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Administrators and Teachers' Perceptions of Key Components of the School Improvement Grant

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ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF KEY COMPONENTS OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT

by

Willis Anthony Smith

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012
ABSTRACT

ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF KEY COMPONENTS OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT

by Willis Anthony Smith

December 2012

The purpose of this research was to assess administrators and teachers’ perceptions of key components of the School Improvement Grant (SIG). This study explores whether or not administrators and teachers believe the SIG’s key components have a positive impact on school improvement.

The participants for this study were drawn exclusively from five of the eighteen SIG schools that received the School Improvement Grant in Mississippi. All of the teachers and administrators at each school were invited to participate in the study. A total of 97 educators participated in the study, 22 administrators and 75 teachers.

The findings from this research revealed that in the state of Mississippi administrators and teachers’ views align with current research regarding effective school leadership, parental involvement, professional learning community and professional development, extended learning time, and data driven decisions. However, there were significant differences among the perceptions in some areas. One area that produced a significant difference based on statistical analysis was the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader. Another area that produced a significant difference was the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement. Both groups had high perceptions, but administrators’ perceptions were much higher than
teachers. The last hypothesis that produced significant difference based on statistical analysis was the perceptions of administrators and teachers on the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement. For each hypothesis, although each hypothesis revealed a significance difference, administrators and teacher had high perceptions, but administrators were much higher than teachers.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of Title I can be traced to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). As part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, the ESEA was signed into law, appropriating federal money to states to improve the educational opportunities of disadvantaged children (Cross, 2004). Title I, the part of ESEA directly related to school children living in poverty and the federal funds intended to support those children, was the largest section of the law. A formula based on schools’ levels of poverty determined whether schools would be eligible for federal money to assist with the educational achievement of their students (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). In 1994, the ESEA was reauthorized as the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA). IASA not only allowed the federal government to allocate funding to schools serving economically disadvantaged students but also ignited standards-based reform at the state and local levels. The use of performance standards for all students, not just those served by Title I, was included in the reauthorization of Title I legislation as part of the IASA (Schwartz, Yen, & Schaffer, 2001).

In 2001, President George W. Bush announced that the ESEA would be reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and would be the top priority of his administration. The most significant change was the institution of a timeline for schools to meet specific academic criteria in reading and math in order to effectively close the achievement gaps related to race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status. The ultimate goal of this legislation is to ensure mastery of all
students so that they are on grade-level or above grade-level standards by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

In 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), marking an increase in the role the federal government played in education. Along with increased funding, NCLB (2002) increased the educational requirements of states, school districts, and public schools (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003). Among these mandates were the requirements for highly qualified teachers in every classroom, the use of research-based instruction, the development of assessment tools that would enable teachers and administrators to make data-driven decisions about instruction, and the development of methods for holding schools accountable for student achievement (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). As a result, all students are now tested in grades three through eleven to determine if they make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading and math (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003).

According to the United States Department of Education (2012), President Obama and Congress have appropriated more than $4 billion to help turn around the nation’s lowest-performing schools. States were awarded nearly $3.5 billion in School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds in 2010 to turn around low-performing schools. Mississippi was one of many states to receive funds from the School Improvement Grant fund.

The School Improvement Grant provides financial resources to Local Educational Agencies (LEA) that provide assistance to persistently low-achieving schools that demonstrate the greatest need and strongest commitment to substantially raise the academic achievement of their students (Mississippi Department of Education, 2011). In
conjunction with Title I funds for school improvement reserved under section 1003(a) of
the ESEA, School Improvement Grants under section 1003(g) of the ESEA are used to
improve student achievement in Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective
action, or restructuring to enable those schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP)
and exit improvement status (United States Department of Education [USDE], 2010).

Mississippi received $47 million in SIG funds in 2009, which were made
available through the United States Department of Education School Improvement Grant
Fund, Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (USDE, 2010).
These monies were set aside in the 2009 federal budget and the American Recovery and
Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2010,
provided $546 million for School Improvement Grants in fiscal year (FY) 2010. In
addition, the United States Department of Education (USDE) estimated that collectively,
states have carried over approximately $825 million in FY 2009 SIG funds; these funds
were combined with FY 2010 SIG funds, for a total of nearly $1.4 billion that was
awarded to states as part of their FY 2010 SIG competitions (USDE, 2010).

According to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) (2011), SIG funds
provided an unprecedented opportunity for educators to implement innovative strategies
to improve education for academically at-risk students and to close the achievement gap
in Title I schools. MDE explained that with the unprecedented funding for school
improvement initiatives, came additional responsibility for schools to demonstrate
transparency and accountability to the general public while investing wisely in research
based strategies that would strengthen education, drive reforms, and improve results for
students.
According to MDE (2011), State Education Agencies (SEA) are to provide subgrants to Local Educational Agencies (LEA) for the purpose of improving the quality of instruction and raising the academic achievement of students in the state’s persistently lowest achieving schools. A State Education Agency must give priority to the Local Educational Agencies with the lowest-achieving schools that demonstrate the greatest need and the strongest commitment to substantially raise student achievement and meet the goals under school improvement, corrective action, and restructuring (MDE, 2011).

A LEA that has been identified with one or more persistently lowest-achieving schools is eligible to apply for SIG funds. The United States Department of Education (2011) published in the Federal Register that School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds are to be focused on Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III schools that commit to implement one of the four intervention models:

1. **Turnaround model** means, among other actions, replacing the principal and rehiring no more than 50% of the school’s staff, adopting a new governance structure, increasing learning time, and implementing an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with state adopted content standards.

2. **Restart model** means converting a school or closing and reopening it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process. A restart model school must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school.
3. School closure means a LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available.

4. Transformation model means implementing each of the following strategies:
   (a) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; (b) institute comprehensive instructional reforms; (c) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and (d) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

These models are to be implemented at the beginning of the school year and throughout the term of the grant period. Eligibility to receive SIG funds is based on the State’s definition of persistently lowest-achieving schools” (USDE, 2011).

Following a competitive grant process in Mississippi, eight eligible schools were awarded three-year grants to implement the transformational school improvement intervention model during the 2010-2011 school year. School grants ranged from $2.4 million to $5.25 million, for a total distribution of $33 million. The remaining state SIG funds were used during the second round of grant competitions in January/February of 2011. Funding for the full three years is contingent upon the schools meeting established performance indicators.

The School Improvement Grant (SIG) was tailored to cultivate the key components identified as being critical to a school’s success (UDSE, 2011):

1. Effective school leadership.
2. Increased parental involvement,
3. Professional learning community and professional development,
4. Extended learning time, and
5. Data-driven decisions.

Glatthorn (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) characterized professional development as the development of a person in his or her professional role and further stated, “Teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically” (p. 6). Gabrieli (2010) stated that with President Obama and United States Secretary of Education Duncan now challenging educators to move beyond a school schedule and calendar developed for a farm and factory era, expanded learning time is moving to center stage. When parents are involved, they know the expectations of teachers and the school, and they can work as partners to ensure their children are successful (Rasmussen, 1998). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2008) defined instructional leadership as leading learning communities, in which staff members meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, collaborate to solve problems, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn. Schools that rely on data rather than making decisions based upon gut instincts and educated guesses are able to sustain improvement (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2003).

The primary purpose of the grant’s fiscal resources was to significantly improve students’ academic achievement through documented implementation of the key components. Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu and Eaton (as cited in Kelly, 2010) compiled twenty years of research that resulted in the classification of five areas crucial
for academic success. The five areas named were closely related to the components incorporated in the School Improvement Grant:

1. School leadership - principals who take a strategic approach focused on instruction and inclusive leadership.

2. Parent-community ties - schools with a welcoming atmosphere and strong connections to local institutions.

3. Professional capacity - high-quality faculty and staff with opportunities for professional development and a willingness to work together.

4. Student-centered learning climate - a safe, stimulating, and nurturing environment.

5. Instructional guidance - an organized curriculum and useful material to help teachers apply it. (as cited in Kelly, 2010, para. 1)

Bryk, et al. (as cited in Kelly, 2010) suggested that school improvement was comparable to a cake recipe requiring all of the ingredients needed to produce a superb product. They concluded that schools that demonstrated strength in every area were much more likely to achieve significantly higher levels of improvement in reading and math scores and attendance when compared to schools that were strong in only one or two areas. Thus, a weakness in just one of the areas increased the chances of failure to show improvement.

Greenwald, Laine, and Hedges (2006) disagreed with Hanushek (1995) on the impact of school funding. Hanushek argued that while the financial investment in education had doubled during the last 25 years, the returns have not been equal to those of previous eras. He asserted that dramatic increases in per-pupil expenditures and the reasons for them have resulted in stable, not increased, student achievement levels.
Greenwald et al. (1996) explained that they have never argued that an increase in expenditures will necessarily result in increased achievement. However, they recognized that sufficient resources are essential if schools are to provide the desirable educational opportunities.

**Statement of the Problem**

With the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act, low-performing schools were targeted based on not meeting the requirement of Adequate Yearly Progress. Based on the disaggregation of data, persistently low-performing schools faced consequences for not meeting this component of the mandate. Subsequently, the School Improvement Grant (SIG) was established to provide millions of dollars to improve low-performing schools. If this study is not conducted, lawmakers, educators, parents, students, and communities will not have additional research to help determine if SIG has a significant impact on increasing student achievement. However, if this study reveals that SIG has made a positive impact on improving low-performing schools, lawmakers will be able to make informed decisions on whether or not to continue to provide additional funding and resources to persistently low-performing schools. Additionally, educators will be able to use this study to determine whether or not key components of the grant led to higher student achievement. This study will greatly influence the field of education by enabling educators to refer to research-based strategies to transform low-performing schools.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks administrators and teachers’ perceptions of key components of the School Improvement Grant. This study explores whether or not administrators and teachers believe the SIG’s key components have a positive impact on school
improvement. This research study contributes to the field of education by providing insight from educators for the purpose of using research-based strategies to turnaround persistently low-performing schools.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader?
2. What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the impact of parental involvement?
3. What are administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement?
4. What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of extended learning time on student achievement?
5. What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement?

Hypotheses

H1: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader.

H2: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the impact of parental involvement?
H3: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement.

H4: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of extended learning time on student achievement.

H5: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are utilized throughout this study, are defined as follows:

* Adequate Yearly Progress - Proficiency standards set by state departments of education that progressively increase the percentage of students in districts that must meet the proficiency standard.

* Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) - Public law passed in 1965 to improve the educational opportunities of low-income families by providing additional support and resources.

* Local Education Agency - a public school district that oversees multiple schools.

* Mississippi Department of Education - The state education agency responsible for oversight of information, resources, and technical assistance on matters pertinent to education in the State of Mississippi.

* No Child Left Behind Act - The No Child Left Behind Act is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965, 1994). It made significant changes
in the federal government’s involvement in education and in the ways that schools educate children in America. The primary purpose of NCLB is to ensure that students in every public school achieve important learning goals while being educated in safe classrooms by well prepared teachers (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

_Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools_ - Persistently lowest-achieving schools means, as determined by the State:

1. Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that
   i. Is among the lowest-achieving 5% of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or
   ii. Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(b) that is less than 60% over a number of years;

2. Any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that
   i. Is among the lowest-achieving 5% of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or
   ii. Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(b) that is less than 60% over a number of years.

3. A school that falls within the definition of (a) above is a —Tier I school and a school that falls within the definition of (b) above is a —Tier II school for
purposes of using SIG funds under section 1003(g) of the ESEA. At its option, an SEA may identify additional schools as Tier I or Tier II schools.

Section 1118 of the No Child Left Behind Act - entitled Parent Involvement.

State Education Agency- governing body responsible for implementing federal education regulations and maintaining governance of local education agencies.

Title I - Funding made available to state departments of education and local education agencies by the federal government to provide an adequate and appropriate education to underprivileged children.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study is the selection of only schools that received the school improvement grant in Mississippi.

Assumptions

The following is assumed to be true for the purpose of this study.

1. The respondents to the survey impartially and candidly answered questions posed to them regarding the study.

Justification

Do the additional resources and funding increase student achievement? Administrators and teachers at the SIG schools are in the trenches implementing the key components, and know first-hand the impact it is having on school improvement. With the additional resources and support staff, teachers are able to modify their pedagogical strategies to enhance student achievement. Therefore, this study helps lawmakers make informed decisions on whether or not to provide additional funding and resources to low-performing schools. Educators are able to use this study to determine whether or not the
key components of the grant led to higher student achievement. The contribution to the field of education is greatly impacted because educators are able to use research-based strategies to turnaround persistently low-performing schools.

Summary

This chapter provided the following: (a) an introduction, (b) statement of the problem, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research questions and hypotheses (e) definition of terms (f) delimitation, (g) assumptions, and (h) justification.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The School Improvement Grant (SIG) was tailored to cultivate the components identified as being critical to a school’s success. Therefore, the review of literature related to this study appears under five sub-headings:

1. Effective school leadership;
2. Increased parental involvement;
3. Professional learning community and professional development;
4. Extended learning time; and
5. Data-driven decisions.

Theoretical Framework

The primary purpose of the School Improvement Grant’s fiscal resources was to significantly improve students’ academic achievement through documented implementation of these key components. Bryk et al. (as cited in Kelly, 2010) compiled 20 years of research that resulted in the classification of five areas crucial for academic success. The five areas named were closely related to the components incorporated in the School Improvement Grant:

1. School leadership: principals who take a strategic approach focused on instruction and inclusive leadership;
2. Parent-community ties: schools with a welcoming atmosphere and strong connections to local institutions;
3. Professional capacity: high-quality faculty and staff with opportunities for professional development and a willingness to work together;

4. Student-centered learning climate: a safe, stimulating, and nurturing environment; and

5. Instructional guidance: an organized curriculum and useful material to help teachers apply it. (para. 1)

Bryk et al. (as cited in Kelly, 2010) suggested that school improvement was analogous to a cake recipe requiring all of the ingredients needed to produce a superb product. They concluded that schools that demonstrated strength in every area were much more likely to achieve significantly higher levels of improvement in reading and math scores and in attendance when compared to schools that were strong in only one or two areas. Thus, a weakness in just one of the areas increased the chances of failure to show improvement.

Literature

Effective School Leadership

Since the inception of a new era of accountability and the passage of No Child Left Behind, the role of school leaders has increased tremendously. Today, principals possess many different roles. They are educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). In addition, Davis et al. explained that principals work with all stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies.
Just when the principal’s pot appears to be running over, another ingredient is added to the mix, the instructional leader (Mangin, 2007). Therefore, principals are no longer viewed as managers, they are instructional leaders ensuring that all students achieve at high levels (Broad, 2003).

Most practicing school leaders have had to matriculate through some type of leadership preparation program prior to becoming a school leader. In educational leadership preparation programs, most school leaders were introduced and continue to use as a guide the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium’s (ISLLC) six standards. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) identified the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium to serve as educator development, and has been adopted by more than 40 states in some measure in their own leadership policies and standards (CCSSO, 2008). The standards assist states with setting expectations for licensure, improve administrator preparation programs at colleges and universities, and influence the process for screening and hiring leaders. The standards are also used to development evaluation instruments and professional development to promote performance growth (CCSSO, 2008). The standards focus on enhancing the quality of educational leadership, transitioning educational administrators from institutional managers to instructional leaders (Johnson & Uline, 2005). The six ISLLC standards are:

1. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

5. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

6. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

These standards represent the broad, high-priority themes education leaders must address in order to promote the success of every student (CCSSO, 2008). Today, these standards serve as the guidelines for all administrators to follow in their roles as school leaders.

**Standard 1 – Vision.** All stakeholders must embrace the same vision for student achievement. Educators embrace high level of learning for all students when a school or district functions as a professional learning community (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). Data should be used to develop, implement, and evaluate a school
improvement plan, promote job-embedded professional development, and guide instructional decisions to ensure the vision of academic success for all (Southern Regional Educational Board, 2007). Being data driven is an important factor to providing effective instructional leadership. Data should be analyzed for the purpose of student remediation and improving instruction (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2002). Principals must be committed to monitoring assessments, analyzing data, and holding teachers accountable for failing to fulfill their responsibilities (DuFour et al., 2002). Results-oriented principals make instructional decisions based on data and continuously monitor student and school progress (National Association for Elementary School Principals, 2008).

One person cannot do it alone. White (2005) articulated when the leadership team embraces the leader’s rope and hang on, it creates and sustains success for the leader. White explained five things that positive and negative leaders of the past have used to motivate their followers. First, they know and understand the people they want to lead. Second, they share common connections with the people they lead, i.e. beliefs, fears, prejudices, education, religion, or faith, etc. Third, they can effectively communicate with the people they lead. Forth, they can sell their vision to the followers. And fifth, they have the ability to share the rope or ownership with their followers. He emphasized “positive leadership builds legacy; negative leadership builds regrets” (p. 20).

A review of research literature conducted by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) explained the important role that successful leadership plays in improving student learning. These findings give reason for the claim that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to
what students learn at school. In addition, the research identified three sets of practices that make up the basic core of successful leadership practices. The first practice is helping staff members establish and understand the goals of the school and is the foundation of shared vision for the school. The second practice is building the capacity of those within the school and using their strengths. The third practice is redesigning the organization to avoid wearing down educators’ good intentions and preventing the use of effective practices. White (2005) shared that leaders must work well with people, be persuasive, challenge the status quo and initiate change, and be a good time manager. These attributes are vital to ensuring a leaders’ effectiveness.

Standard 2 – Culture & Instruction. Leaders focused on student achievement embrace the challenge of shaping a school culture to foster collaboration, protect and defend shared values, and support the fundamental purpose of learning for all students (DuFour et al., 2006). Long and short terms goals must be established by the principal and staff to create and sustain a school culture conducive to student learning. The focus on the goals for school improvement is critical to the success of the school; the principal must keep school improvement goals as the most important aspect of the school (Marzano, McNutty, & Waters, 2005). Professional learning communities establish collaborative parameters that create an infrastructure that connects individual goals with the building’s vision and mission (DuFour et al., 2006).

Dufour (2002) stressed the importance of shifting the focus from teaching to the focus on learning. He noted that principals can foster this structural and cultural transformation by shifting their emphasis from helping individual teachers improve instruction to helping teams of teachers to ensuring learning outcomes. By doing so, the
principal is functioning as a learning leader rather than an instructional leader. Learning leaders are attentive to the culture of the school, constantly promoting, protecting, and defending the mission of learning and the staff’s collaboratively developed and publicly stated core values (Eaker & Gonzalez, 2006).

Salazar and Jorissen (2007) noted that principals must collaborate with teachers by providing leadership for what students are taught, research based instructional strategies and pedagogy, and focusing on student learning outcomes. Salazar and Jorissen recognized that effective instructional leaders have to understand best practices, spend time in classrooms, and analyze student data to serve in this capacity. In order to be highly effective, principals must work with teachers to ensure all students learn. Principals do so by guiding teachers in developing vital learning and best practices that make student improvement achievable (Southern Regional Education Board, 2007). By working with teams of teachers, principals can ensure the continuous improvement of instruction.

Leaders must honestly examine and continuously monitor student achievement. Effective principals celebrate success and develop a plan for change if an initiative has failed (Marzano et al., 2005). Not only does a learning leader monitor student progress, but he also builds time into the day to allow teams of teachers to analyze student work and make instructional decisions that relate to student learning (DuFour et al., 2006).

Glickman (1989) stressed that shared instructional leadership is pivotal to the effectiveness of instructional leaders. It is evident that one person cannot handle all of the tasks alone. Glickman explained that shared instructional leadership involves the active collaboration of principals and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
Within this model, the principal seeks out the ideas, insights, and expertise of teachers in these areas and works with teachers for school improvement. After two decades, Glickman still believes in shared leadership. In 2002, he clarified that shared leadership is when an instructional leader listens to the teacher, clarifies what the teacher says, encourages the teacher to speak more about the concern, and reflects by verifying the teacher’s perceptions (Glickman, 2002). Then he can clearly understand the teacher’s participation in making the decisions about professional practice.

Instructional leadership by the principal is important to ensuring a culture of learning. The National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) (2005) described instructional leadership as “the guidance and direction of sustained instructional improvement leading to higher student achievement” (p. 2). The NISL approach to instructional leadership implied that school leadership:

1. Starts with clarity about the ends in terms of high student performance – a vision that incorporates the achievement of high performance standards by all students;

2. Recognizes effective instructional practice as the key to the achievement of high performance standards by all students;

3. Identifies evidence based ways of improving teacher capacity and practice by focusing on the use of data to drive improvement in practice; benchmarking; distributed instructional leadership; capacity building through communities of practice; an aligned standards-based instructional system; and professional development embedded in the workplace with a focus on student work;

4. Acts to ensure that the means follow the vision for improvement. (pp. 2-3)
Dufour (2002) stressed that instructional leaders must be up-to-date with knowledge of three areas of education: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. First, principals should be familiar with curriculum, changing conceptions of educational philosophies and beliefs, curriculum evaluation, different models of teaching, the theoretical reasons for adopting a particular teaching model, the theories underlying the technology-based learning environment, alternate assessment methods.

Research showed that effective instructional leadership is the key to improving schools. Instructional leadership includes evaluating and improving instruction. Sissman (2004) expanded the instructional leadership roles of school principals as (a) define the school mission; (b) to manage instruction and school curriculum; (c) supervise and evaluate instruction; (d) to monitor student development; and (e) to develop school climate.

**Standard 3 – Management.** The school leaders’ role of managing learning also includes the management of the organization, operations, resources for a safe, efficient, learning environment, which is vital to the success of students. Marzano et al. (2005) reported the need for administrators to control management and operational systems. Marzano et al. identified three specific behaviors that create order in a school: establishing routines for the smooth running of the school that staff understand and follow; providing and reinforcing clear structures, rules, and procedures for staff; and providing and reinforcing clear structures, rules, and procedures for students.

Waters and Cameron (2007) presented additional insights into the need for administrators to facilitate the management and operational systems within their buildings. They identified three leadership responsibilities related to managing
Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliot, and Cravens (2007) concluded that educational leaders in high-performing schools realize that teachers are the most critical resource in a school district. Educational leaders in high-performing schools focus on hiring quality teachers and placing them in the right positions to ensure the academic success of all students. Effective leaders allocate resources to support their staff in continuous professional growth. Goldring et al. study indicated that quality school leaders have a gift of acquiring, allocating, and using resources to strengthen student learning.

**Standard 4 – Collaboration.** Research has found that the role of collaborating with families and communities is vital to the success of all students. The Council of Chief State School Officers (2008) reported that educational leaders must build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers. Leaders must also work to create relationships with the community at large. Leithwood et al. (2004) supported the idea of the need for leaders to understand the interconnectivity of schools and homes. This relationship plays a key role in student success and can be established by adopting and implementing such school-sponsored practices as school-community partnerships, parent education programs, and social services (Leithwood et al., 2004). Cotton (2003) stated that effective principals are good communicators who share with and seek information from all groups in the school community. This builds positive relationships with stakeholders that enhance all school functions. Marzano’s et al. (2005) study addressed organizational systems which include establishing a set of standard operating procedures and routines, involving teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies, and monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their relationship to student learning.
the importance of outreach for administrators and indicated the leader is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders.

Goldring et al. (2007) identified advocating for the best interests and needs of all children as a key process of effective leadership. These leaders:

... advocate for a rigorous curriculum for all students. They ensure that policies in the school do not prevent or create barriers for certain students to participate in classes that are deemed gateways to further learning... They ensure that special needs students receive content-rich instruction... Both the instruction and content of the school’s educational programs honor diversity. (p. 12)

*Standard 5 – Integrity, Fairness, & Ethics.* The principal must model integrity, fairness, and a strong sense of ethics if the school is to operate at the highest level (Shipman, Queen, & Peel, 2007). Integrity was also identified by the National Association of Independent Schools (2006) as a core quality for leaders to possess. School leaders should display good ethics by being honest and candid when dealing with people (Shipman et al., 2007). This behavior leads followers to imitate the leader’s behavior throughout the school and community. Consequently, administrators should model and teach values by every word and action they employ in and out of school.

Shipman and his colleagues reported that an effective principal should genuinely care about students, teachers, and parents, and this should be apparent in every aspect of the principal’s nature and actions. Heathfield concluded that best leaders exhibit both their values and their ethics in their leadership style and actions.

*Standard 6 – Responding to Influences.* In order to promote success for all students, educational leaders must act to influence local, district, state, and national
decisions affecting student learning; evaluate, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt (CCSSO, 2008). School leaders must be aware of what is going on outside of their school. Reeves (2004) pointed out that a public debate on educational issues is the most important contributions that state policymakers can make to education. This gives school leaders the opportunity to participate. Reeves (2009) disclosed that educational leaders can confront a bewildering array of recommendations, programs, and alternatives. Therefore, we know that the least effective response is the simultaneous implementation of many different initiatives.

As noted by research, applying the ISLLC 2008 standards outlining effective school leadership can have a lasting impact on student achievement. Davis et al. (2005) pointed to evidence that school leadership strongly affects student learning. They stated that principals’ abilities are central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students. Jenkins (2009) explained that in a learning community instructional leaders make adult learning a priority, set high expectations for performance, create a culture of continuous learning for adults, and get the community’s support for school success. Jenkins also noted that principals must possess certain skills to carry out the tasks of an instructional leader: interpersonal skills; planning skills; instructional observation skills; and research and evaluation skills.

Marzano et al. (2005) meta-analysis research study found a significant relationship between leadership and student achievement, and developed 21 specific leadership responsibilities correlated with student achievement. The 21 leadership responsibilities were defined as
1. Affirmation – recognizes and celebrates accomplishment and acknowledges failures;
2. Change agent – is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo;
3. Contingent rewards – recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments;
4. Communication – establishes strong lines of communication;
5. Culture – fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation;
6. Discipline – protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus;
7. Flexibility – adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent;
8. Focus – establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention;
9. Ideals/beliefs – communicates and operates from strong ideas and beliefs about schooling;
10. Input – involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies;
11. Intellectual stimulation – ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture;
12. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment – is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices;
13. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment – is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices;

14. Monitoring/evaluating – monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact of student learning;

15. Optimizer – inspires and leads new and challenging innovations;

16. Order – establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines;

17. Outreach – is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders;

18. Relationships – demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff;

19. Resources – provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs;

20. Situational awareness – is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems; and

21. Visibility – has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students.

(pp. 42-43)

The result of this study showed similarity to a study conducted by Cotton (2003) in which she identified 25 categories of principal behavior that positively affect the dependent variables of student achievement, student attitudes, student behavior, teacher attitudes, teacher behaviors, and dropout rates. Principals must be able to act as initiators or facilitators of continuous improvements in order to successfully initiate change (Dove & Freeley, 2011). Being optimistic that change is possible is an important attribute of an
effective principal. It is evident a key component of lasting reform efforts is effective leadership (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2003).

*Parental Involvement in Schools*

Although research indicates that parent involvement plays a vital role in a school’s success, parental involvement has sharply declined over time. Gaining meaningful parental support for the education process has posed a national challenge for schools. Defining parent involvement is vital. Parental involvement is generally referred to as parents’ participation in their children’s education with the purpose of promoting their academic and social success (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). A positive link between parental involvement and students’ achievement, motivation, and attitudes have been found by researchers (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan-Holbein, 2005). A positive atmosphere can be created when realistic and workable ways are determined to involve parents and other community representatives in planning, establishing policy, and making decisions regarding mainline educational issues (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005).

Fan and Williams’ (2010) study revealed positive associations with students’ academic self-efficacy in math, English, engagement, math intrinsic motivation, and English intrinsic motivation when schools made initial parental contact regarding academics, future educational plans, and helping students at home. They explained that parents are more likely to motivate their children, which can result in students’ intrinsic motivation and engagement. Their study also revealed negative association with all five motivational outcomes when schools communicate to parents their child’s poor performance and behavior problems. The researchers found that these type of
conversations lead to discouragement, criticism or punishments form parents, which decreases confidence, interest, and engagements of learning.

Jeynes (2005) conducted a meta-analysis to determine the overall impact of parental involvement on K-12 students and to determine what forms of parental involvement are most beneficial to children. The meta-analysis was derived from 77 studies, comprised of over 300,000 students. Thirty-six studies included data only from secondary schools. Twenty-five studies consisted of data only from elementary schools, and 16 studies possessed data for both elementary and secondary schools. The overall quality of Jeynes’ study was rated as a 2.3 on a 0.0 (lowest)–3.0 (highest) scale by two reviewers used in the study. The following summarizes the research questions and findings from Jeynes’s meta-analysis of parental involvement and student achievement:

1. How does the academic achievement of students whose parents are actively involved in their education compare to that of their counterparts whose parents are not involved?

The results of the meta-analysis indicate that parental involvement is associated with higher student achievement outcomes. These findings emerged consistently whether the outcome measures were grades, standardized test scores, or a variety of other measures, including teacher ratings. This trend holds not only for parental involvement overall but for most components of parental involvement that were examined in the meta-analysis. Moreover, the pattern holds not only for the overall student population but for minority students as well. For the overall population of students, on average, the achievement scores of children with highly involved
parents was higher than children with less involved parents. This academic advantage for those parents who were highly involved in their education averaged about .5– .6 of a standard deviation for overall educational outcomes, grades, and academic achievement. In other words, the academic achievement score distribution or range of scores for children whose parents were highly involved in their education was substantially higher than that of their counterparts whose parents were less involved.

2. What is the particular influence of specific aspects of parental involvement?

   One of the most vital aspects of this study was its examination of specific components of parental involvement to see which aspects influenced student achievement. Two of the patterns that emerged from the findings were that the facets of parental involvement that required a large investment of time, such as reading and communicating with one's child; and the more subtle aspects of parental involvement, such as parental style and expectations; which had a greater impact on student educational outcomes than some of the more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement, such as having household rules, and parental attendance and participation at school functions.

3. Which aspect of parental involvement has the greatest impact on academic achievement?

   The largest effect sizes emerged for parental expectations. The effect sizes for parental style and reading with one's child were smaller than for either parental expectations, but they also had very consistent influences
across the studies. Parent involvement programs also influenced educational outcomes, although to a lesser degree than preexisting expressions of parental support.

4. Do the effects of parental involvement hold for racial minority children?

The results for studies examining 100% minority students and mostly minority students were also close to about .5 of a standard deviation. The effects of parental involvement tended to be larger for African American and Latino children than they were for Asian American children. However, the effect sizes were statistically significant for all three of these minority groups. The results highlight the consistency of the impact of parental involvement across racial and ethnic groups.

5. Do parental involvement programs work?

The results indicate that, on average, parental involvement programs work. As expected, the influence of these programs is not as large as the impact of parental involvement as a whole. This is because parents are already enthusiastic about supporting the educational progress of their children will, on average; tend to help their children more than parents whose participation is fostered by the presence of a particular program. (para. 5)

Based upon his findings, parental involvement and parental programs substantially influenced student achievement, Jeynes (2005) proposed that educators consistently encourage parents to become more involved in their children's schooling and that teachers, principals, and school counselors become familiar with the facets of parental
involvement that are most useful to parents so that they can guide them through the steps to become more involved.

According to Machen et al. (2005), a partnership between the school and parents is the key to improving schools. They stressed the importance of schools building partnerships with parents to benefit students. When developing this partnership, the researchers explain that a successful parent-school collaboration program should focus on creating opportunities for positive communication, reducing the barriers that prevent parental involvement such as providing child care and scheduling teacher conferences favorable to the parent's schedule, and providing educational workshops to assist parents on way how they can help their child succeed.

Martinez (2004) reported that there is over 30 years of research showing that having parents actively involved in their children’s education is one of the most effective tools that can be used to increase student achievement. Martinez highlighted a 2002 National Education Service study that revealed that when parents are involved students tend to achieve more, earn higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, more consistently complete homework, enroll in postsecondary education. Martinez recommended that schools use models such as Epstein’s Framework of Parental Involvement to help them change how they view parent involvement. Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement included:

1. Parenting – parenting skills are promoted and supported.

2. Communication – communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
3. Volunteering – parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

4. Learning at Home – help parents understand the educational process and their role in supporting student achievement. Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

5. School Decision-Making and Advocacy – parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families. Title I, II, and IV stipulate that parents should have a role regarding programmatic decisions that are made. The intent is to give parents voice in decisions that affect their children’s education.

6. Collaboration with the Community – community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning. (p. 2)

Martinez advised schools to make an investment in parental involvement activities and strategies that are designed to develop a nurturing parent and school collaboration. As cited in Pate and Andrews (2006) research summary, the following are potential outcomes when parents are involved:

1. Parent involvement leads to improved educational performance (Epstein et al., 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; NMSA, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Van Voorhis, 2003).

3. Parents who participate in decision making experience greater feelings of ownership and are more committed to supporting the school's mission (Jackson & Davis, 2000).


5. Parent involvement improves school attendance (Epstein et al., 2002).

6. Parent involvement creates a better understanding of roles and relationships between and among the parent-student-school triad (Epstein et al., 2002).

7. Parent involvement improves student emotional well-being (Epstein, 2005).

8. Types of parent involvement and quality of parent involvement affect results for students, parents, and teachers (Epstein, 1995).

Increased parental involvement helps parents better understand the curriculum, values, and norms of the school system while helping them monitor their child’s progress (Gonzalez, 2005).

President George W. Bush signed The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 into law on January 8, 2002. No Child Left Behind supports parent involvement because research overwhelmingly demonstrates the positive effect that parent involvement has on children’s academic achievement (USDE, 2003). The law requires low-performing schools to inform parents of their corrective action plan and explain to parents how they can be a part of the school improvement process. Schools must also provide parents with a school report card that includes data on the school and the school district. Based upon the information that parents receive, they can decide how they can best assist their children’s school—whether it be attending parent-teacher meetings; attending special meetings to address academic problems at the school; volunteering to serve as needed;
encouraging other parents to become involved; learning about the school’s special challenges; learning about community resources; or learning about the No Child Left Behind Act (USDE, 2003). The United States Department of Education encourages parents to take advantage of the rights afforded them under the No Child Left Behind Act by talking with their school board members, principals and other state and local education leaders about which programs they think will help their students the most. The United States Department of Education (2003) listed Section 1118 as a mandate for local educational agencies to receive additional funding if the agencies implement programs, activities that involve parents.

No Parent Left Behind White Paper (2003) introduced the notion of No Parent Left Behind as a powerful response to the No Child Left Behind Act, in that it shares the burden of accountability with parents. It acknowledged that accountability is not always expected from children. No Child Left Behind legislation is really about more than the child, it is largely about parents. The legislation is aimed at schools giving parents the opportunity to be more involved in their child’s education. In Response to No Child Left Behind, Michael Petrilli, vice president for national programs and policy for the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and an early supporter of No Child Left Behind, asserted "What we've learned more than anything else is that the federal government isn't well-equipped to force school districts to do things they don't want to do" (Paulson, 2007, para. 9).

After extensive research sponsored by the Appleseed Foundation, Coleman, Starzynski, Winnick, Palmer, and Furr (2006) acknowledged that the bold vision of No Child Left Behind that portrays parents as actively engaged partners remains unfulfilled because the nation has not invested in it financially or given it the attention that is
needed. They called for a renewed focus on parental involvement in the 21st Century and viewed parent involvement as possibly being the key to defeating persistent achievement gaps and engaging low-income and non-English speaking parents. In addition, they recommended that Congress should take the following steps in its reauthorization of No Child Left Behind law to promote more effective and educationally appropriate parental options:

1. Provide for an expanded role for parents in the school improvement process, including creating more detailed directives about the role parents will play in the development and implementation of any school improvement plans.

2. Provide for and fund a more strategic, focused role for Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCs), to concentrate on working with states and districts to strengthen and monitor parent involvement activities, make parental involvement activities an integral part of their strategic school-reform efforts, and build ties between schools and community groups representing and working with parents.

3. Promote effective district and SES provider collaboration, as well as district and school “ownership” of SES, by requiring:
   i. Districts and provider to cooperatively engage parents in the development of individual learning plans and in ongoing monitoring of student progress; and (2) exchange relevant student/classroom data throughout the delivery of SES services; and
ii. Schools to incorporate SES as an integral part of their Title I school improvement plans, including addressing how those services will be leveraged to improve school performance. (pp. 41-42)

It is important to understand parents. When parents are more involved in their child's education, the child performs better academically and becomes engaged in school (Gonzalez, 2002). Parent involvement also contributes to students’ attitudes toward school and aspirations about schooling (Elish-Piper, 2008).

Professional Learning Communities and Professional Development

According to research (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Robert, 2006), the positive result of professional learning communities is that teachers have a greater confidence in knowing that newly acquired, shared information will hopefully lead to student achievement. The impact of professional learning communities has been of great interest to educational researchers.

DuFour (2004b) stated that the creation of a professional learning community depends on several factors. He explained that professional learning communities focus on (a) ensuring students learn, which shifts the focus from teaching to learning; (b) creating a culture of collaboration; and (c) results, which utilizes data to drive instructional decisions. “Professional learning communities empower the teaching staff to work together with administrators and other teachers to provide quality instruction and improve student learning” (Hughes & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 1). Dufour (2004b) offered the concept of the big ideas that represent the core principles of professional learning communities.
Big Idea #1 is ensuring that all students learn. Shifting the focus from ensuring students are taught to ensuring they are learning is the core mission of the professional learning community model (Dufour, 2004b). Dufour pointed out that this shift has profound implications for schools. He stressed that everyone in the school should focus on finding answers to the following three critical questions to drive their work: “(1) What do we want each student to learn? 2) How will we know when each student has learned it? 3) How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?” (p. 8) The third question differentiates learning communities from traditional schools.

Big Idea #2 is establishing a culture of collaboration. According to Dufour (2004b), educators must work together in their professional learning community to achieve the goal of learning for all students and to promote a collaborative culture, which also benefits students. Dufour further elaborated that when teachers work together and engage in conversations that promote deep team learning, a powerful collaboration exist that leads to increased student achievement. One example Dufour (2004b) shared of a school collaborating for school improvement is at Boones Mill Elementary School. He shared the following scenario:

The school's five 3rd grade teachers study state and national standards, the district curriculum guide, and student achievement data to identify the essential knowledge and skills that all students should learn in an upcoming language arts unit. They also ask the 4th grade teachers what they hope students will have mastered by the time they leave 3rd grade. On the basis of the shared knowledge generated by this joint study, the 3rd grade team agrees on the critical outcomes that they will make sure each student achieves during the unit.
Next, the team turns its attention to developing common formative assessments to monitor each student's mastery of the essential outcomes. Team members discuss the most authentic and valid ways to assess student mastery. They set the standard for each skill or concept that each student must achieve to be deemed proficient. They agree on the criteria by which they will judge the quality of student work, and they practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently. Finally, they decide when they will administer the assessments.

After each teacher has examined the results of the common formative assessment for his or her students, the team analyzes how all 3rd graders performed. Team members identify strengths and weaknesses in student learning and begin to discuss how they can build on the strengths and address the weaknesses. The entire team gains new insights into what is working and what is not, and members discuss new strategies that they can implement in their classrooms to raise student achievement. (pp. 9-10)

Dufour (2004b) stated that discussions, such as these, give teachers an opportunity to dialogue with each other and improve classroom practices. In order for teachers to participate in this powerful process, he explained that everyone should be on a team that focuses on students’ learning, meet during the workday, focus on answering crucial questions related to learning, set expectations for members’ roles, responsibilities, and relationships among each other, and set student achievement goals should.

Graham (2007) conducted a mixed-method study of a middle school within a large Southeastern school district. He reported that when teachers learn from each other, it is more effective and rewarding than traditional professional development. Lavie
(2006) explicated that building a culture of collaboration leads to higher student achievement and encourages teachers to work collaboratively. He then stressed the idea that a shared vision must exist to unify staff as a community.

The Big Idea #3 is the focus on results. Dufour (2004b) reported that results determine the effectiveness of professional learning communities. He explained that it becomes a routine of working collectively to improve student achievement when the focus is on results. Teachers collaborate to identify students’ current level, set goals to improve the current level, work to achieve that goal, and provide evidence of academic progress are a major part of focusing on results. Educators must be concern with what a student has learned rather than what the student has been taught.

To clarify the term professional learning community, DuFour et al. (2006) reiterated that PLCs have

1. A focus on learning-helping each student to learn;
2. A collaborative culture with a focus on learning for all, which is driven by 5 questions: (1) What are the things that a student needs to learn from a given unit, class, or grade? (2) What evidence of student learning can be gathered in a timely manner? (3) How will students be provided additional time, support, and direction? (4) How do we enrich students who are performing at grade level? and (5) How are strategic and specific, measureable, attainable, results oriented, time bound goals and evidence used to improve practice?;
3. Collective inquiry into best practice and current reality-an expectation of working and learning together;
4. Action orientation: Learning by doing-members commit to doing different things so they can achieve different results, making a greater commitment to reading, planning, thinking, and listening; and

5. A commitment to continuous improvement-gather evidence of student learning, strategies for addressing weaknesses and building on strengths, implement strategies, analyze their impact, apply that new knowledge to the next cycle of improvement. (pp. 2-5)

Professional learning communities can offer a powerful alternative to traditional models of staff development with supportive leadership and conditions; shared values, vision; personal practice, and collective learning and application of that learning, all of which lead to improved student outcomes and increased school morale (DuFour, 2004a; DuFour et al., 2006; Hord, 2004). Professional learning communities have been described as an intervention toward increased success for students and improved instructional practices for teachers (DuFour et al., 2006; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). These learning communities offer educators an opportunity to share their knowledge and provide common empowerment (DuFour et al., 2006; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Job-embedded professional development is able to be sustained as a result of professional learning communities (DuFour et al., 2006; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

To fully understand the pivotal role of professional development in the school improvement process and to rationalize its merit as part of the School Improvement Grant, it should first be defined. Glatthorn (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) characterized professional development of a teacher as allowing growth in their role by gaining increased experience and examining their own teaching practice. Until a recent
distinction was made, staff development was considered as professional development for teachers. Staff development was short-term and generally consisted of in-service training and workshops that were not relevant to teachers’ work. Researchers Cochran-Smith, Lytle, Walling and Lewis (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) pointed out that unlike staff development, professional development is a long-term process that is strategically planned to present teachers with opportunities and experiences for job-related growth and development. Furthermore, Cochran-Smith and Lytle and Walling and Lewis (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) referred to this historic paradigmatic shift from staff development to professional development for teachers as a revolution in education.

Desimone (2011) shared that one of the keys to improving the quality of schools is teacher professional development. Desimone explained that job-embedded professional development can take the form of co-teaching, mentoring, reflecting on lessons, group discussions of student work, a book club, a teacher network, or a study group. Other researchers such as Ball, Cohen, and Remillard (as cited in Desimone, 2011) agreed that even curriculum materials can be a source of professional development when they are designed to be educative to support learning by teachers as well as by students. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) (2005) suggested that professional development should focus on how students learn a particular subject matter; instructional practices that are specifically related to the subject matter and how students understand it; strengthening teachers’ knowledge of specific subject-matter content; influencing teachers’ classroom practices significantly; and improving student achievement.

Extended opportunities for teachers to better understand student learning, curriculum
materials and instruction, and subject-matter content can boost the performance of both teachers and students.

Teachers change their practices by participating in professional development and participating in a professional learning community optimizes the time spent on professional development (AERA, 2005). Guskey and Yoon (2009) stated that researcher Mary Kennedy found that when teachers participate in professional development activities that are ineffective, the outcome of students’ academic progress will not be affected. AERA (2005) concluded,

What matters most is what teachers learn. Professional development should improve teachers’ knowledge of the subject matter that they are teaching, and it should enhance their understanding of student thinking in that subject matter. The time teachers spend in professional development makes a difference, only when the activities focus on high-quality subject-matter content. Aligning substantive training with the curriculum and teachers’ actual work experiences also is vital.

The time teachers spend in professional development makes a difference as well, but only when the activities focus on high-quality subject-matter content. Extended opportunities to better understand student learning, curriculum materials and instruction, and subject-matter content can boost the performance of both teachers and students. (p. 4)

Guskey and Yoon (2009) explained that considerable time that is well organized, structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content or pedagogy or both is a requirement for effective professional development.
The effectiveness of professional development is vital to school improvement. Desimone (2011) explained that an effective professional development includes: content focus, in which subject matter content and how students learn the content is the focus of professional development activities; active learning, which involved teachers being involved with observing and receiving feedback, analyzing student work, or making presentations; coherence, in which professional development activity is consistent with other professional development offered by the district; duration, in which 20 hours or more of professional development activities spread over a semester; and collective participation, which involves group teachers from the same grade, subject, or school participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community. Desimone stressed that a successful professional development enhances student learning when all teachers experience professional development, their knowledge and skills increase, they use it to improve the content of their instruction, and student learning improves because of their instructional changes. He explained the steps answers the following questions: (1) What teachers learn? (2) Do they change their practices? and (3) Does student achievement increase? AERA (2005) reported that research shows better instruction and improved student learning are results of professional development when it connects to the curriculum, state academic standards, and the assessment and accountability measures that evaluate their success.

The Finance Project and Public Education Network (2004) reported that while there has been much debate over the influence of professional development on student achievement, professional development that focuses on induction programs and support for new teachers was found to be the strongest link to student achievement. A correlation
between continuing professional development for teachers and a rise in student achievement was also found. The Finance Project and Public Education Network acknowledged that effective professional development gives teachers of all experience levels confidence to approach classroom challenges and access to a supportive professional community. In addition, The Finance Project and Public Education Network determined that “Great teachers produce high-achieving students” (p.16). The Finance Project and Public Education Network imparted the theory that professional development is an investment in the development of great teachers.

Extended Learning Times

According to Deich, Little, Morgan, Ford, and Stonehill (2009), the idea of extended learning time is nothing new. Deich et al. stated that adding more learning time to students’ days is one strategy that is now being embraced by policy-creators and community activists who are struggling to figure out methods to better prepare students for success. Gabrieli (2010) stated extended learning time as taken center stage since districts are being challenged by President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan to move beyond a school schedule and calendar developed for a farm and factory era. Gabrieli highlighted that increased learning time as one of the requirements for the Race to the Top competition. He explained that the U.S. Department of Education indicated extended learning time as a way to make significant improvements. Acceptable approaches for the use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for states, districts, and schools have been outlined by the United States Department of Education. The turnaround and transformational models, two of four models, require the use of increased learning time.
Altman (2010) reported that President Obama is in favor of extending the school day. He noted that when compared to other nations such as South Korea, England, Thailand, Israel, New Zealand, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, and Japan, the United States ranked at the bottom. According to Altman, President Obama wants to increase the school year from 180 days to 200 days and extend the school days as well. President Obama’s reason is that we can no longer afford an academic calendar designed for when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing the land at the end of each day because today it puts us at a competitive disadvantage. The increase in learning time has been identified by the Department of Education as a core innovation that schools should promote. However, research of the impact of extended learning time reveals mixed reviews.

Sack-Min (2007) reported that a new $6.5 million extended-learning time program in Massachusetts showed signs of increased learning. The program included increased core academics; enrichment programming, such as arts or music classes; individualized instruction; professional development and increased planning time for teachers. Only 10 schools in five districts participated in the program, and each was required to add two hours to the school day. Under the program guidelines, schools spent a year planning for the changes and reconfiguring their schedules, and then implemented their entire plan at the beginning of the next school year.

Pascopella (2007) examined a report by the Center for American Progress which concluded that an important component of successfully extended learning time in high schools is the concept of engaging students with interests beyond school. The Center for American Progress surveyed high school students and found that most prefer options that
give access to work experience and college credit. The report concluded that extended learning time can help raise student achievement and close the achievement gap.

On the contrary, Parker-Burgard (2009) reported that Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida started the School Improvement Zone, a three-year $100 million project designed to boost achievement in the district's lowest-performing school. However, the district did not improve very much for its investment. When compared to other schools in the district, schools in the School Improvement Zone scored lower than other schools with similar demographics in math, science, and reading. Parker-Burgard explained extending the school day and year were more problematic with reports of exhaustion and dropouts, and the feeling of punishment for proficient students rather than enhancement.

Pennington (2006) advocated for more systemic experimentation with extended learning time at the high school level. Pennington looked at high schools that implemented an extended learning day as required by an educational program. Pennington outlined several guiding principles on what might work best to improve student achievement through the design and implementation of extended learning time at the high school level. She recommended extending the learning time to focus on enabling academic progress and fostering youth development, engagement, creating transitions from middle to high school and from high school to the world, exposure to colleges, jobs, and community service.

Gabrieli (2010) found that individualizing instruction and putting the right teachers with the right students and focusing on the cognitive skills are the greatest opportunities offered by extended learning time. Gabrieli highlighted the most persuasive
evidence by Caroline Hoxby’s ongoing study of all New York City charter schools that demonstrate how extended learning time is driving academic gains. Hoxby analyzed 30 different design variables, such as curriculum, discipline approach, teacher pay, schedules at 42 schools, and found that increased learning time was correlated with academic success.

Gabrieli (2010) reported that the middle school level is the most compelling initial target for extending learning time because students deviate into one of the two groups. One group is well socialized to school and is on a strong path to high school graduation. The other group tends to be alienated from school and at-risk of dropping out. Expanded learning time and effective instruction ensure at-risk students keep up academically, participate in extracurricular activities, and develop the beliefs and behaviors consistent with success (Gabrieli, 2010).

Gabrieli (2010) discussed the need to have buy-in of extended learning time from all stakeholders including teachers, students, and parents. He furthers explained that teachers believe more time allows them to help struggling students, and it provides an opportunity to engage students in a wider variety of instructional approaches. On the other hand, students are skeptical when they hear about longer school days, especially older students. However, they adapt to the new schedule, are pleased with the new opportunities for enrichment and engagement, and take advantage of the additional time teachers are available to help them improve academically. Finally, most parents love the idea of extended learning time because they believe that it can help their children do better academically. It works better with parents’ work schedule and it saves parents money that would have been spent on out-of-school activities.
However, extended learning time should be closely monitored. Gabreli (2010) gave several crucial keys to a successful implementation of extended learning time such as allotting a large amount of extended learning time. A modest amount of time will not help achieve goals. He suggested to impact student achievement, an additional 300 hours are required. The additional time should be integrated into a wholly re-envisioned day. The extended learning time is to be allocated to a balanced program that allows students to learn and teachers to collaborate. In order to commit the whole school, the extended time should be required for all students. To ensure buy-in, a school-wide planning process should take place that includes faculty and the community examining the data to identify strengths and weakness. This creates a data-driven culture that contributes to long-term success. There must be a focus on strengthening core instruction, personalizing learning, providing enrichment opportunities, and promoting a professional learning community.

There are many arguments from proponents and opponents of extended learning time. However, Barnes (2009) simplified the argument by pointing out the pros and cons identified by case studies. Barnes implied that extended learning is a strategy now being considered by states and school districts nationwide to meet the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act. Barnes found some pros to extended learning time, such as educators can spend more time preparing for test and students can exchange the time that would have been spent attending an after-school program for time spent on studies; however, the cons seemingly outweigh the pros. Opponents of extended learning time argue that administrators worry about the cost; teacher associations insist their membership currently is fully engaged or overworked and will seek more pay and a renegotiation of
their contracts, and some parents insist that their children spend enough time in school and are concerned about its effect on school-sponsored extra-curricular activities and sports.

Barnes (2009) cited studies from the New York Times that found extended learning time to have a positive impact on students’ achievement at schools in Lowell, Massachusetts; Fall River, Massachusetts; and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Results of these studies led him to make recommendations concerning extending learning time. He recommended that school districts evaluate the costs and benefits of extending the school day, examine actual and hidden costs, funding options, sustainability, and pilot projects. The National Center for Time and Learning listed more time for students to complete tasks, teachers to delve more deeply into the subject matter, student engagement with project-based learning and elective courses, teacher-student interaction, and teacher planning and professional development as five potential benefits of extending school time.

Data Driven Decisions

Since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act, schools have become more active in collecting, analyzing and making data driven decisions. Wayman (2005) explained that the practical use of student data has drawn increased attention because of the No Child Left Behind accountability mandates. Data-driven educational decision making was defined by Means, Gallagher, and Padilla (2007) as a set of expectations and practices focused on the continuous examination of student data to determine the effectiveness of those programs and activities to allow refinement to improve outcomes for students. Bernhardt (2009) offered a similar definition describing data-driven decision
making as the “process of using data to inform decisions to improve teaching and learning” (p. 1). Both definitions include concise objectives and anticipated outcomes that are essential to the implementation of a successful school improvement plan. Extensive research exists that provides considerable evidence that data-driven decisions can result in higher student achievement.

The path to making significant gains in student achievement can be shaped by taking the proper steps. In 2003, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) reported that in order for schools to remain on a path of continuous school improvement, data should be used to make decisions regarding policies, programs and individual students. McREL suggested that school improvement efforts be tied to meaningful data collection and analysis. The use of data can help teachers and administrators identify areas that need improvement and get to the root cause of problems as well as allocate resources and communicate the school’s needs to stakeholders. McREL concluded that schools that rely on data rather than making decisions based upon gut feelings and educated guesses are able to sustain improvement.

The collection of data is a crucial step towards achieving school improvement goals; however, Downey, Steffy, Poston, and English (2008) stressed that goals for the use of data should be collected before data are collected. Ezarik (2002) recommended collecting data that linked to direct goals such as: developing a district plan for data driven culture; conducting an audit of data types, location, format and value in decision-making; determining what is needed; involving teachers; investing in professional development; and recognizing that tracking at-risk students now requires action later.
Guerra-López and Thomas (2011) concurred with the notion of goals-oriented data decision making. They stated that “The ideal decision-making scenario is to begin with a clear definition of the long-term results that stakeholders want to accomplish” (p. 42). Guerra-López and Thomas (2011) further elaborated by stating:

The starting point of any organizational endeavor is identifying and verifying the ultimate ends the organization wishes to accomplish. These ends are about results, accomplishments, products, outputs, outcomes, or consequences (rather than the processes, activities, or resources to be implemented and used). (p. 38)

This conceptual framework must be in place before any data of potential information value can be collected. Otherwise schools are likely to end up with a large amount of data with little or no information to aid in decision making. Resources are wasted on data that is not relevant, reliable, valid, and complete for decisions that need to be made (Guerra-López & Thomas, 2011).

Thornton and Perreault (2002) weighed in on teachers’ perception of collecting data for decision making purposes. They found that many educators believed that data collection was an unnecessary burden; data analysis was the principal’s responsibility, and data-based decision making was just another fad that would pass. According to Thornton and Perreault (2002), a remedy for educators’ unfavorable perceptions regarding the data driven decision making process is to engage staff members in a meaningful project in which the principal identifies and models the value of data-based decision making. To ensure success, the staff must feel ownership in the project and feel that it addresses important issues concerning students and the school (Thornton & Perreault, 2002).
Despite research-based recommendations on the appropriate use of data, many educators continue to misinterpret its appropriate use. Hess (2008) referred to this as the New Stupid concept. He stated that educators who do not understand what data can and cannot do pose a danger because they lack adequate knowledge to make an informed decision. He described the New Stupid as

1. Using Data in Half-Baked Ways - The key is not to retreat from data but to truly embrace the data by asking hard questions, considering organizational realities, and contemplating unintended consequences. Absent sensible restraint, it is not difficult to envision a raft of poor judgments governing staffing, operations, and instruction — all in the name of "data-driven decision making."

2. Translating Research Simplistically - The moral is that even policies or practices informed by rigorous research can prove ineffective if the translation is clumsy or ill considered. When it comes to "research-based practice," the most vexing problem may be the failure to recognize the limits of what even rigorous scientific research can tell us.

3. Giving Short Shrift to Management Data - School and district leaders have embraced student achievement data but have paid scant attention to collecting or using data that are more relevant to improving the performance of schools and school systems. (pp. 12-15)

Hess also outlined ways to avoid the “New Stupid”:

First, Educators should be wary of allowing data or research to substitute for good judgment. When presented with persuasive findings or promising new programs,
it is still vital to ask the simple questions: What are the presumed benefits of adopting this program or reform? What are the costs? How confident are we that the promised results are replicable? What contextual factors might complicate projections? Data-driven decision making does not simply require good data; it also requires good decisions.

Second, schools must actively seek out the kind of data they need as well as the achievement data external stakeholders need. The data most useful to parents and policymakers focus on how well students and schools are doing; this is the kind of data required by No Child Left Behind and collected by state accountability systems.

Third, we must understand the limitations of research as well as its uses. Especially when crafting policy, we should not expect research to dictate outcomes but should instead ensure that decisions are informed by the facts and insights that science can provide.

Finally, school systems should reward education leaders and administrators for pursuing more efficient ways to deliver services. (p. 16)

“Public schools are currently required to collect, file, and summarize various data that directly relate to the school operation and to the quality of education, and it does not appear as if this requirement will decrease in the foreseeable future” (Thornton & Perreault, 2002, p. 86). Wayman (2005) reported that

The use of data to inform educational decisions has recently drawn increased attention, spurred largely by accountability requirements set forth at the state and federal levels. A familiar example is the 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
legislation, which mandates a significant increase in the gathering, aggregation, and upward reporting of student-level data. NCLB policy carries an implicit assumption that the availability of data will inform and initiate changes in teaching practice, but mechanisms for helping educators turn accountability data into actionable information are lacking in NCLB. Thus, although the NCLB legislation has provided much-needed stimulus for the gathering and presentation of student data at the school and district levels, it remains necessary to move beyond reporting mandates to provide teachers with the access and support needed to use these data in improving instruction. (p. 295)

Thornton and Perreault (2002) pointed out that principals are under increasing pressure to improve student achievement, and data-based decision making is at the top of every educator’s agenda because of high-stakes testing and standards-based funding. Lou (2008) asserted that the need for states and districts to create a policy structure to support and encourage data-driven decision making resulted in data-driven decision making becoming an emerging field of practice for school leadership and a central focus of education policy and practice. Thornton and Perreault identified (a) providing students with accurate and timely feedback, (b) documenting improvements in instruction, (c) measuring the success or failure of specific programs, (d) guiding curriculum development, and (e) promoting accountability as some of the benefits of a data-based approach to school leadership. An authoritative base for leadership teams, a means of continuous school improvement, and a solid foundation for effective transformation can be provided by reliable and valid data (Thornton & Perreault, 2002). When teachers work
as a team to analyze data and make decision, it serves as an avenue for principals to promote autonomy and freedom for teachers (Thornton & Perreault, 2002).

When data driven decisions are made, student achievement increases dramatically. Bernhardt (2009) pointed to Marylin Avenue Elementary School as a good example of what can result when schools make sound data driven decisions. After the school leadership team attended an institute that taught educators how to employ data-driven decision making, the team returned home and began working. After one year, the school made huge gains in student achievement at each grade level, every subject, and with every group. The school leadership team contributed their success to the following:

1. Reviewing all of the school’s data,
2. Using a self assessment tool,
3. Developing a vision,
4. Identifying causes that contributed to the unfavorable results,
5. Engaging in professional learning opportunities,
6. Using common assessments,
7. Establishing and enforcing collaborative teams and meeting times, and
8. Creating a school portfolio that stores their data, vision, and plan. (pp. 2-3)

Despite success with school leadership teams, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (2003) discouraged school leadership teams from serving as the data team due to the complexity of the process of collecting and using data to make decisions. However, Love (2002) recommended that at least one member of the leadership team serve as a liaison for the data team in order to establish and maintain communication and collaboration between the groups. Love concluded that the primary
role of the school leadership team in data-driven decision making is to help maintain a climate of trust and respect to ensure that potentially difficult or sensitive discussions about data are productive.

Leithwood and Riehl (as cited in Park & Datnow, 2009) explained the importance of district and school level administrators working together to develop teachers’ capacity for data-driven decision-making with ongoing professional development. In data-driven school districts, superintendents work side by side with other administrators, teachers, principals and parents to ensure all children achieve (AASA, 2002). Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (2003) identified and discussed three key elements of an effective school data program:

1. Purposeful Data Collection and Analysis - When data collection and analysis are purposeful, educators are better able to identify patterns of outcomes and design strategies to enhance student learning. Purposeful data collection and analysis efforts focus on answering questions that is tied to identified needs and goals, as illustrated in the sidebar. Focusing on identified needs and goals — in the school improvement plan, for example — makes the best use of time and other resources. It also increases the likelihood that teachers will use data to inform decision making and that stakeholders will receive useful information about the school.

2. Resources and Supports - In order for data to be collected and used effectively to enhance student learning, a number of supports need to be in place. One important support is a data team. Working as a team builds a sense of community that provides support for improvement over the long run. Also,
distributing the work across team members lightens the burden on any one person and ensures that if a member leaves, the team continues to function. In addition, a team is likely to view data from multiple perspectives, which increases the probability that interpretation of data will be less biased and more complete. Another necessary support for effective data-driven decision making is access to the right tools — data collection and analysis software, access to the Internet and e-mail, and access to practical guides and references. A technology infrastructure, including professional development for users and equipment maintenance, supports the sustainability of improvements by aiding data use over the long term.

3. Communication - Communicating both the purpose and results of data analysis to all stakeholders is critical for schools that want to sustain improvement efforts. This communication must occur throughout the school year, not just when the school or district’s annual report card is released. Further, schools should think carefully about whether information should be disseminated without conversation or whether opportunities also should be available to talk about results, patterns, possible interpretations, and likely next steps. According to Love, 2002 allowing time for stakeholders to dialogue about the results of data analysis is worth the effort because it leads to sounder strategies and policies and greater understanding and support at all levels. (p. 1)

Researchers have overwhelmingly concurred that data-driven decision making plays a pivotal role in schools. Data use is central to the school improvement process
Collecting, analyzing, and putting it into good use are only a few ways for it to be effective. Data-driven decision making does not simply require good data; it also requires good decisions (Hess, 2008). Kowalski, Thomas, and Mahoney (2008) identified three essential dimensions of data-driven decision-making:

1. Data - accurate, organized, and accessible facts and related evidence stored in a data warehouse.

2. Technology – information technology and a database management information system allowing data to be accessed and reformulated as needed

3. User competency - technology literacy, information literacy, decision skills, and assessment and evaluation skills essential to transform data into information. (p.187)

Thornton and Perreault (2002) asserted that placing emphasis on the usefulness of data, in addition to principals empowering and coaching teachers, delegating authority and fostering teachers’ professional growth transform the school culture and positively affect the lives of students and the community.

Summary

The overwhelming decline of student achievement in schools across the country has led to the emergence of school improvement programs focused on systemic change. The urgency to address the needs of failing schools eventually garnered support from stakeholders at state and federal levels in the form of School Improvement Grants. Aladjem el at. (2010) report that one of the primary goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, is to improve persistently low-performing schools. According to statistics
from Aladjem et al. (2010), 13,457 schools across the nation failed to make adequate yearly progress in 2007–08. Finding ways to improve underachieving schools became the premise for a plethora of research. Countless studies have resulted in varying implications that have formed the framework for school improvement. In-depth studies on school improvement have enabled researchers to identify components that must be present in order for schools to experience success. Although highly debated, many researchers ranked professional learning communities and professional development, extended learning time, increased parental involvement, data-driven decisions, and effective school leadership as key components that significantly influence the school improvement process. This study will further explore those components and their effect on school improvement and contribute additional research on school improvement.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the design and methodology for this study. Included in this chapter are (a) research design, (b) participants, (c) instrumentation (d) procedures, (f) limitations, and (g) data analysis.

Research Design

Quantitative research methods were used for this study. According to Creswell (2005), quantitative research conducts an inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner. This type of research utilizes numerical data in a formal, objective, and systematic process to obtain information about the world. Creswell further contends that quantitative research asks specific narrow questions, collects numeric data from participants, and analyzes the numbers using statistics.

The quantitative data for this study was collected via the SIG Survey, designed to analyze perceptions of administrators and teachers of the key components of SIG. Those factors were categorized into five constructs. The responses were quantified using SPSS for Windows version 20.0.

Participants

The participants for this study were drawn exclusively from the eighteen SIG schools that received the School Improvement Grant in Mississippi. All of the teachers and administrators at each school were invited to participate in the study. A total of ninety-seven educators participated in the study, 22 administrators and 75 teachers.
First, a letter (Appendix A) was sent to the superintendents of each school district requesting permission for the survey to be administered at the SIG School. After receipt of permission from the school district, the proposed study was submitted to the University of Southern Mississippi Review Board to ensure that the proposed procedures complied with the protection of human subjects’ safeguards and permission was granted (Appendix B).

Instrumentation

The questions on the survey instrument (Appendix C) were created by the researcher. When developing the survey instruments, the researcher, in addition to reviewing the literature, worked with the Mississippi Department of Education Office of School Recovery and educators at the SIG schools to decide which variables to measure in this study and how to design the questionnaire to ensure the survey questions were accurately measuring the variables. The completed instrument consisted of 31 items, five collected status and demographic data and 26 collected data (using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) measuring administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions of effective school leadership, parental involvement, professional learning community and development, extending learning times, and data driven decisions.

A pilot study was conducted with a group of twelve participants from one of the SIG schools. Permission was granted from the Superintendent of Education to conduct the study. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine whether the directions, questions, and answer choices were understandable to the pilot study participants. The pilot study participants was asked to read the directions, questions, and answer choices
very carefully, and write down any concerns they had regarding the wording, spelling, clarity, or any other issues which inhibited their understanding of the questionnaire.

The data collected from the pilot study was entered into a SPSS data file to calculate the reliability of the survey instrument. The validity of the instrument was established by using written responses and oral comments as well. Reliability was established by calculating the alpha reliability using the Cronbach’s alpha approach. The Cronbach’s alpha was .886 for effective school leadership (question 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14), .724 for parental involvement (questions 15, 16, 17, and 18), .870 for professional learning community and professional development (questions 19, 20, 21, and 22), .710 for extended learning time (questions 23, 24, 25, and 26), and .923 for data driven decisions (questions 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31). Since all of the internal reliability statistics were greater than .70, the instrument was considered to produce reliable scores.

For the purposes of this study, a data file containing the following information for each participant was created in SPSS: position, gender, age, ethnicity, years of educational work experience, and perceptions of professional learning community, extended learning time, parental involvement, effective school leadership, and data driven decision.

Procedures

Permission was granted from five Superintendents of Education to conduct the study. The SIG Survey instructions and cover letters were emailed to the principal or assistant principal at each school to invite all teachers and administrators to participate in the online survey. Surveys were completed using K-12 Insight, an online program. The
SIG Survey instrument consisted of a Likert type survey format with choices of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS 20.0 for Windows. Independent variables in this research study were administrators and teachers. The dependent variable was their perceptions. The sample consisted of ninety-seven educators, 22 administrators and 75 teachers from five SIG schools in Mississippi.

The responses were collected from the surveys and entered into SPSS. Data was analyzed using independent samples t-tests. The .05 level of significance was used.

Summary

This chapter included an overview, research design, participants, instrumentation, procedures, limitations, and data analysis. The methods that will be used to conduct this study have been provided in Chapter III. The results of the study will be presented in Chapter IV. The findings, implications, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings along with an analysis of the findings gathered from the SIG Survey. This survey was administered to administrators and teachers at the SIG schools. The sample was drawn exclusively from four school districts. The findings are organized as follows: (a) demographic information; (b) frequency charts in accordance with responses to research questions; and (c) independent sample t-test analysis in response to the established hypotheses. The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the differences, if any, between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of key components of the School Improvement Grant.

Utilizing the K-12 Insight web-based survey, the resulting quantitative data were used to answer the five research questions and five hypotheses that guided this study:

1. What are administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader?

2. What are administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the impact of parental involvement?

3. What are administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement?

4. What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of extended learning time on student achievement?
5. What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement?

H1: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader.

H2: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the impact of parental involvement?

H3: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement.

H4: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of extended learning time on student achievement.

H5: There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement.

Statistical analysis of the quantitative data was completed through a series of independent samples t-test using the SPSS, version 20.0. The independent samples t-tests were used because the study investigated administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions. All tests were performed at the confidence interval level of .05.

Data Analysis

A web-based survey, the SIG survey, was e-mailed to principals at the five Mississippi schools who were recipients of the grant. The survey consisted of 31 questions divided into six subgroups: (a) demographic information about participants; (b)
perceptions of effective school leadership; (c) parental involvement in schools; (d) professional learning communities and professional development; (e) extended learning time; and (f) data driven decisions.

The SIG survey was available online for administrators and teachers to complete during the spring of the 2011-2012 academic school year. A total of 97 participants out of the 150 target population responded to the survey, yielding a 64.7% response rate. Of the 97 respondents, approximately 22.7% were administrators, 77.3% were teachers. Table 1 presents the position of the participants.

Table 1

*Position of Participants*

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Table 2 presents gender of participants. Males account 31.8% of administrators and 42.7% of teachers. Females account 68.2% of administrators and 57.3% of teachers.

Table 2

*Gender of Participants*

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</tbody>
</table>

The age of participants for administrators varied per group. As presented in Table 3, only 4.5% of the administrators are in their 20s. Administrators in their 30s and 40s both represented 27.3% each. Respectively, 31.8% of the administrators were in their 50s, and 9.1 percents were 60 or more. Teachers in their 20s accounted for 24% of the group. 34.6% were in their 30s, 21.3% in the 40s, 16% in their 50s, and only 4.1% were 60 or older.

Table 3

Age of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60s or older</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 77.3% of the administrators in the study were African American and 22.7% were Caucasian. For teachers, 68% of the teachers were African American and 28% were Caucasian. Asian and Pacific Islander make up 1.3% of the teachers, and 2.7% identified themselves as Other. Table 4 presents the information on ethnicity of participants.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the participants had numerous years of experience as an educator. As presented in Table 5, a total of 22.7% of the administrators had been an educator for 4-10 years. A total of 31.8% had been an educator for 11-20 years. Additionally, 44.5% had been an educator for 21 or more years. For teachers, a total of 30.7% of participants had only been an educator for 0-3 years. A total of 34.7% of the teachers had been an educator of 4-10 years. Additionally, 24% of the teachers had been an educator for 11-20 years, and only 10.6% of the teachers had 21 or more years as an educator.
Table 5

*Years of Experience as an Educator*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Range</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 or more</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining portion of the survey focused on surveying respondents on their perceptions of an effective school leader, parental involvement, professional learning community and professional development on student achievement, the effects of extended learning time on student achievement, and the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement. To analyze the responses of participants, frequency charts were created based on the five categories. According to Field (2009), a frequency distribution is an indicator used to show how often responses occur among participants.

Research Question 1: What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader? In order to evaluate perceptions, administrators and teachers responded to survey questions 6-14. Tables 6-14 indicate the frequencies for the categories of an effective school leader. Through the review of literature, it is evident that effective school leadership has an impact on the performance outcomes of schools.
The data from this research is further proven by the administrators’ and teachers’ responses to this category of questions.

As presented in Table 6, a total of 98% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that effective school leaders must have a thorough understanding of the curriculum and effective instructional practices. While only 4.5% of administrators took a neutral stance, and 1.3% of teachers disagreed on this survey item.

Table 6

*School Leaders must have a thorough Understanding of Curriculum and Effective Instructional Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 6</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 7, a total of 99% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that in order to be effective, school leaders must engage the faculty in continuous school improvement. While only 1% of teachers took a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.
Table 7

*Effective School Leaders Engage the Faculty in Continuous School Improvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 8, a total of 98% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that in order to be effective, school leaders promote ongoing professional development. While only 1% of teachers took a neutral stance, and another 1% of teachers strongly disagreed with this item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.

Table 8

*Effective School Leaders Promote Ongoing Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 8</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 8</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 9, a total of 97.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that in order to be effective, school leaders must have exceptional communication and interpersonal skills. While only 2.1% of participants took a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.

Table 9

*Effective School Leaders have Exceptional Communication and Interpersonal Skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 9</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 9</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 10, a total of 95.5% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that in order to be effective, school leaders must possess high energy and a relentlessly positive nature. While only 5.2% of participants took a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.

Table 10

*Effective School Leaders Possess High Energy and a Relentlessly Positive Nature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 10</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 11, a total of 95.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that in order to be effective, school leaders clearly
communicate the school’s vision and mission to all stakeholders. While only 4.1% of participants took a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.

Table 11

*Effective School Leaders Communicate the School’s Vision and Mission to all Stakeholders*

| Question 11 | Administrator | | Teacher | | Both |
|-------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|
|             | Frequency | %   | Frequency | %   | Frequency | %   |
| Strongly Agree | 19  | 86.4 | 57  | 76.0 | 76  | 78.4 |
| Agree        | 2   | 9.1  | 15  | 20.0 | 17  | 17.5 |
| Neutral      | 1   | 4.5  | 3   | 4.0  | 4   | 4.1  |
| Disagree     | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    |
| Total        | 22  | 100  | 75  | 100  | 97  | 100.0 |

As presented in Table 12, a total of 95.8% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree that in order to be effective, school leaders must inspire teachers to go beyond expectations. While only 4% of teachers took a neutral stance, 1.3% disagreed with this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.
Table 12

*Effective School Leaders Inspire Teachers to go Beyond Expectations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 12</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 13, a total of 97.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that in order to be effective, school leaders must be accessible. While only 2.7% of teachers taking a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.

Table 13

*Effective School Leaders are Accessible*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 13</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As presented in Table 14, a total of 95.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agreed with the notion that in order to be effective, school leaders must be highly visible – in the hallway, in the classroom, and in the lunchroom. While only 4% of teachers taking a neutral stance and 1.3% of teacher disagreed with this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of being an effective school leader.

Table 14

*Effective School Leaders are Highly Visible*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 14</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</table>
Table 14 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 14</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the impact of parental involvement? In order to evaluate this impact, administrators and teachers responded to survey questions 15-18. Tables 15-18 indicate the frequencies for the categories of Parental Involvement in Schools. Through the review of literature, it is evident that parental involvement has an impact on the performance outcomes of schools. The data from this research is further proven by the administrators’ and teachers’ responses to this category of questions.

As presented in Table 15, a total of 84.5% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. While only 17.3% of teachers taking a neutral stance on this survey item, and 2.1% disagreed of both groups disagreeing with it. However, it is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of parental involvement.
Table 15

Contacting Parents Weekly Builds a Positive Relationship with Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 15</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 16, a total of 88.7% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. While only 9.3% of teachers taking a neutral stance on this survey item, and 1.3% of teachers disagreed with question 16. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important outcome of parental involvement.

Table 16

Students Show Improvement when Parents are Involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 16</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 16</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 17, a total of 96.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. Only 4% of teachers took a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important outcome of parent involvement.

Table 17

*Parental Involvement in Schools has a Positive Impact on School Improvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 17</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 17</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 18, a total of 90.8% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. While only 5.3% of teachers taking a neutral stance on this survey item, a combined 5.1% disagreed with question 18. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of parental involvement.

Table 18

*Schools should Involve Parents in the Decision-making Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 18</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3: What are administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community (PLC) and professional development (PD)
on student achievement? In order to evaluate this impact, administrators and teachers responded to survey questions 19-22. Tables 19-22 indicate the frequencies for the categories of Professional Learning Communities and Professional Development.

Through the review of literature, it is evident that professional learning communities and professional development has an impact on the performance outcomes of schools. The data from this research is further proven by the administrators and teachers’ responses to this category of questions.

As presented in Table 19, a total of 99% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. While only 1.4% of teachers taking a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of professional learning community and professional development.

Table 19

*A Professional Learning Community Allows Educators to Collaborate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 19</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As presented in Table 20, a total of 95.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. While only 5.3% of teachers taking a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of professional learning community and professional development.

Table 20

*A PLC Improves Teaching Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 20</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 21, a total of 90.8% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. A total of 10.7% of teachers took a neutral stance on this survey item, and 1.3% disagreed with question 21. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of professional learning community (PLC) and professional development (PD).
Table 21

**A PLC and PD Increase Teachers’ Ability to Prepare Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 21</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 22, a total of 96.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that a professional learning community and professional development allows educators to collaborate. Only 3.1% of participants took a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of professional learning community and professional development.

Table 22

**PLCs and PDs should be Evaluated to Determine its Impact on Teaching and Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 22</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>26</td>
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</table>
Table 22 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4: What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of extended learning time (ELT) on student achievement? In order to evaluate this impact, administrators and teachers responded to survey questions 23-26. Tables 23-26 indicate the frequencies for the categories of Extended Learning Time. Through the review of literature, it is evident that extended learning time has a positive impact on the performance outcomes of schools. The data from this research is further proven by the administrators’ and teachers’ responses to this category of questions.

As presented in Table 23, 51.6% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that extended learning time positively impacts student achievement. While 23.7% of participants taking a neutral stance on this survey item, 24.7% disagreed. It is evident that both groups do not share the same perception. Administrators had a much higher perception than teachers.
Table 23

*ELT Positively Impacts Student Achievement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 23</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 24, a total of 97.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that extended learning time must be structured and utilized effectively. Only 2.7% of teachers took a neutral stance on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this item as an important factor of ensuring the effectiveness of extended learning time.

Table 24

*ELT must be Structured and Utilized Effectively*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 24</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 24 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 25, a total of 40.2% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that extended learning time is valued by students. While 15.51% of participants took a neutral stance, and 43.3% of the participants disagreed with this survey item. Administrators had a higher perception than teachers. However, teachers have more interactions with students. Therefore, their perception may be more accurate.

Table 25

*Students Value the ELT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 25</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9.1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As presented in Table 24, 100% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agreed with the notion that the goal of extended learning time must be communicated to students and parents. It is evident that both groups perceive this as important.

Table 26

*The Goal of ELT must be Communicated to Students and Parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 26</th>
<th>Administrator Frequency</th>
<th>Administrator %</th>
<th>Teacher Frequency</th>
<th>Teacher %</th>
<th>Both Frequency</th>
<th>Both %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>90.9</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79.4</td>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>9.1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>97</td>
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</table>

Research Question 5: What are the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement? In order to evaluate this, administrators and teachers responded to survey questions 27-31. Tables 27-31 indicate...
the frequencies for the categories of Data Driven Decisions. Through the review of literature, it is evident that data driven decisions have an impact on the performance outcomes of schools. The data from this research is further proven by the administrators’ and teachers’ responses to this category of questions.

As presented in Table 27, a total of 96.9% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that assessment data should be shared with parents and students. While only 2.1% of participants took a neutral stance, and 1.3% of teachers disagreed on this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important factor of data driven decisions.

Table 27

Assessment Data should be Shared with Parents and Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 27</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 28, 87.7% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree that data should be used to make school-wide decisions. While 10.3% of
participants took a neutral stance, 2.6% of teachers disagreed with this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive data should be used to make school-wide decisions.

Table 28

*Data should be Used to Make School-wide Decisions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 28</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 29, a total of 84.5% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that data driven decisions increase student achievement. Only 10.3% of participants took a neutral stance and 6.7% of teachers disagreed with this survey item. It is evident that both have high perceptions.

Table 29

*Data-driven Decisions Increase Student Achievement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 29</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>91.0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 29 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 30, a total of 84.6% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that data driven decisions impact the overall school improvement. Only 10.3% of participants took a neutral stance and 6.6% of teachers disagreed with this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important outcome of making data driven decisions.

Table 30

Data-driven Decisions Impact the Overall School Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 30</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>95.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As presented in Table 31, a total of 91.8% of the surveyed administrators and teachers agree with the notion that the use of data helps teachers refocus attention to skills deficits displayed. Only 6.2% of participants took a neutral stance and 2.6% of teachers disagreed with this survey item. It is evident that both groups perceive this as an important outcome of using data.

Table 31

*The Use of Data Helps Teachers Refocus Attention to Skills Deficit Displayed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 31</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>95.5</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Null Hypothesis One

There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader. Questions 6 through 14 on the SIG Survey were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The responses for each of these questions ranged from 5 to 1 (5 as strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree) with a mean of 4.85 and a standard deviation of .33 for administrators, and a mean of 4.48 and a standard deviation of .51 for teachers. An independent sample test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader. As reported in table 32, the results indicate a statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(95) = 3.23, p = .002$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Administrators had a higher perception than teachers.

Table 32

Independent Sample t Test Comparing Administrators and Teachers Perceptions of Effective School Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Null Hypothesis Two

There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the impact of parental involvement. Questions 15 through 18 on
the SIG Survey were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The responses for each of these questions ranged from 5 to 1 (5 as strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree) with a mean of 4.81 and a standard deviation of .36 for administrators, and a mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of .44 for teachers. An independent sample test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the impact of parental involvement. As reported in table 33, the results indicate no statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers \( (t(95) = 1.04, p = .30) \). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 33

*Independent Sample t Test Comparing Administrators and Teachers’ Perceptions of Impact of Parental Involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Null Hypothesis Three*

There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement. Questions 19 through 22 on the SIG Survey were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The responses for each of these questions ranged from 5 to 1
(5 as strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree) with a mean of 4.78 and a standard deviation of .36 for administrators, and a mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of .56 for teachers. An independent sample test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement. As reported in table 34, the results indicate a statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(95) = 2.732, p = .008$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Administrators had a higher perception than teachers.

Table 34

*Independent Sample t Test Comparing Administrators and Teachers’ Perceptions of the Effects of a PLC and PD on Student Achievement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>2.732</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Null Hypothesis Four*

There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of extended learning time on student achievement.

Questions 23 through 26 on the SIG Survey were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The responses for each of these questions ranged from 5 to 1 (5 as strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree) with a mean of 4.85 and a standard deviation of .32 for
administrators, and a mean of 4.70 and a standard deviation of .39 for teachers. An independent sample test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between administrators and teachers perceptions of the effects of extended learning time on student achievement. As reported in table 35, the results indicate no statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(95) = 1.74, p = .085$). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 35

**Independent Sample t Test Comparing Administrators and Teachers Perceptions of the Effects of ELT on Student Achievement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Null Hypothesis Five**

There is no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement. Questions 27 through 31 on the SIG Survey were used to determine the presence of a statistical difference between administrators and teachers. The responses for each of these questions ranged from 5 to 1 (5 as strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree) with a mean of 4.88 and a standard deviation of .39 for administrators, and a mean of 4.37 and a standard deviation of .74 for teachers. An independent sample test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of
making data-driven decisions on student achievement. As reported in table 36, the results indicate a statistically significant difference at the .05 level between administrators and teachers ($t(95) = 3.141, p = .002$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Administrators had a higher perception than teachers.

Table 36

*Independent Sample t Test Comparing Administrators and Teachers Perceptions of the Effects of Making Data-driven Decision on Student Achievement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>3.141</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The data gathered from this study used quantitative analysis to determine the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of key components of the School Improvement Grant. The data presented in this chapter revealed that administrators and teachers understand the importance of key components of the School Improvement Grant. However, the majority of the administrators and teachers noted that no one single measure should be used to determine the quality of students or schools. These findings magnify the research in the area of school improvement, and they provide opportunities for additional exploration.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the study, and the findings from this research study as identified in Chapter IV. This chapter begins with a summary of the research study, followed by its conclusion and discussion. The researcher also presents limitations from the study and proposes recommendations for policy and practice and recommendations for further research.

Summary

This research produced a wealth of information regarding how administrators and teachers perceive key components of the School Improvement Grant. The key components include: effective school leadership, professional learning community and professional development, parental involvement, extended learning time, and data driven decisions.

Being able to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding key components of SIG was beneficial. This research study has contributed to the field of education by providing insight from educators for the purpose of using research-based strategies to turnaround persistently low-performing schools. Lawmakers, educators, parents, students, and communities have additional research to help determine if SIG has a significant impact of increasing student achievement. Now, lawmakers are able to make informed decisions on whether or not to continue to provide additional funding and resources to persistently low-performing schools. Additionally, educators are able to use this study to determine whether or not key components of the grant led to higher student achievement. This study will greatly influence the field of education by enabling
educators to refer to research-based strategies in order to transform low-performing schools. The participants’ responses coincided with concepts revealed in the review of literature.

This study sought administrators and teachers’ perceptions of key components of the School Improvement Grant. It explored whether or not administrators and teachers believe the SIG’s key components have a positive impact on school improvement. The data was collected using the SIG Survey, a 31 item questionnaire that used a Likert scale to assess participants’ perceptions of key components of SIG.

Conclusions and Discussion

The majority of the findings were conclusive with the current research noted in the review of literature. However, some distinct discoveries were made regarding administrators and teachers’ perceptions. One area that produced a significant difference based on statistical analysis was the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of an effective school leader. Although both groups have high perceptions, administrators’ perceptions were much higher than teachers. The role of school leaders has increased tremendously since the inception of a new era of accountability and the passage of NCLB. School leaders serve in many roles such as visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives (Davis et al., 2005). Effective school leaders have a significant impact on the outcome of student performance.
Another area that produced a significant difference based on statistical analysis was the administrators and teachers’ perceptions of the effects of a professional learning community and professional development on student achievement. Both groups had high perceptions, but administrators’ perceptions were much higher than teachers. Despite the differences in the level of perceptions, both groups seem to concur with researchers, Stoll et al. (2006) that teachers have a greater confidence in knowing the newly acquired information will lead to higher student achievement. Administrators and teachers agree with Desimone (2011) that professional development is one of the keys to improving the quality of schools.

The last hypothesis that produced a significant difference based on statistical analysis was the perceptions of administrators and teachers on the effects of making data-driven decisions on student achievement. For this hypothesis, administrators also had higher perceptions than teachers. However, both groups had high perceptions on the effects of data driven decisions. Accountability has been the focal point of education since the inception of NCLB. NCLB had pushed educators to making data driven decision because they impact the outcome of student performance. Thornton and Perreault (2002) found that many educators believed that data collection was an unnecessary burden; data analysis was the principal’s responsibility; and data-based decision making was just another fad that would pass. They suggest inspiration ownership among teachers; principals should engage staff members in meaningful projects to model the value of data-based decision making.

Based on this study, research shows that most administrators and teachers believe key components of the School Improvement Grant can significantly improve student
achievement, and they understand the need to work harder to achieve expectations. It must also be noted that both groups had high perceptions. Administrators’ perceptions were higher than teachers possibly because of the increased accountability placed on school leaders. To ensure teachers understand the importance of implementing the key components identified as key to improving schools, administrators should involve teachers in the decision-making process and use professional development opportunities to discuss the School Improvement Grant.

Limitations

Participants included only administrators and teachers from five of the eighteen SIG schools. Additionally, participants in this study were exclusively from Mississippi, and the findings may not be indicative of administrators and teachers’ perceptions of key components of SIG in other states or even in Mississippi. Also, perceptions of the key components that may be used in schools who are not identified as a SIG school were not participants in the study.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, there are several recommendations to be made to education policy makers, legislators, the State Department of Education, school districts, and administrators.

1. State and federal legislators should consider fully funding education and/or providing additional funding and resources to persistently low performing schools. Administrators and teachers’ perceptions in the SIG schools are the only testimony of the impact of the School Improvement Grant, which began in 2011.
2. Legislators should evaluate their roles of ensuring schools are adequately funded and supported. After their evaluations, other stakeholders that share a vested interest in the process of educating children can develop systems that work for their unique situations.

3. Educators should consider using some of the key components of SIG to improve their underperforming schools.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, there are several different avenues that can be taken to further explore the impact of the School Improvement Grant.

1. Replication of this study in another state could be beneficial. This avenue for research could be used to compare results from one state to another.

2. Another way that this study could be replicated is by analyzing the results of standardized assessments. This would determine whether or not the key components are really improving student achievement and not what individuals think works or does not work. The findings from such research could aid lawmakers, educators, and other stakeholders in determining what impact, if any, SIG had made on improving student achievement.
March 22, 2012

Superintendent
XXX School District
XXX, MS XXXXX

Dear Superintendent,

I am in the process of completing requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Educational Leadership at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. One of the requirements for this degree is that of conducting research. The title of my dissertation is Administrators and Teachers’ Perceptions of Key Components of the School Improvement Grant.

To complete this task, I would like to include XXX High School’s principals, assistant principals and teachers in this study. With your permission, I will send the instrument via email. All responses will be kept strictly confidential.

I am requesting your permission to include your school district in this process. With your consent, I would need to contact the principals at both schools to provide specific instructions for emailing of the instrument.

Please enable me to conduct this research by giving me permission to include your school district in this research. I will need a letter to include as an attachment in my dissertation giving me permission to conduct the research. You may indicate your response via email. My email address is smithwill04@aim.com.

Educationally yours,

Willis A. Smith
Doctoral Student
APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #3147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 12042603
PROJECT TITLE: Administrators’ and Teachers’ Perceptions of Key Components of the School Improvement Grant
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
RESEARCHER/S: Willis A. Smith
COLLEGE/DIVISION: Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 05/01/2012 to 04/30/2013

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
APPENDIX C

PERCEPTIONS OF KEY COMPONENTS OF SIG
SIG SURVEY

PART I. Demographic Information
The information in this section will be used to make comparisons by demographic groups.

1. Position  ______ Administrator  ______ Teacher

2. Gender  ______ Male  ______ Female

3. Age  ______ 20s  ______ 30s  ______ 40s  ______ 50s  ______ 60s & older

4. Ethnicity  ______ African American  ______ White  ______ Hispanic  ______ Asian/Pacific Islander  ______ Native American  ______ Other

5. Years of Educational Work Experience
   ______ 0-3  ______ 4-10  ______ 11-20  ______ 21 or more

Instructions: For each question below, check one of the following categories for the answer of your choice: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree.

PART II. Effective School Leadership

6. Effective school leaders must have a thorough understanding of the curriculum and effective instructional practices.
   _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree

7. Effective school leaders engage the faculty in continuous school improvement.
   _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree

8. Effective school leaders promote ongoing professional development.
   _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree

9. Effective school leaders have exceptional communication and interpersonal skills.
   _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree

10. Effective school leaders possess high energy and a relentlessly positive nature.
    _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree

11. Effective school leaders clearly communicate the school’s vision and mission to all stakeholders.
    _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree

12. Effective school leaders inspire teachers to go beyond expectations.
    _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree

13. Effective school leaders are accessible.
    _____ Strongly Agree  _____ Agree  _____ Neutral  _____ Disagree  _____ Strongly Disagree
14. Effective school leaders are highly visible – in the hallway, in the classroom, in the lunchroom.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

PART III. Parental Involvement in Schools

15. Contacting parents weekly builds a positive relationship with teachers.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

16. Students show improvement when parents are involved.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

17. Parental involvement in schools has a positive impact on school improvement.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

18. Schools should create an avenue for parents to be actively involved in the decision-making process.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

PART IV. Professional Learning Communities and Professional Development

19. A professional learning community with job-embedded professional development allows educators to collaborate.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

20. A professional learning community with job-embedded professional development helps teachers improve their teaching practice.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

21. A professional learning community with job-embedded professional development increases teachers’ ability to prepare students to meet challenging state academic standards.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

22. A professional learning community with job-embedded professional development should be evaluated to determine its impact on teaching and learning.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

PART V. Extended Learning Time

23. Extended learning time positively impacts student achievement.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

24. Extended learning time must be structured and utilized effectively.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

25. Students value the extended learning time.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

26. The goal of extended learning time must be communicated to students and parents.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree
PART VI. Data Driven Decision

27. Assessment data should be shared with students and students.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

28. Data should be used to make school-wide decisions.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

29. Data driven decisions increase student achievement.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

30. Data driven decisions impact the overall school improvement.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree

31. The use of data helps teachers refocus attention to skills deficit displayed.
   _____Strongly Agree _____ Agree _____Neutral _____Disagree _____Strongly Disagree
REFERENCES


Barnes, Mike. (2009). Longer school day or extended school calendar. Educational Leadership, 68(2), 11-12.


Broad, K. (2003). Constructing the renovation: By making the curricular reform initiatives "local," schools can increase commitment and make sense of the reform "on the ground." *Orbit, 33*(4).


