12-2010

The Relationship Between Leader Decision Making and Student Achievement at K-3 Title I and Reading First Elementary Schools

Emily Kathleen Richmond
University of Southern Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations

Part of the Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons

Recommended Citation
Richmond, Emily Kathleen, "The Relationship Between Leader Decision Making and Student Achievement at K-3 Title I and Reading First Elementary Schools" (2010). Dissertations. 456.
https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations/456

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact Joshua.Cromwell@usm.edu.
The University of Southern Mississippi

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADER DECISION MAKING AND
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AT K-3 TITLE I AND
READING FIRST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

Emily Kathleen Richmond

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 2010
ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADER DECISION MAKING AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AT K-3 TITLE I AND READING FIRST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by Emily Kathleen Richmond

December 2010

This mixed methodology study investigated the relationship between administrator and teacher perceptions of leader decision making regarding five variables (reading training, reading curriculum, program evaluation, financial support, and student assessment) and student achievement (in the single content area, reading, at the 3rd grade level) in Title I K-3 schools receiving Reading First Grants (RFGs) and Title I K-3 schools not receiving RFGs, in four states (Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, and Oklahoma). Respondent data and district data regarding percentages of students achieving proficient and above on state third grade reading assessments were analyzed via Pearson Correlations, Multiple Regression Analysis, and a MANOVA. For teachers from RFG and non-RFG schools, all decision scales were found to be significantly correlated with each other, but not with reported percentages of third grade students at or above proficient in reading, as reported on the annual report card the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) required of each state. For administrators, most decision making variables were found to be significantly correlated with each other, and curriculum was found to be significantly correlated with reported percentages of third grade students at or above proficient in reading (r(104) =
The highest correlations among administrators were between evaluation and assessment \((r(96) = .59, p < .001)\) and evaluation and training \((r(104) = .56, p < .001)\). For teachers, the highest correlation was between evaluation and assessment \((r(135) = .63, p < .001)\). However, evaluation and training was the second lowest significant correlation for teachers \((r(138) = .37, p < .001)\). The lack of correlations between decision scales and district level reported percentages of third grade students at or above proficient in reading contrasted with the results implied by the qualitative portion of the study. Statistically significant differences were found between the response models for teachers and principals and respondents from RFG and non RFG schools.
DEDICATION

To my Mom, my brothers, my friends, and my muses (you know who you are) I love you all deeply and admire you fiercely. Without your support I could never have made it this far.

To my fellow travelers on this journey… especially those of you who have been amused watching me work… you have instilled in me great hope for the future.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To those who have helped shape and guide my dissertation, with great respect and gratitude, my thanks go to my chair, Dr. Roberson, my statistician, Dr. Shelley, and my committee members, Dr. Ward and Dr. McNeese.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii

DEDICATION .............................................................................................................. iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................................................... v

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ....................................................................................... viii

LIST OF TABLES ....................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1

   Background
   Purpose of the Study
   Research Questions
   Definitions of Terms
   Delimitations
   Assumptions
   Justification of the Study
   Chapter Summary

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ............................................................... 14

   Introduction
   Historical Overview
   Leadership, Organizational Theory, and Decision Making
   Leadership Styles, Decision Making, and Student Outcomes
   The Element of Leadership in Organizational Adaptation
   Impact of School Leader Decision Making on Study Variables
   Conclusion

III. METHODOLOGY ......................................................................................... 93

   Introduction
   Research Design
   Sample
   Data Collection
   Instrumentation
   Validity and Reliability
   Variables
Data Collection Procedures
Data Analysis Procedures

IV. DATA ANALYSIS........................................................................105
   Introduction
   Research Questions
   Analysis of Data
   Additional Analysis

V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ......139
   Introduction
   Purpose
   Research Questions
   Subjects
   Limitations
   Findings
   Emergent Themes
   Key Concepts
   Implications for Future Research
   Implications for School Leaders
   Summary

APPENDIXES..................................................................................179

REFERENCES..................................................................................192
# LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Numbers of Districts, Title I Districts, Title I Schools, and RFG Schools ................................................................. 109

2. Response Numbers and Response Rates ................................................................. 110

3. State Reported Percent Proficient or Above on Third Grade Reading Tests for 2005 and 2008 as a Function of Grant Status ............. 111

4. State Reported Percent Proficient or Above on Third Grade Reading Tests for 2005 and 2008 as a Function of Grant Status ............. 112

5. Richmond Questionnaire: Variable Scales and Internal Reliability ............. 114


7. Means and Standard Deviations for Decision Making Variables as a Function of Respondent Role ........................................... 117

8. Administrator Descriptive Statistics ................................................................. 118

9. Pearson Correlations among Five Decision Making Variables for Administrators ......................................................................... 119

10. Teacher Descriptive Statistics ........................................................................ 121

11. Pierson Correlations among Five Decision Making Variables for Teachers ............................................................................. 121

12. Teacher and Administrator Decision Variable Correlations ....................... 123

13. Descriptive Statistics: Respondent Role Decision Variables ....................... 124


15. RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations .......................... 127

16. Non RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations ................... 128

17. RFG and Non RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations ......................................................................................... 128
18. RFG and Non RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations by Difference in r Value ........................................... 129
19. Effects of RFG Status and Role on Decision Making Variables .......... 131
20. Means and Standard Deviations for Decision Making Variables as a Function of Respondent Role and RFG Status .......................... 132
21. Frequency of Themes in Open-Ended Responses .......................... 135
22. Selected Reading Training Responses ....................................... 136
23. Selected Reading Curriculum Responses .................................... 136
24. Selected Reading Program Evaluation Responses .......................... 137
25. Selected Reading Funding Responses ......................................... 137
26. Selected Reading Student Assessment Responses .......................... 138
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. Framework for Study Variables: Five Areas of School Leader Decision Making .......................................................... 13

2. Perceived Decline in American Education leads to Increased Federal Control........................................................................................................ 15

3. State Reported Percent Proficient or Above on Third Grade Reading Assessments for 2005 and 2008 .......................................... 112

4. State Reported Percent Proficient or Above on Third Grade Reading Tests for 2005 and 2008 by District Grant Status.................. 113
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this study was the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which was passed by the United States Congress on January 8, 2001. Because of the federal educational policy mandates inherent in the act, a series of educational changes occurred at both state and local levels. An additional interest of this study was the impact of the Reading First Grant (RFG), which was embedded in NCLB, on both recipient schools and non-recipient schools.

Ultimately, the focus of this study was on leader decision making in districts affected by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Of particular interest were the effects of the different opportunities and demands created by the various changes enacted in federal educational policies. This study drew on the work of a number of scholars (Fullan, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Reeves, 2007; Schmoker, 2006) who have analyzed the current trends in educational leadership organizational systems in successful districts, as well as the relationship between leadership and student outcomes.

Specifically, this study proposed to investigate the relationship between student achievement and leader decision making concerning a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. To examine this relationship, this study limited itself to the single content area, reading, and to the two comparable groups: Title I schools receiving Reading First Grants (RFGs) and Title I schools not receiving RFGs. The study schools were drawn from five states (Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, and...
Oklahoma). Michigan was cut from the study due to low response rates. The common link between these five states, causing their selection for this study, was their choice of assessment tools for their RFG schools. Essentially, when the RFGI began to take effect in 2002, each of these states used the same standardized reading assessment, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory [SEDL], 2006) to assess third grade student reading proficiency in their RFG schools. The essential question was, which, if any, of the above areas of leader decision making moderate the reported percentage of third grade students at or above proficient in reading.

Background

Educational leaders are charged with making critical decisions within their school districts and schools that ultimately impact student learning. Educational leaders have not only a responsibility to students, teachers, and staff, but also to the students’ parents and community stakeholders regarding decisions about finance, training, curriculum, student assessment, and program evaluation (Shields, Knapp, Wechsler, Anderson, Bamburg, Hawkins, et al., 1995; Slaughter-Defoe & Glinert, 1996). The role of educational leaders has evolved such that those who were teacher-leaders and building-leaders must now act as instructional leaders (Renner, 1986).

Part of this change has been due to federal policy mandates, especially those that examine school performance. By the early 21st Century, educational leadership theory and practice began embracing organizational theories touted by scholars such as DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005), Fullan (2002a),
Marzano et al. (2005), Schmoker (2006), and Senge (2005) who argued that collaboration between administrators and teachers would promote successful student outcomes. In addition, “leaders have a responsibility to track budgets, motivate people, respond to political pressures, and attend to symbols” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 405).

Currently, state departments of education and university principal training programs struggle with standards and licensure (Cohen, Darling-Hammond, & LaPointe, 2006). At the same time, school administrators continue to strive to ensure that every child reaches the federal benchmark of proficiency by 2014 (No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2001). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), average fourth grade reading scores in the U.S. rose four points between 1992 and 2005 and two points between 2005 and 2007 (NAEP, 2007). Despite these growth figures, however, the public continues to perceive U.S. schools as being in decline (Gallup & Elam, 1988; Rose & Gallup, 2007). This fact, coupled with student dropout figures that rose from 347,000 to 544,000 between 1990 and 2001 (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2005), has added to the belief that U.S. schools are failing. At this point, it is important to determine whether or not school leadership, through the decision making process, can definitively influence student success in reading.

Purpose of the Study

The study pursued four main research questions which examined: a) the relationship among principal perceptions of the five independent variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third
grade reading tests, b) the relationship among teacher perceptions of the five independent variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests, c) the relationship (similarities or differences) between principal and teacher perceptions, and d) the relationship between the five independent variables and the dependent variable: reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests. Of further interest were the differences in these relationships when comparing Title I schools receiving Reading First Grants and Title I schools not receiving Reading First Grants.

Research Questions

Specifically, this research sought to answer the following questions:

1(a). Is there a relationship among the following variables as reported by principals?
   • Decisions about reading training
   • Decisions about reading curriculum
   • Decisions about program evaluation
   • Decisions about funding
   • Decisions about student assessment

1(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

2(a). Is there a relationship among the following variables as reported by teachers?
   • Decisions about reading training
• Decisions about reading curriculum
• Decisions about program evaluation
• Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment

2(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

3. Is the relationship model different for principals and teachers?

4. Do the following variables predict reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?
• Decisions about reading training
• Decisions about reading curriculum
• Decisions about program evaluation
• Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment

Definitions of Terms

Assessment – a process of documenting in comparable terms, skills, knowledge, performance, problems, and progress in order to achieve or maintain academic standards and benchmarks. Assessment can be performed at every level within the educational system, from smaller scale assessments of individual learners, classrooms, or teachers, to larger scale assessments of institutions or the educational system in its entirety (Academic Exchange Quarterly, 2008).

AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) – “The minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year as they
progress toward being 100% proficient by 2014” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n.p.). Specifically, AYP is designed to measure growth – benchmark goals (the percentage of students expected to be proficient on state tests) are raised periodically as the schools improve (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

*Criterion-Referenced Assessments (CRAs) –* are designed to allow students to demonstrate what they understand, know, or can do in light of specified performance objectives. CRAs are designed to highlight both students’ weaknesses and their strengths. Additionally CRAs assume that the majority of students will be able to achieve the curriculum objectives (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

*Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) –* The ESEA is a “Federal law affecting pre-K12 education in the United States [which was first] enacted in 1965” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n. p.). Specifically, ESEA was designed to provide direct assistance to poor children, by distributing funds to local education agencies (LEAs) through state education agencies (SEAs) (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) –* “The federal law designed to provide special education for specific categories of disability. For qualifying disabled students, school districts must provide free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment as specified in a child’s annual Individual Education Plan (IEP)” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n. p.).

*Local Education Agency (LEA) –* “The public board of education or other governing body that oversees public elementary or secondary schools within a
city, township, county, school district, or other political subdivision” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n.p.).

*Norm-Referenced Assessments* – are designed to demonstrate how any given student’s test score or performance is ranked in comparison to the level of achievement or work of their peers:

These assessments assume that some students will do very well, some will do very poorly, and most will fall somewhere in the middle. They focus on providing information about which child knows most and which knows least and how to rank the work of everyone in between. (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n.p.)

*Standardized Test* – refers to any “test taken by many students under identical conditions [which is] meant to allow results to be compared statistically to a standard such as a norm or an average” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n.p.).

*Standards* – “academic guidelines for what all students should know and be able to do in a variety of subjects such as math, science, or language arts” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n.p.).

*State Education Agency (SEA)* – “The public board of education or other governing body that oversees state administration of public education programs” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n.p.).

*State Reading Tests* – In 2002, when the Reading First Grant Initiative was implemented, the five states chosen for this study (Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan and Oklahoma) initially utilized the same standardized reading
assessment, the ITBS (SEDL, 2006) to assess third grade student reading proficiency in their RFG schools. However, each state later began to use different instruments for reading assessment in their RFG schools.

*Title I* – Title I is “the first section and flagship program of the ESEA; it refers to teaching and learning assistance to the nation’s high-poverty schools. It serves 12.5 million children” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, n.p.).

**Delimitations**

The delimitations of this study were as follows:

1. The study was limited to a maximum of 1,000 Title I schools within five states (Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan and Oklahoma). Of these schools, 500 were Reading First Grant recipient (RFG) schools and 500 were non-Reading First Grant recipient (non RFG) schools. These five states were chosen because, initially, in 2002, the RFG schools in all five states used the same standardized reading assessment, the ITBS (SEDL, 2006). Regardless of their overall grade configuration, the schools studied included third grade classrooms (i.e., K-3 schools were accepted, as were 3-5 schools).

2. The timeframe for collected archival data was anticipated to include the duration of the Reading First Grant, years 2002-2008. However, while archival district data regarding the percentage of students at proficient and above on state third grade reading assessments was available for three study states (Arkansas, Georgia, and Oklahoma) for the period from 2002 to 2008, for the remaining two states (Idaho and Michigan).
the period of data available was only from 2005 to 2008. For this reason, the study was delimited to the three year period between 2005 and 2008.

3. The measure of teacher and principal perceptions was delimited to the assessment of five variables: training, curriculum, program evaluation funding, and student assessment. The five variables were chosen since they were the elements mandated in the Reading First Grant application for all states, districts, and schools receiving Reading First Grant funds.

4. The study was delimited to a single content area, Reading, at the third grade level.

5. Student achievement in reading was delimited to district data regarding percentage of students achieving at or above proficient on state third grade reading assessments, as reported by each Local Education Agency (LEA).

6. The study participants were delimited to those individuals who were K-3 teachers or elementary school principals in Title I RFG and non RFG schools.

7. The measure of teacher and principal perceptions was delimited to a survey methodology utilizing a single instrument, The Richmond Questionnaire (RQ).
Assumptions

For the purposes of this study:

1. It was assumed that the information obtained from State and Federal Educational Agency Websites was accurate regarding the following:
   a. Percentages of students achieving proficient and above for each school district as reported on each State’s Annual Report Card.
   b. The RFG status of schools (which schools did and did not receive Federal Reading First Initiative Grants).

2. It was assumed that the five variables required by the Reading First Grant accurately reflected the practices of RFG-recipient schools.

3. It was assumed that the five variables required by the RFG were important in regards to student achievement.

Justification of the Study

With the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), educational reform has remained focused on curricula driven by research and rigor, on high stakes testing, and on academic success. The Action Guide for Community and Parent Leaders (Public Education Network, 2002) described the intent of NCLB: by the 2013-2014 school year, NCLB mandated that districts and schools achieve Adequate Yearly Progress in regards to meeting their proficiency benchmarks. Essentially, districts and schools must achieve a 100 percent level of proficiency in reading by the year 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Levels of proficiency were defined by individual states; however, NCLB (2001) set forth guidelines, such as the development of standards and well-defined
means of assessment and accountability measures for students. These guidelines defined the elements necessary to achieve the NCLB goals and objectives.

The Reading First Grant Initiative (RFGI, 2002), a federal grant authorized in 2002 for at-risk students in grades K-3, was proposed by the administration to close the achievement gap by using Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR) and by focusing on rigor. Literacy is an often-used criterion to point out the shortcomings of education in the U.S. as well as the foundational skill of all educational core curricula. Without the ability to read with fluency and comprehension, children can have difficulty succeeding at any grade level (Calkins, 2001). The 2003 Reading Report Card, part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2007), offers a current snapshot of the reading ability of students in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades which reflects a persistent flat performance in which a large percentage of students remain below the level of proficiency. According to the 2005 Brookings Papers on Educational Policy, 37% of fourth graders read below the basic level, rendering them essentially illiterate (Ravitch, 2005).

To date, schools have been unable to close this achievement gap, and utilizing available resources have not successfully addressed the problem (Coalition for Evidenced-Based Policy [CEBP], 2003; Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; Uline & Johnson, 2005; Viadero & Hoff, 2006). As of 2006, there was no consensus as to whether or not the $4,200,704,002 Reading First dollars spent in the United States through 2006 closed the gap for students in grades K-3
Wolf (2007) wrote of the natural history of reading development and states, “reading begins with simple exercises, practice and accuracy and ends, if one is lucky, with the tools and the capacity to leap into transcendence” (p. 109). With this in mind, Reading First presented an opportunity for both educational leaders and practitioners to build a new framework for educational decision making concerning reading (Connor, Jakobsons, Crowe, & Meadows, 2009; Kame‘enui, 2002; Wolf, 2007).

This same framework was utilized to choose the five variables (reflecting five areas of leader decision making) that were examined in this study. These leader decision making areas were: a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. These areas were chosen because they were specifically described in both No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and the Reading First Grant Initiative (RFGI), and because they were simultaneously specified by a number of prominent educational leadership theorist as being elements of school leader decision making critical to student outcomes.

Chapter Summary

The most difficult task associated with the design of this study was to determine what variables of leader decision making were likely to influence student achievement in reading. Since both NCLB (2001) and the RFGI (2001) designated Training, Curriculum, Evaluation, Funding, and Assessment as areas in which schools must make decisions, these seemed to be reasonable choices for the study. At the same time, the literature of Educational Leadership
demonstrated the five study variables as elements which strongly affected student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Schmoker, 2006; Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2000). These two aspects, then, combined to form the framework for this study, which can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Framework for Study Variables: Five Areas of School Leader Decision Making. NCLB described training, curriculum, evaluation, funding, and assessment as areas in which school leaders have to make decisions. The RFGI made this an even stronger requirement by mandating that schools wishing funding specifically address these areas in their grant proposals. Additionally, organizational theory and educational leadership literature discuss each of the five areas as critical to a school’s success.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter is divided into five main sections. The sections are as follows: a Historical Overview, a section on Leadership, Organizational Theory, and Decision Making, a section on Leadership Styles, Decision Making, and Student Outcomes, a section on The Element of Leadership in Organizational Adaptation, and a section discussing the Impact of School Leader Decision Making on the studies’ Independent Variables.

The first section, the Historical Overview, begins with a discussion of the role the federal government has played in education; and the shift in that role from one of persuasion through proffered funding to persuasion and more direct control (Manna, 2006; McCluskey, 2007, Rossell & Clarke, 1987; see Figure 2). Federal control was more direct, in that states set benchmarks that then had to be met in order to receive funding and avoid restructuring (NCLB, 2001).

The first section of the Historical Overview continues with a discussion of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the way in which NCLB became the framework for educational decision making. Notably, NCLB insisted on data-driven decision making using Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR), and also on synchronous training for teachers and administrators. An additional subsection focuses on the Reading First Grant Initiative (RFGI). This subsection points out that SBRR regarding curriculum, testing, and assessment was even more important for schools applying for RFG funds, and that RFG served to
Figure 2. Perceived Decline in American Education Leads to Increased Federal Control. Beginning in the fifties, the American education system began to be perceived to be in decline. This perceived decline led to a series of federal acts, culminating in NCLB of 2001 and RFGI, which represented a shift in the role of the federal government, from persuasion only, to persuasion and control.

Further focus the current framework of educational leader decision making. Following this, specific attention is paid to the Five Essential Components of Reading defined by the National Reading Panel in response to the RFGI’s requirement that school leader decision making be based on SBRR. The last subsection of the Historical Overview focuses on the Synchronous Training of Instructional Staff, which was also part of the RFGI’s focus on SBRR-driven improvement in student outcomes.

The second section of the literature review focuses on Leadership, Organizational Theory, and Decision Making. This section is divided into seven subsections: Defining Leadership, Leadership in Education, Leading in Times of Change, Leader Decision Making in Organizations, the Application of Business Models to Educational Leadership, a subsection on Learning Organizations, and a subsection on Reframing Leadership.
The third section of the literature review focuses on the relationship between Leadership Styles, Decision Making, and Student Outcomes. This section is divided into five subsections. The first subsection discusses the relationship between School Learning Environment and Student Outcomes, with specific attention paid to the concept of Flow, as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997). The next subsection focuses on the changing role of school principals. This is followed by an exploration of different Types of Principal Leadership, and a last subsection that focuses on the concept of Schools that Learn.

This leads to the next section of the literature review, which focuses on The Element of Leadership in Organizational Adaptation. Subsections describe the Challenges for Schools Adapting to Change, the requirements for Sustainable School Improvement, the characteristics of Leadership in Sustainable Systems, and Why Schools Fail to Adapt. The last major section of the Literature Review discusses the Impact of School Leader Decision Making on the Study Variables: a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. One subsection is devoted to examining each Independent Variable.

Historical Overview

*The Path to Increased Federal Control*

Considering the deep roots of the government’s involvement in education, historical inquiry can enhance one’s understanding of current federal educational laws and mandates regarding pedagogy, curricula, assessment, and training. In fact, the involvement of federal government in public education has a dated
history, Thomas Jefferson said: “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be” (Padover, 1959, p. 89). While there was concern by many of the founders of the United States regarding reliance on the general public to make decisions, Jefferson argued: “whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government” and that, “whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them right” (Padover, 1959, p. 88). Despite this stance, the federal government initially relied on tactics of persuasion, in terms of proffered funds in exchange for compliance with various educational acts.

This trend of governmental persuasion, rather than coercion or control, continued for the next two centuries. It was not until the 1950s, when problems with the education system began to attract public attention (ex. Brown v. Board of Education), that the government began to take a more active role in mandating national educational policies.

The United States has experienced a perceived decline in the public education system since the mid-20th century. Bestor (1953) claimed in the book Educational Wasteland that school curricula and instruction in the United States lacked scientific foundation and rigor. Educational historians and scholars (Michael, 2006; Pulliam, 1982; Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999) have echoed this criticism. This perceived downward spiral has been apparent in the continual decrease in national standardized student test scores, especially among minority subgroups (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Fitzpatrick et al., 2004).
There has been contention, however, about the validity of the initial benchmark against which student achievement has been measured. The norm group of the initial Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) in 1941 was an elite group of students who likely did not accurately represent minority or low social economic status (SES) subgroups (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Despite the fact that the initial SAT benchmark was not very representative of national student populations, the recorded scores became the signature of a transition in which the public education system became more inclusive (Segel, 1951). At the same time, with the setting of a universal benchmark, the idea of standardized testing became the norm, even though many states had not yet established yearly assessments or evaluations of student achievement. Essentially, there was no structure in place, and no records of actual student achievement for the national student body as a whole. If the initial benchmark was indeed not representative of minority and low SES sub groups, this may have contributed to the growing idea that public education was in decline (Segel, 1951).

The continued public dissatisfaction with education during the 1950s was reflected in three events: President Eisenhower’s creation of the Federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the litigation of Brown v. Board of Education; and the formation of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999; Rippa, 1997). Furthermore, many educational theorists began to disassociate from John Dewey’s Progressive movement (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004; Rickover, 1959; Rippa 1997; Wise, 1969). Theorists instead began to embrace Realisms’ emphasis on isolated academic
activities related to reading, writing, computation, history, and science (Michael, 2006; Ornstein & Levine, 2006).

In 1957, as Sputnik orbited the earth, the call to strengthen core math, science, and technology curricula and related skills increased (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004; Rickover, 1959; Rippa, 1997). Additionally, pressure was mounting to expand education to all of society, as seen in civil rights legislation such as the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education ruling (Wise, 1969). These factors drove what became known as the Essentialist Movement, which strove to increase math and reading test scores across the country, especially among minority subgroups (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004; Rickover, 1959; Rippa, 1997; Wise, 1969). In response, the U.S. Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA, 1958). The purpose of the NDEA was twofold: a) to increase the funding for scientific education and scientific research; and b), to increase the role of the federal government in educational policy regarding elementary and secondary education (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004; NDEA, 1958; Rickover, 1959; Rippa, 1997; Wise, 1969).

Federal intervention into school curricula continued with the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which also increased state responsibility for local districts and reflected a desire for increased equity and excellence in education (Wise, 1969). With these acts, federal remediation and substantiation of failing schools began in earnest.

The ESEA mandated supplemental education centers, funded programs which purchased library books, and strengthened state departments of education
(Borman, Stringfield, & Slavin, 2001). Specifically, as part of President Johnson’s War on Poverty, the Gardner Commission proposed that federal educational aid should be targeted towards certain categories of need, principally towards the education of children living in poverty (Borman et al., 2001). By making targeted federal aid to education, a compromise was reached among three different parties: those who wanted greater federal involvement, those who believed that education was a state’s rights issue, and those who were a contingent of private school lobbyists (Borman et al., 2001). Thus, ESEA focused on targeting entire schools for change, based on the assumption that schools serving the most disadvantaged youth, could, with remediation programs, achieve success (Borman et al., 2001). Control of the increased federal funds allocated to education was placed in the hands of public trustees—local education agencies (Borman et al., 2001). Title I of the ESEA was essentially the first time that the federal government gave monetary aid for remediation to elementary and secondary education schools with populations of low SES and underperforming students (Borman et al., 2001). Two years after the ESEA took effect, the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1967) studied educational equity and measured students’ background and socioeconomic status. The Coleman Report blamed families, students, and teachers for poor student achievement rather than identifying a failure in the education system itself (Coleman et al., 1967).

After another decade and a half, the fact that America’s education system was still seen to be in decline led members of the National Commission on
Excellence in Education to generate the report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983; Hewett, 2008). As opposed to the *Coleman Report* (Coleman et al., 1967), *A Nation at Risk* (1983) directly attributed poor student achievement to problems in the U.S. educational system. While delineating these problems, members made the following statement:

> Part of what is at risk is the promise first made on this continent: All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983)

At this point there was near universal agreement regarding the existence of a problem. However, despite the fact that both reports outlined a number of possible corrective actions, and while their strong rhetoric may have inspired individual educators and LEAs, neither the *Coleman Report* nor *A Nation at Risk* led to substantive systemic attitudinal changes by the national government, state and local school boards, or the general public (Hewett, 2008).

In 1989, President George H. W. Bush cited the educational crisis as a primary reason for a sagging U.S. economy and convened the Charlottesville Education Summit (Vinovskis, 1999). The summit was comprised of state governors with an agenda set by the president, and notably did not include
educational leaders or women (Borman & Greenman, 1994; Vinovskis, 1999). As a result of the summit, the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) was formed. This organization was comprised of governors and CEOs. NASDC was charged with creating a framework for the education system that supported a private school option (Borman & Greenman, 1994).

Goals 2000

During the 1990s, discontent with public education continued. Fiske, Reed, and Sautter (1991) argued that U.S. public schools had failed to live up to expectations. The public longed for a return to a period when schools were seen as exemplary learning environments (Rose & Gallup, 2005). By March 31, 1994, the national public education system was still not seen to have made significant progress; this spurred President Clinton to sign H.R.1804 [GOALS 2000] (1994) which, for the first time, acted as a national mission statement for public schools, in that it sought national voluntary standards in core subjects (Weiss, 1994). The Goals 2000 act was in fact a reauthorization of ESEA (Weiss, 1994). It included eight explicit National Education Goals, which were summarized in the May 1994 issue of NEA Today:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter . . . and [all students will be] prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment . . .
4. The nation’s teaching force will have access to programs for continued improvement of their professional skills . . .

5. United States’ students will be the first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

6. Every adult American will be literate.

7. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

8. Every school and home will engage in partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. (Weiss, 1994, p. 3)

Essentially, the Goals 2000 act had a number of implications for early childhood education and for increased poverty level funding of Title I schools. Specifically, additional Title I money would be put into districts in which 75% or more of the students were living in poverty (Weiss, 1994). Additionally, the Goals 2000 act began a collegial discussion about ways to measure student achievement and defined the national role in education. Even so, schools and states had flexibility; funding could be used not just for remediation but also to assist all students in meeting national achievement standards (Weiss, 1994).

This represented a shift in the orientation of the law. Title I (ESEA, 1965) was concerned primarily with providing remedial education for children living in poverty. The 1994 (GOALS 2000) revision, however, was more concerned with the implementation of educational standards across the board and with infusing rigor into classrooms.
Goals 2000 had significant legislative support. It was passed by the House of Representatives with a vote of 289 to 128 (Weiss, 1994) and received endorsement from 40 organizations, including the National Education Association, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and the Council of the Great City Schools. According to Senator Dodd, one of the sponsors, “Core American standards would set high goals for all students, allow for meaningful comparisons across states, and ensure that all of our students are prepared for higher education” (Olson & Hoff, 2007, p. 1). Furthermore, the senator explained that the act avoided mandates, and stressed that creating incentives - such that states voluntarily adopt the national standards - is the optimal path to avoid states-rights complaints (Olson & Hoff, 2007).

In 1999, with one year to go before year 2000 deadline, it became clear that none of the Goals 2000 goals would be successfully achieved (Hoff, 1999). Indeed, after the fact, it was quite clear that none of the National Education Goals delineated by the Goals 2000 act had been met (Rothstein, 2004). This failure in turn led to support for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The NCLB act was important because it represented a paradigm shift for the federal government from persuasion to persuasion and direct control (Manna, 2006).

*The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*

President George W. Bush’s reauthorization of ESEA 1965, with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), continued the philosophy of greater accountability nationwide, while asserting that State Education Agencies (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEA) were in charge of managing curriculum,
testing programs, and pedagogy. Even with the prescriptive nature of NCLB and Reading First, the Bush Administration continuously promoted local control as one of the pillars of NCLB. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) became P.L. 107-110 on January 8, 2002. The purpose of NCLB, as stated in the act, is for the federal Department of Education to assure Americans that all children will receive an equal education and achieve proficiency on state standardized scores (NCLB, 2001). NCLB (2001) amended the statement of purpose of ESEA (1965) with language that included a focus on quality academic assessment, plans for accountability, and training for teachers and principals to insure that schools either met state standards within a defined period of time or faced restructuring (NCLB, 2001). Continuous failure by a school to meet state standards led to closure (NCLB, 2001).

Essentially, according to NCLB (2001), student performance on state-developed standardized reading, math, and science tests is the yearly measurement for school evaluations. Standardized test results designate whether or not states, districts, and schools are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and closing the achievement gap. The tenets of NCLB allow states to determine state standards, develop state yearly testing programs and declare benchmarks by which all public schools and students will be evaluated. Regulations and consequences for states (schools) not meeting AYP expectations were established. For example, LEAs and schools not meeting AYP expectations for multiple years are classified as in need of improvement and thus can face restructuring and/or closure (NCLB, 2001).
According to Manna (2006), with NCLB the federal Department of Education employed new tactics of financial persuasion and coercion to get states to adopt federal priorities as their own. Manna argued that “understanding NCLB implementation as a series of control and persuasion challenges confronting federal officials will enable observers to better assess the law’s performance” (p. 472). The regulations that govern NCLB funding require that monies from the federal government be allocated to state departments of education. At the state level, these funds must be prioritized for redistribution. The LEAs that are granted these funds should be those that handle the lowest achieving schools, have the greatest need, and demonstrate the strongest commitment to use the awarded monies to achieve their progress goals (NCLB, 2001).

Title II of NCLB (2001) addresses funding allocations for principal and teacher training. One of the unique characteristics of this funding stream is the press for synchronous training of principals and teachers. Another unique aspect is that such synergistic training provides opportunities for improved teaching and the development of instructional leaders with the necessary skills to support teaching and learning schoolwide (NCLB, 2001).

Paul Manna discussed this in a 2006 Educational Policy article titled: Control, Persuasion, and Educational Accountability: Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act. According to Manna (2006), in order to understand the effects of NCLB, one must understand that implementation of the accountability provisions required federal officials to simultaneously attempt to assert control
over state-level implementers while at the same time attempting to persuade them to adopt the federal government’s educational priorities. Thus, these strategies of persuasion and control were critical to the efforts of the federal government to keep NCLB running smoothly, and to properly assess the implementation of NCLB, one should view it as a series of “control and persuasion challenges” (Manna, 2006, p. 471).

Sandy Kress, one of Bush’s education advisers, explained, “What makes this tough is designing something that will work in 50 very different states, and then figuring out how you can leverage change when you’re only paying 7 percent of the bill” (Manna, 2006, p 472). Arguing that the unwillingness of past administrations to hold state and local governments responsible for educational outcomes, Bush pushed for “real accountability and aggressive enforcement” (Manna, 2006, p. 472). In a public address, President George W. Bush (2003) stated:

[The] first principle is accountability. . . . So in return for federal dollars, we are asking states to design accountability systems to show parents and teachers whether or not children can read and write and add and subtract in grades three through eight. [...] There are no more excuses, as far as I’m concerned, about not teaching children how to read. (p.1)

Bush’s argument was that accountability applied through annual testing and standards would provide the federal government with the statutory and budgetary stick needed to successfully implement state reforms, something the ESEA lacked (Manna, 2006, p. 472).
Reading First Grant Initiative

NCLB (2001) provides opportunities for the funding of mandated changes. Title I, Section 1002, defines funding available to LEAs, in the form of grants, for meeting the requirements of NCLB (2001). Grants can be awarded for up to five years and vary in amount. In 2001, the total federal grant allotment for Century 21, Family Literacy, and Reading First was $6,250,000,000. For the purposes of this study, the researcher will examine only the Reading First Grant Initiative (RFGI).

The Reading First Grant Initiative was a sub-grant of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The RFGI had five specific agendas: a) to establish reading programs, for K-3 students, founded on scientifically-based reading research, to ensure that every student could read at grade level by grade three; b) to assist state and local educational agencies in training teachers to teach reading; c) to assist state and local educational agencies in selecting and administering “screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based reading assessments”; d) to assist state and local educational agencies in selecting or developing more effective reading instructional materials; and e) to increase coordination between schools, early literacy programs, and family literacy programs in order to improve children’s reading achievement (NCLB, 2001, n.p.).

The Five Essential Components of Reading

The RFGI mandated education driven by scientifically based reading research (NCLB, 2001). For this reason, the National Reading Panel defined the following five essential components of reading: a) phonemic awareness, b)
phonics, c) fluency, d) vocabulary, and e) comprehension (NCLB, 2001). In section 1208 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the five essential components of reading are defined as follows:

Phonemic awareness is defined as a child’s ability to recognize and use individual sounds, or phonemes (NCLB, 2001). Through Phonemic Awareness children become aware of the phonemes that make up individual words and are able to understand how phonemes are related to printed words (NCLB, 2001).

Phonics consists of a child’s ability to understand the relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. In other words, children should be able to identify the sounds that individual letters and groups of letters make in order to identify familiar words accurately and automatically and decode new words they encounter (NCLB, 2001).

The third component, fluency, consists of children’s ability to read texts accurately and quickly, while understanding what they read. Fluent readers are able to recognize words automatically when they read silently, and read effortlessly and with expression when they read out loud. When readers are weak in fluency they read slowly, word by word, since they must focus on decoding words rather than simply comprehending meaning (NCLB, 2001).

The fourth component of reading, vocabulary, consists of learning the meaning and pronunciation of words. In order to build vocabulary, children must expand their knowledge of the meaning and use of written and spoken words (NCLB, 2001).
The fifth and last specified component of reading is comprehension, which consists of children acquiring strategies, which allow them to understand, remember, and communicate what they read. Children with good reading comprehension strategies have a greater chance of becoming purposeful and active readers (NCLB, 2001).

*Synchronous Training of Instructional Staff*

Another major provision of the Reading First Grant Initiative (RFGI, 2001) was a specific call for more schoolwide staff involvement and interaction in reading education. NCLB (2001) defined instructional staff as all “individuals who have responsibility for teaching children to read” including “principals, teachers, supervisors of instruction, librarians, library school media specialists, [and] teachers of academic subjects other than reading” including “other individuals who have responsibility for assisting children to learn to read” (NCLB, 2001, n.p.).

The RFGI (2001), in fact, called for what was termed synchronous training of staff, specifically teachers and administrators, in which both received compatible and comparable “professional development activities designed to “improve the knowledge of teachers and principals” concerning “the core academic subjects that the teachers teach” and “effective instructional strategies, methods, and skills, and use of challenging State academic content standards and student achievement standards, and State assessments, [in order] to improve teaching practices and student academic achievement” (NCLB, 2001, n.p.).
In addition to synchronous training, the RFGI (2001) called for increased schoolwide collaboration “among groups of teachers and administrators,” and for training to “improve the knowledge of teachers and principals” concerning “how to teach and address the needs of students with different learning styles, particularly students with disabilities, students with special learning needs, (including students who are gifted and talented), and students with limited English proficiency” in order to improve student classroom behavior and to identify “early and appropriate interventions to help students” (NCLB, 2001, n.p.).

The RFGI (2001) also called for teachers and principals to “involve parents in their child’s education” especially when those parents were limited in their English proficiency or when they are immigrants. Furthermore, teachers and principals were required to undergo training designed to teach them “how to understand and use data and assessments to improve classroom practice and student learning” (NCLB, 2001, n.p.).

Leadership, Organizational Theory, and Decision Making

Defining Leadership

In an article published in Management Science, Jago (1982) pointed out that there are many conflicting definitions of leadership, and that each definition suggests different and often contradictory approaches for those in leadership positions. To clarify the issue, Jago (1982) explained that the term leadership actually refers to both a property, in that one may have the attribute of leadership or be perceived to have the attribute of leadership, and a process, in that one may undertake the task of leading by utilizing various techniques and strategies.
In other words, leadership may be a characteristic or perceived characteristic, but it can also be an action, or something that one does.

Jago (1982) further explained that leadership does not involve domination, coercion, or the use of force. In this light, Jago (1982) argued that leadership is not intrinsically connected to positions such as superior, supervisor, or manager; and that there is a distinction between individuals and groups which lead and individuals and groups which motivate, through “administration of discretionary rewards and punishments made possible by some formal authority structure” (p. 316). This category of behavior, Jago (1982) explained, falls under the purview of “headship” or “supervision” (p. 316).

According to Jago (1982), leadership theories are affected by a pair of basic assumptions. The first has to do with whether or not leadership is universal, in that there is always a best way to lead, or contingent, in that leadership should be different in different situations (Jago, 1982). The second assumption has to do with whether or not leadership should be considered a trait (an enduring and stable attribute of certain people), or a behavior (the actions or patterns of actions of a leader) (Jago, 1982). From the interaction of these two assumptions, leadership theories can be broadly viewed as falling within four areas of focus: a) a focus on determining a set of leadership traits which are universally useful and appropriate; b) a focus on determining a behavioral style that is universally appropriate; c) a focus on determining leadership traits which are situationally contingent; and d) a focus on determining behavioral styles which are situationally appropriate (Jago, 1982).
Leadership in Education

In regards to educational leadership settings, according to Marzano et al. (2005), the need for inspired and truly effective school leadership is greater than it has ever been. In the book, *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*, the authors (Marzano et al., 2005), argue that the pressure on schools becomes more intense as they try to cope with the society’s increasing needs for citizens and workers who are skilled, knowledgeable, and responsible. Essentially, the writers argue, “The expectation that no child be left behind in a world and in an economy that will require everyone’s best is not likely to subside” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 123).

Considering its importance for education, defining leadership becomes important. Langley and Jacobs discussed this in their 2006 book titled, *5 Essential Skills for School Leaders: Moving from Good to Great*. According to Langley and Jacobs (2006), a person is defined as a leader anytime they face situations in which they must make decisions that affect other people. Essentially, since it is almost impossible to make decisions that only affect the decision maker, almost everyone is a decision maker at some time or another (Jago, 1982; Langley & Jacobs, 2006; Maxwell, 2005). In education, for example, superintendents lead individuals and groups from many levels, principals lead everyone associated with their school, classroom teachers directly lead their students and indirectly lead their peers, and students lead each other through peer-mentoring and by example (Langley & Jacobs, 2006). Langley and
Jacobs (2006) argue that, whatever leadership situation people discover themselves to be filling, they should always aim at success.

*Leading in Times of Change*

Jim Collins (2001) discussed successful leadership in the book; *Good to Great, Why Some Companies Make the Leap… and Others Don’t*. Collins (2001) explained that successful leadership is an “inherently iterative process” which consists of a cycle of “piercing questions, vigorous debate, resolute action, and autopsies without blame” (p. 88). Collins (2001) argued that organizations only improve if this cycle is repeated continuously, over and over, and that it is only successful if the leaders and the entire organization face the “brutal facts” of the situation as they make decisions and prepare to make decisions.

In the book, *Leading Change*, John Kotter (1996) explained eight steps or stages, which can be applied to the creation of a professional learning community (PLC):

1. Create a sense of urgency.
2. Pull together a guiding team with the necessary skills, credibility, connections, and authority to keep things moving.
3. Create an uplifting vision along with strategies that make the vision possible.
4. Communicate the vision and strategies effectively through simultaneous application of words, deeds, and symbols.
5. Remove obstacles and empower people to move ahead.
7. Stay with the process and refuse to quit when things get difficult.

8. Nurture and shape a new culture in the face of adversity.

(Kotter, 1996, p. VII)

Kotter further argued that wherever adaptation is essential, such as in the struggle to keep pace with a changing world, quality leadership and decision making is essential (Bencivenga, 2002). Kotter also explained that companies and organizations are frequently over-managed and at the same time under-led. When people argue that something is their bosses’ job rather than their own, the organization is setting itself up for failure (Bencivenga, 2002).

John Maxwell, in a 2005 book titled, *The 360° Leader: Developing Your Influence from Anywhere in the Organization*, argued against the idea that leadership is only the responsibility of the highest ranking people in an organization. Maxwell (2005) explained that any individual, if they want to make things happen, or lead, must be aware of the impact they can have on their boss, on their boss’s peers, on their own peers, on their peer’s subordinates, and on their own subordinates. In other words, each member of an organization has the potential to influence people in every direction, in terms of the organization’s hierarchy, including the people they work for, the people they work with, and the people who work for them (Maxwell, 2005). This can be thought of as leading up, across, and down (Maxwell, 2005).

According to Zaccaro and Banks (2004), one of the most important tasks of leaders is to successfully deal with the challenges inherent in societal systems that are complex, turbulent, volatile, and rapidly changing. In order to achieve
this, Zaccaro and Banks (2004) argued that leaders and decision makers at all levels within and across organizations must be creative, innovative, and strategically flexible. This strategic flexibility is reliant on two main factors which are inextricably linked: a) the ability to successfully manage change, and b) the ability of leaders and decision makers to develop a strategic plan based on an organizational vision (Zaccaro & Banks, 2004). According to Senge (1990), organizational visions are only effective if they are positive and if they are centered around aspirations for change and growth. Negative visions, which desire to maintain the status quo, even in the face of changing situations and environments, lead organizations to failure (Senge, 1990).

Zaccaro and Banks (2004) argue that there are three main areas in which organizations fail to fully embrace current leadership research: a) many organizations fail to understand the importance of organizational visions; b) organizations often fail to understand necessity for leaders at all levels to acquire and maintain change management skills; and c), training programs focused on organizational vision and change management skills are often ineffective and lack practical utility.

Felfe and Peterson discussed another hazard to leadership decision making in a 2007 paper titled, Romance of Leadership and Management Decision Making. Felfe and Peterson (2007) pointed out that much of the research in the field of leadership decision making has been leader-centric and focused on the effects the leader’s behavior has on organizational outcomes. However, the authors (Felfe & Peterson, 2007) also explained that recent
research has embraced the idea of follower-centered research, in which the followers’ interactive role in the dyadic process of organizational decision making is explored. The main point Felfe and Peterson (2007) made has to do with the way in which the biases of organization members’ implicit leadership theories affect the function and outcomes of the organization. The importance of the way each member of the organization, including the leader, views the process, purpose, and effects of leadership decision making, is supported by the earlier theories of March and Simon (1958).

*Leader Decision Making in Organizations*

March and Simon are both credited as early pioneers in the field of organizational research. In 1958 March and Simon published a book titled, *Organizations*, in which they argued that decision making is always based on a simplified model of the world in which behavior is ego centered. In other words, decision making, according to March and Simon (1958), is primarily based around each individual striving to satisfy his or her own aspirations. However, organizational decision making is more complicated because the environment involved is complex, resources (time, money, attention, etc.) are scarce, and conflict is constant among involved individuals and groups (March & Simon, 1958).

Essentially, March and Simon (1958) wanted to define the field of organizational theory: they wanted to give it structure and language so that people could continue to study organizations. Their perspective on organizations
was cognitive, social, and psychological with an emphasis on thinking, information processing, and decision making (March & Simon, 1958).

One of the concepts introduced by March and Simon (1958) has to do with the idea of the decision premise. Basically, organizations manage the information, and thus the options, available to employees (March & Simon, 1958). When faced with choices, employees are then able to make decisions, but only based on the information they have available, or their decision premise (March & Simon, 1958). While economists have argued that the rational person considers all available options before making the best choice, March and Simon (1958) contend that this was not accurate, since individuals in organizations have limited information, and therefore, are restricted in their ability to process the options available. As individuals search through the available options, they lower their aspirations and end up choosing the first option that's good enough (March, 1978; March & Simon, 1958).

An important point here is that both individuals and organizations operate from limited knowledge, and thus face similar restrictions in regards to decision making (March & Simon, 1958). Organizations, to reduce the pressure applied to their limited information processing and decision making capabilities, simplify decision making by developing standardized routines (March & Simon, 1958). Organizations then follow their established routines invariably as long as the results are marginally acceptable. When results become unacceptable, organizations are then forced to expend time and energy to innovate (March & Simon, 1958).
**Application of Business Models to Educational Leadership**

Leadership and decision making in an educational setting is not necessarily identical to that which goes on in conventional business oriented organizations; instead, decision situations can involve goals which are unclear, technology whose applicability is uncertain, and a fluid body of participants (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). In a 1972 paper, Cohen et al. discussed the ambiguity of leadership and decision making in educational environments, which they categorize as organized anarchies. To resolve this ambiguity, the theorists (Cohen et al., 1972) proposed what they called a garbage can model of organizational choice, which they thought would be ideal for educational settings. Essentially, garbage can organizational simulations involve four basic choices: a stream of choices; a stream of problems; a determined rate of flow of solutions, and a stream of energy from participants (Cohen et al., 1972).

Argyris (1976) further explained that the garbage can model of organizational decision making essentially makes six recommendations to leaders and decision-makers: a) the leader should be involved and provide energy to influence major decisions; b) the leader should become informed so as to be valued in the information-poor environment of an organized anarchy; c) the leader should persist in promoting their opinions since a decision may be temporarily defeated only to be accepted later; d) the leader should exchange their status for substance; e) the leader should encourage opposing factions to participate; and f) the leader should overload the system so as to make themselves more necessary.
Argyris (1976) noted that this advice serves to perpetually keep organizations as they were described by Cohen and March: “mini-Machiavellian” organized anarchies. Argyris (1976) argued that such a philosophy of decision making and leadership leads to or promotes a number of problems, such as the perpetual expectation among subordinates that the leadership of the organization, and the organization itself, will never change. Likewise, such a method of leadership can lead to the physical and mental exhaustion of the leader as the energy they have contributed is absorbed and expended by the opposing factions the leader encouraged to interact (Argyris, 1976). Additionally, Argyris (1976) points out that mini-Machiavellian leadership and decision making sanctions deceit in that it requires that the leadership to keep secret the reasons for any given behavior or strategy.

Argyris (1976) then discussed factors that inhibited learning in organizations; such factors include: competitive games; bargaining, parochial priorities, personal goals, interests, stakes and stands; use of power; and misperception and miscommunication. Argyris (1976) also noted, as situations became more important and affecting, the problem of acquiring valid feedback increased. This phenomenon is one of the attributes of the theory-in-use (as opposed to the espoused theory) which Argyris (1976) labeled the Single-Loop Model, and in which control over others is a primary behavioral strategy.

**Learning Organizations**

Argyris (1976) proposed a Double-Loop Model of learning in which the governing variables are free and informed choice, valid information, and internal
commitment. As opposed to the unilateral control by the leader that took place in Single-Loop environments, advocacy in order to win is rejected and replaced by an open invitation to face and confront one another’s views and to change or alter them; thus, achieving positions which are based on the most valid information possible (Argyris, 1976). Power is expected to be shared with anyone who has competence or who is relevant in deciding or implementing the action in question, in defining a particular task, or in controlling the environment in question (Argyris, 1976). In this case, defensiveness and face-saving is resisted since it is defined as a non-learning activity, and any face-saving that becomes necessary is planned jointly with those who are involved (Argyris, 1976).

Argyris further explored organizational phenomena with Schön in later books about organizational learning (1978, 1996). The first book, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (Argyris & Schön, 1978), dealt with the idea of organizations as entities able to learn. It was explained that organizations, although they are collections of individuals, cannot be entirely explained or understood solely through the social psychology of group behavior, as studied or explained by social psychologists, management theorists, sociologists, anthropologists, systems analysts, or political scientists (Argyris & Schön, 1978). According to Argyris and Schön (1978), organizations are more than structures of authority, structures of information flow, systems of communication, systems of control, instruments to achieve social purposes, cultures, or social theatres for the byplay of conflict and interests.
Instead, Argyris and Schön (1978) explained that organizations exemplified theories of action. These theories of action are constantly maintained and transformed by the individuals who occupy roles within organizational structures and within the behavioral worlds that exist over and around those structures (Argyris & Schön, 1978). In this light, it is necessary to differentiate theories of action from other theories designed for explanation, prediction, or control (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Further, it is important to note that the behavioral world may constrain or facilitate the collective inquiry which allows error in organizational theory of action to be detected and corrected.

Despite the fact that Argyris and Schön are among the theorists most closely linked to the literature of organizational learning, Lipshitz (2000) argued that their actual impact is far less than it should be. Lipshitz (2000) believes that while Argyris and Schön are widely acclaimed, and frequently cited, they are, at the same time, seldom understood and rarely followed. In the article, “Chic, Mystique, and Misconception: Argyris and Schön and the Rhetoric of Organizational Learning,” published in the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Lipshitz (2000) explained that Argyris and Schön are often cited to support the arguments and views of other writers, who in actuality rarely directly critique or deal with the conceptual framework Argyris and Schön proposed. Easterby-Smith and Lyles (2003) agreed that Argyris and Schön had a substantial impact on the field, and also that the authors works had been used, ignored, and reinterpreted by theorists and scholars over the last quarter century. Ultimately, according to most who analyze the topic (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2003; Lipshitz,
2000), while the concept of single-loop and double-loop learning has been
Argyris and Schön’s most important contribution to the field of organizational
learning, there are several other feasible and applicable lessons that can be
drawn from their body of work.

In an article titled “Disciplines of the Learning Organization: Contributions
and Critiques,” Easterby-Smith (1997) explained that the literature of
organizational learning can be considered to fall within six distinct disciplines,
each using their own distinct ontologies, and each focusing on different themes,
problems, or aspects of organizational learning. These six disciplines are:
a) organizational development and psychology, b) organizational theory and
sociology, c) strategy, d) management science, e) cultural anthropology, and
f) production management (Easterby-Smith, 1997). Argyris and Schön,
according to Easterby-Smith (1997), contributed heavily to two out of the six
disciplines. The field of organizational development and psychology is still
influenced by Argyris and Schön’s themes of underlying values and cognition,
and by the problematics of transition from individual to collective learning and of
defensive routines (Easterby-Smith, 1997). Management science is still
influenced by Argyris and Schön’s themes of error correction, knowledge, and
double-loop versus single-loop learning (Easterby-Smith, 1997).

Reframing Leadership

Bolman and Deal (2003) also contribute to the field with their 2003 book,
*Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. In the book, the two
theorists (Bolman & Deal, 2003) build on the theories of March, Simon, Choen,
and others as they attempt to blend and unify the major traditions of organizational theory. Their goal is a concise whole that will satisfy both the public and private sector, in addition to theorists and practitioners (Bolman & Deal, 2003). In order to accomplish this task, Bolman and Deal (2003) propose four frames through which situations can be viewed. In particular, it is notable that March and Simon, according to Bolman and Deal, operated using the Structural Frame and the Human Resource Frame.

Essentially, in order to learn, both organization leaders and leadership teams must have a model of leadership, in the form of a theory, premise, or frame, which shapes their expectations, interpretations, and strategies (Bolman & Deal, 2003). These frames allow the individuals and the organizations themselves to process information, and to blend instinct and leaned behavior in order to make the best choices out of the options that seem to be available (Bolman & Deal, 2003). It is important to note that, as Bolman and Deal (2003) explained it, the information available to the organization as a whole, and to every member, is always limited.

A key concept, Bolman and Deal (2003) explained, is the idea of framing, which is the skill or ability to match perceptions to a cognitive map of the situation or state of affairs within the organization, or facing the organization. Understanding this, the ability to reframe entails the ability to use skill and awareness to consciously break frames, or view the situation through a different cognitive map, or cognitive filter (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Bolman and Deal (2003) envisioned the frames as windows which open onto cognitive terrain, and
as tools by which leaders or teams may correctly analyze a situation and then successfully navigate through it.

Leadership Styles, Decision Making, and Student Outcomes

*School Learning Environment and Student Outcomes*

In the 1992 book, *Life in a Crowded Place*, Ralph Peterson described life in an elementary school, insofar as it affects students and teachers. Basically, living in the elementary classroom is an intense social experience. Peterson (1992) explained that the immediate response of most teachers, when crowded together with students for six hours or more per day, all in a room no bigger than a large living room, is to focus on maintaining control and enforcing obedience. This doesn’t necessarily mesh with bringing students together and keeping them together as part of a learning community, which can be considered the most vital aspect of a teacher’s work (Peterson, 1992). Without a community climate, Peterson (1992) argued, real learning cannot take place; even the soundest teaching philosophies and techniques amount to little with no community to bring them to life. Peterson (1992) explained that community allows teachers to see what is happening in the classroom. Community allows teachers to identify and name the positive and negative aspects of the learning environment, which then allows teachers to exercise greater control over their work (Peterson, 1992). By understanding the way the learning community they create functions, Peterson (1992) explained, teachers are able to influence the quality of learning and life in their school.
As another important point, Avery (1993) explained that individual and group efficacy cannot occur in a vacuum of curricula, agendas, well-conceived programs, or materials. Instead, considering any group of children can be as different as they are alike, efficacy and outcomes are the result of continuous decision making by the teacher as they respond to the current contexts of the classroom (Avery, 1993).

Other aspects also affect student outcomes; for example, in the book, *Finding Flow*, Csikszentmihalyi (1997), who is a noted behavioral psychologist, discussed the phenomena of focusing energy to enhance learning, work, play, and life in general. To this end, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) introduced the concept of flow, which is a mental operational state in which a person is fully involved in the activity they are pursuing. When flow is achieved every action and thought follows, each one leading to the next, with the individual able to use his or her skills to the utmost (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) explained that developing flow is a process and that it needs time to be experienced, implemented, and reviewed. With that in mind, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) identified nine factors which can accompany a flow experience, and pointed out that the factors need not all apply in every instance of flow. The factors are: a) goals which are clear; b) focus and concentration; c) loss of self-conscious feelings; d) a distortion of sense-of-time; e) feedback which is direct and immediate; f) a balance between challenge and ability-level; g) a sense of personal control regarding the activity or situation; h) an activity which is intrinsically rewarding; and i), a narrowing of focus until
awareness is absorbed by the activity and merged into the associated action (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Many educators, such as Johnson (2009), find Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow to be valuable, especially for the realm of gifted education. Johnson (2009) queries the educational system, asking educators and administrators how they encourage new ideas. Is time allowed for the implementation of new ideas, Johnson (2009) asked; does the system encourage new ideas? Johnson (2009) argued that, in addition to the students themselves, the parents, teachers, and administrators of gifted learners would all benefit from the cultivation of ‘flow’.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), however, school leaders must have a perspective that is not constrained only to the classroom; they need to be able to see schools as systems. Avery (1993) supported this, arguing that it is not enough to see the school as both a system and separate classroom environments; those who lead must be aware of the impact of their decisions on all levels. Avery (1993) argued that while decisions should be thoughtful and well informed in terms of knowledge and experience, they must also be made in response to individual settings, at given moments in time, to address the needs of individual children. It is in the classrooms that learning occurs, or fails to occur; but decisions have systemic connotations as well (Avery, 1993). A fundamental law of teaching is that dynamic energy must be maintained as the driving force in the teaching-learning process (Avery, 1993).


Principals’ Changing Role

According to Doud and Keller (1998), school principals are currently being asked to undertake more tasks than they have in the past. According to the seventh annual survey of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the principal’s obligations are no longer limited building walk-throughs, classroom observations, and the maintenance of discipline (Doud & Keller, 1998). Today’s principals have increased responsibility for outside fund raising and other marketing activities, dealing with social services, fiscal decision making, and collaborating with site-based councils (Doud & Keller, 1998).

Simultaneously, principals are being called on more frequently to make budget decisions for the school, and to make hiring decisions regarding school teachers and staff (Doud & Keller, 1998). Doud and Keller (1998) explained that, as part of the national push to close existing academic gaps and to meet mandated standards by the year 2014, principals are now being held firmly accountable for student performance vis-à-vis student standardized test scores.

Doud and Keller (1998) found that while principals have an increased role in decision making their authority has been diminished, but their responsibility has increased leading to a 42% turnover during the 1990s. This situation, along with the trend to involve teachers, parents, and staff in policymaking, has led to a greater number of schools with collaborative shared-decision making systems (Doud & Keller, 1998). Even so, Doud and Keller (1998) explained that elementary school principals typically spend 9 hours each work-day (45 hours
each week) in work-specific activities, and 7-8 additional hours outside the school at meetings, community events, and speaking engagements.

In Doud and Keller’s 1998 study, principals reported that their highest job priorities involved contact with and supervision of staff, followed by interaction with and discipline of students. Their lowest priorities were staff development, budget, and interaction with central office staff (Doud & Keller, 1998). Contradicting this, principals reported that they were highly concerned with staff development, with staff understanding and application of technology, with improving staff performance, with retaining quality teachers, with time fragmentation, with use of student assessment, with improving student performance, and with planning for school improvement (Doud & Keller, 1998).

**Types of Principal Leadership**

Researchers Hall, Rutherford, Hord, and Huling (1984) conducted three studies to determine the effects of different principal decision making and leadership styles on school outcomes and improvement. A major premise of the study was that principal leadership styles could be classified into types, based on principals’ daily behaviors and interactions when new practices were introduced in their schools (Hall et al., 1984). The researchers (Hall et al., 1984) disagreed with the view that leadership delegation activity (LDA) is a style of leadership, and instead defined it as a political tool strongly correlated with group productivity. The researchers (Hall et al., 1984) instead identified three principal leadership types, a) Initiators, b) Managers, and c) Responders, particularly relevant to the principals’ roles as change facilitators. These leadership types
are similar to those identified by Thomas in 1978 but are broader and more closely aligned with today’s educational needs (Hall et al., 1984).

The first principal leadership style is that of Initiators, who typically have strong ideas about what constitutes good teaching and good schools and who have long range goals and policies that are clear and decisive, designed to help them attain their visions for education (Hall et al., 1984). Initiator principals make their decisions according to their beliefs about what is best for the students, based on up-to-date best-practice theories (Hall et al., 1984). Initiator principals solicit opinions and input from staff and seek changes when they believe it is necessary for the best interests of the students or the school (Hall et al., 1984).

The second described leadership style is that of Managers, who are generally responsive to situations and people and who exhibit a broad range of behaviors (Hall et al., 1984). Variations in the behavior of managers are related to the principal’s rapport with staff and teachers (Hall et al., 1984). Manager principals usually strive to keep teachers informed about their decisions, are sensitive to teacher needs, and defend and support teachers (Hall et al., 1984). Manager principals are often involved in fulfilling district office requirements, but seldom move beyond imposed or mandated changes (Hall et al., 1984).

The third style of principal leadership is that of Responders, who emphasize opportunities for teachers to take leading roles, and who otherwise focus on smoothly running the school through traditional administration tasks which treat students well and keep teachers satisfied (Hall et al., 1984).
Responder principals tend to let everyone have input before making a decision, or simply let others make decisions (Hall et al., 1984)

*Schools that Learn*

Theories on leadership and decision making styles in education have come from the field of business management, as well as from educational research. In a 1990 management book titled *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Peter Senge (1990) explained why quick solutions to problems and symptomatic response strategies, even when well-intended, often make the overall situation even more difficult. Senge (1990) argued that short-term symptomatic fixes can often prevent people from seeking sustainable reforms and long-term solutions. In his book, Senge (1990) defines four primary disciplines which are necessary for an organization to learn:

1) Personal Mastery
2) Creating and Using Mental Models
3) Building a Shared Organizational Vision
4) Team Learning.

The fifth discipline is Systems Thinking, which occurs when everyone in the organization understands and applies the first four disciplines, simultaneously, thus transforming the organization into a learning organization (Senge, 1990).

Due to a call from educational leaders, Senge and his colleagues, known as the MIT Fifth Discipline Team, worked with a team of educators and educational administrators to write a fifth discipline tool kit designed specifically for education. This book was titled *Schools That Learn: A Fifth Discipline*
Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares About Education (Senge et al., 2000). Senge et al.'s educational fieldbook contained case studies, anecdotes, and articles from prominent educational leaders, administrators, teachers, parents and students. As a resource guide, Schools that Learn helps schools reach out to and utilize both young beats and elder statesmen (Senge et al.). Senge et al. views schools as a “fulcrum point for educational and societal change” (p. 6). Further, he argued that the only way for classrooms to change is for the schools which encompass them to change; and that the schools themselves depend on the communities and school districts which in turn surround them (Senge et al.).

Inspired by Senge’s ideas, O’Callaghan published an article, “Think Like Peter Senge,” in the November 2004 issue of School Administrator. O’Callaghan, a superintendent, discussed making a workbook titled “How Schools Learn” (a title borrowed from one of Senge’s books) based on Senge’s Fifth Discipline concepts (O’Callaghan, 2004). The workbook was designed to help administrators and teachers implement Senge’s concept of organizational learning (O’Callaghan, 2004).

The Element of Leadership in Organizational Adaptation

Challenges for Schools Adapting to Change

Several leadership and decision making theories (Avery, 1993; Doud & Keller, 1998; Hall et al., 1984; Peterson, 1992; Senge et al., 2000) deal with efficacy and outcomes in education and with the problems which interfere with a schools’ success, but another theme is the continuity of change and the
necessity to deal with change at every level (Tirozzi, 2003). Change occurs on a daily basis: it is a cosmic problem which short-term solutions such as standardized-testing cannot address (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Senge et al., 2000, Tirozzi, 2003). Ultimately, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 represents the government’s effort to implement reform in a time of turmoil and dissatisfaction (NCLB, 2001), with standardized testing, which has already been identified as a short-term, non-systemic fix (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Senge et al., 2000).

In a book titled Politics and Education: A Conundrum for School Leadership, Tirozzi (2003) explained that, in order to overcome the current shortcomings of the educational system, educators must become more aware of student success and outcomes and modify strategies to meet changing situations. Essentially, more accountability is needed (NCLB, 2001). However, Tirozzi (2003) said that “leading change is a relatively new role for principals” (p. 61). Tirozzi (2003) also asserted that principals must lead in order to create a supportive educational culture and climate, in order for teachers to develop common goals aimed at helping all students achieve proficiency, and in order for all staff to keep their focus on student achievement.

In an Educational Leadership article, “The Change Leader,” Fullan (2002b) states unequivocally that “only principals who are equipped to handle a complex rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained student improvement” (p. 16). Fullan (2002b) argued that for change to be met successfully and sustainably, principals must be instructional leaders who are focused on the development of teacher knowledge, program coherence,
technical resources, and the professional community in their own school and in
the entire school district.

Another view of managing change is offered by Roger Martin, dean of the
Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. In a 2007 book,
*The Opposable Mind: How Successful Leaders Win Through Integrative
Thinking*, Martin argues that leaders, to successfully achieve their desired
outcomes, must be able to integrate multiple opposing strategies, viewpoints,
philosophies, and models. In other words, Martin (2007) argues that leaders
must be able to face the tension of opposing models, such as the curricular,
assessment, and training preferences of individual teachers, and leverage the
opposing energy into a new and better model, rather than viewing conflict as an
either-or situation.

*Sustainable School Improvement*

addressed the question of why educational reform has so far failed to achieve
sustainable growth. Fullan (2000) argued that educational reform that lasts
depends on the quality of the local school development and simultaneously on
the quality of the surrounding educational infrastructures. The first of the three
stories Fullan (2000) presented in the article is the “Inside” story, which describes
the internal workings of school improvement. Fullan (2000) discusses the
formation of professional learning communities, a focus on student work through
the lens of assessment, and assessment-based changes in educational practice.
In a second section, the “Inside-Out” story, Fullan (2000) explained that because the external environment of schools has changed and become turbulent and complex, and because schools, administrators, and educators now operate behind transparent walls and under the microscope of accountability, everyone must change and learn to perform optimally. This entails a scholastic focus on reculturing to successfully deal with five external forces: a) the parents and the community, b) technology, c) corporate connections, d) government policies, and e) the community of teaching professionals (Fullan, 2000). Ultimately, Fullan (2000) argued, in order to deal with outside forces schools must be able to accept, adapt to, and integrate external forces by developing and implementing professional learning communities.

The third story Fullan (2000) presented was the “Outside-In” story. In the context of someone on the outside of the individual school level, Fullan explained that practices described in the first two stories were not occurring successfully in many schools. While there is a large body of knowledge centered on how to improve individual schools (Avery, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Doud & Keller, 1998; Fullan, 2000; Hall et al., 1984; Peterson, 1992; Senge et al., 2000), there is little shared knowledge about school system success. However, educators are starting to examine the problem of how to improve large numbers of schools within the same system (Fullan, 2000). Even if big systems commit to change, it has to happen internally inside of every school in the system; therefore, change on a wider front involves building capacity, or efficacy, one school at a time in order to build capacity simultaneously all across the board (Fullan, 2000).
Leadership in Sustainable Systems

These examples were somewhat demonstrated in a condensed form by Jim Collins’ (2001) analogy of leadership styles, labeled The Hedgehog Affect. Collins (2001) described leaders as either foxes or hedgehogs. According to an ancient Greek parable foxes are those who know many small things while hedgehogs are those who know only one big thing. In describing great leaders, Collins (2001) argues that the best leaders are those who are able to simplify the complex problems of the world and manage it with a single principle that organizes, unifies, and guides all decisions. This is not to argue that hedgehogs are simplistic: rather they are able to translate complexities to simple, but profound ideas (ex.: Darwin and Evolution, Adam Smith and the Invisible Hand, Einstein and Relativity) (Collins, 2001). Hedgehog leaders’ ideas may be simple but they reflect deep understanding and penetrating insights (Collins, 2001).

On a related note, in the book Leadership & Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action, Fullan (2005) discussed the many leadership problems associated with large scale reform and ways in which the problems can be simplified. Fullan (2005) pointed out that conceptualization and thinking do not disseminate well through organizations, but terminology travels well, and can promote large scale change. Fullan (2005) also argued that autonomy of action is not the same as capacity for action, and that building capacity is necessarily a central component of any lasting or deep plan of reform. NCLB of 2001, for example, required all states to institute achievement-driven systems in which Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in student achievement is documented in school
report cards, and in which there are escalating consequences for schools which fail to meet AYP expectations (NCLB, 2001). Fullan (2005) argued that because systems of this sort are not focused on capacity, leaders desperately jump from solution to solution in order to attempt superficial and impossible goals. According to Fullan (2005), achievement gains in systems without a focus on capacity and sustainability tend to be minor and to plateau.

Fullan (2005) defined sustainability as a dynamic process and as the ability of a system to engage in the complexities necessary for continuous improvement. Sustainable improvement is defined then as progress which is consistent with deep values of human purpose (Fullan, 2005). According to Fullan (2005), eight elements are necessary for a sustainable system: a) public service with a moral guiding purpose, b) a commitment to systemic change at all levels, c) building lateral capacity through networks, d) vertical relationships that include intelligent accountability and capacity building, e) a focus on deep learning, f) a simultaneous commitment to short-term and long-term goals, g) renewing energy in a cyclic (looping) fashion, and h) leverage from purposeful leadership.

Sergiovanni (2007) also focused on the importance of public-value and moral leadership in driving change. According to Sergiovanni (2007) the challenge facing leaders in education is to assist their organizations in realizing that traditional approaches can no longer be considered affective and that changes must be implemented in order to create environments that are nonthreatening and collaborative. Sergiovanni (2007) explained that, though
educational administrators and institutions have successfully responded to outside pressures in the past, they continue to suffer from tension between traditional ways of organization and the changes required by evolving economic, political, social, and technological demands. In this light, Sergiovanni (2007) argued that the traditional strategies of leadership which focus on control and authority are no longer effective in meeting the needs of educational institutions which are globally oriented and highly diverse. Instead, Sergiovanni (2007) recommended the nation should actualize the nation’s educational environments as learning communities which contain individual specialist able to meet the needs of local, regional, and even international interest groups. In order to achieve this, Sergiovanni (2007) suggested a framework or administrative architecture in which leaders strive to find and recognize the experience, value, and expertise of individuals within their organizations while serving as enablers, facilitators, community builders, and the organizations moral compass. All this entails that leaders must be able to facilitate change and at the same time diminish the threats and fears often associated with new organizational strategies (Sergiovanni, 2007). This is in agreement with a 2008 article by Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur, and Schley, in which the authors explained how leadership is strongly associated with inspiration. The word *Inspire*, Senge et al. (2008) explained, comes from the Latin *inspirare*, which means to breathe life into a thing. In this sense, leadership is the inspiration of organizations by bringing them life, energy, goals, and focus (Senge et al., 2008).
Why Schools Fail to Adapt

Even when organizations attempt to embrace change, they often fail to successfully adapt and sustain change. In a 1999 article Bolman and Deal wrote about how change efforts can still fail even when everyone, even the leaders, agree that the idea is correct and that it is time for the status quo to change. Bolman and Deal pointed out that two-thirds of businesses fail in their change efforts regardless of their degree of commitment. To explain this, Bolman and Deal (1999) argued that the theory and practice of change initiatives, though they often address human resource and structural needs and barriers, frequently fail to address cultural and political obstacles. Since reform initiatives often fail to support and develop individual and organizational knowledge and skills, Bolman and Deal (1999) argued that collateral investment in training is imperative for successful organizational change to occur.

Zaccaro and Horn (2003) suggested several reasons, offered by both practitioners and theoreticians, for the limited application of available leadership theories so far. The authors (Zaccaro & Horn, 2003) suggested that, because management and leadership researchers often have a narrow focus for their research, the applicability of their results can be limited for practitioners. One example of this is the way many theories or leadership models emphasize direct interpersonal interaction by the manager as the primary form of influence, which leads to a focus on leader's styles and their direct impact on their immediate subordinates and followers (Zaccaro & Horn, 2003). However, for middle-level and upper-level leaders, indirect influence is often more important (Zaccaro &
Zaccaro and Horn (2003) argued that managers in the middle-level, because they manage multiple units and the subordinates of those units, two or more levels below them, need to have a perspective that involves their influence below them as well as their influence with their own supervisors. On the other hand, Zaccaro and Horn (2003) pointed out, senior leaders deal with a wider range of responsibility and set strategies for the entire organization, which lets them influence many tiers of followers whom they may never even meet. According to Zaccaro and Horn (2003), few models of leadership actually reflect these distinctions.

Leech and Fulton (2007) argued that a combination of different factors act to naturally inhibit the success of schools utilizing shared or collective decision making. One such factor may be the multilayered issue of training, which requires that both teachers and principals be trained synchronistically in collaborative decision making (Leech & Fulton, 2007). Additionally, Leech and Fulton (2007) pointed out, principals must receive training in order to act as facilitators for shared decision making. Essentially, all those involved, from teachers to principals, must have training hours and occasions which are parallel, in order to practice different decision making models (Leech & Fulton, 2007).

According to Datnow and Castellano (2001), the success of school-wide reform is entirely dependent on leadership and decision making that is strong and collaborative. The authors (Datnow & Castellano, 2001) pointed out that the literature of school improvement demonstrates clearly that schools will not be strengthened unless teachers and administrators work together. Datnow &
Castellano (2001) argued instead, that teachers and administrators must be connected so that the organizational structures are centered around the most productive work in the field of schooling. In order to achieve the daunting task of connecting administrators and teachers, Datnow and Castellano (2001) argued that the operational relationships of educational organizations must change at all levels. Additionally, the authors (Datnow & Castellano, 2001) argued, research should focus on schools where the principals have demonstrated successful involvement in change, restructuring, and reform.

Impact of School Leader Decision Making on Study Variables

*Reading Research, Reading Training, and Leader Decision Making*

According to Henk, Moore, Marinak, and Tomasetti (2000), literacy pedagogy has in recent years taken a place under the microscope of public attention. This, the authors argued, was due to the constant bad publicity America’s schools have received due to consistently low student performances (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy [CEBP], 2003; Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; Uline & Johnson, 2005; Viadero & Hoff, 2006) or it may be due to high publicity presidential initiatives, such as America Reads (Office of the Press Secretary, 1997), or the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). Because of the public attention and the national pressure to improve the situation, state legislatures have begun to mandate the literacy methodologies used by teachers in public schools (Henk et al., 2000). This has caused school staff, from classroom teachers to literacy supervisors and principals, to find themselves in a position where they must
defend their results but have little choice in the decisions about tools and strategy (Henk et al., 2000).

Further, for teachers, looking to literacy supervisors or administrators for direction in choosing or defining reading education goals is often complicated: teachers frequently have limited time to devote to maintaining their familiarity with current reading knowledge, and administrators must deal perpetually with issues that have little to do with reading training (Henk et al., 2000). Collectively, school staff find themselves unable to keep up with reading curricula research and adjusted methodologies (Henk et al., 2000). The authors (Henk et al., 2000) pointed out that the lack of informed dialogue among teachers and with teachers, and teachers and administrators regarding reading training, acts as a great impediment to the school’s success at meeting student literacy needs. In order for professionals to meet the literacy needs of their students they must find ways to establish academic dialogues centered around proven state of the art pedagogy (Henk et al., 2000).

According to Mackey, Pitcher, and Decman (2006), while studies have linked the principal’s influence on the success or failure of school reading programs, few studies have attempted to link the principal’s characteristics directly to student performances on standardized test scores. To remedy this, the researchers (Mackey et al., 2006) performed a study synthesizing principal interviews, teacher interviews, field observations and notes in order to create composites of four elementary principals. The composites were then analyzed in light of five of the National Association of Elementary School Principals’
standards for principal leadership (Mackey et al., 2006). Additionally, the
principals’ composites were linked to three years of reading scores for the
second grade students in the respective schools (Mackey et al., 2006).

According to the researchers (Mackey et al., 2006), the study of principal
impact grew out of a larger ethnographic study focused on the reading strategies
of second grade students in four urban schools, each of which was utilizing a
different reading program. During observations of the students, teachers, and
principals, the researchers (Mackey et al., 2006) began to note the importance of
the principal in regard to the actualization of the different reading programs in
each school. The researchers ultimately determined that three concepts had
significant impact on student scores: first, who was responsible for establishing
and for sharing the vision guiding the school’s reading program, second, the
educational background of the principal, and third, the instructional role pursued
by the principal (Mackey et al., 2006).

The principals’ vision, or lack of vision, determined whether they actively
chose their school’s reading program; in two instances when the principals
delegated or relied on others to choose their school’s reading program, the
principals later showed an incomplete understanding of the philosophies and
mechanics behind the chosen program during their interviews (Mackey et al.,
2006). In these instances, when the principals did not understand the schools
reading program, the researchers frequently noted practices in individual
classrooms which were not in alignment with the agenda and vision of the
schools’ reading program. In one instance, when the principal was directly
involved in choosing and implementing the school’s reading program, the
classroom practices were far more aligned with the program theory and the
second grade comprehensive scores in reading rose 20 points (Mackey et al.,
2006).

The second concept Mackey et al. (2006) identified as being significant
was the principal’s background. In two cases, the principals who had prior
training in fields related to reading were able to explained their decisions in light
of their knowledge, observations, and experiences related to reading education
(Mackey et al., 2006). Those principals without expertise in reading related fields
relied on the opinions or recommendations of others to choose their schools’
reading programs (Mackey et al., 2006). The researchers (Mackey et al., 2006)
observed that principals who did not have a reading background also did not
actively participate in or attend the teachers’ training for the chosen program.
When the principals did not attend synchronous reading training, the researchers
(Mackey et al., 2006) noted that critical components of the reading model
outlined by the program in use were missing from classrooms or replaced by
contradictory components. These leadership decisions were justified by the
principals’ pre-existing reading beliefs and by the pressure and practices being
pushed by the state or local school districts (Mackey et al., 2006).

Counter to this, a principal with a master’s degree in Reading and further
study in Educational Leadership was able to recount the history of reading
program choices and effects at his school (Mackey et al., 2006). That principal
had analyzed student scores at his school for the previous program and had
chosen a new program based on current research as to how to best cover those areas he determined had been lacking (Mackey et al., 2006). After experience with the new program, due to further analysis of student outcomes, the principal decided to modify the curriculum to even more closely align with the needs of the school’s students (Mackey et al., 2006). The principal was able to direct the more-balanced approach he wanted at his school by regularly attending district administrator meetings (Mackey et al., 2006).

In regards to the principals’ instructional roles, the researchers (Mackey et al., 2006) noted that those principals who did not attend synchronous training with their teachers were negatively affected by state curriculum political pressure and did not understand the underlying research behind their school reading program. This caused teachers to fail to adhere to the chosen reading program and to attempt to utilize various conflicting instructional paradigms (Mackey et al., 2006).

On the other hand, when the principal attended synchronous training and supervised the professional staff development at their school, they were knowledgeable enough to provide ideal materials matching the reading program’s requirements, and were able to significantly increase the students’ reading test scores (Mackey et al., 2006). Furthermore, when the principal took an active role in teacher training and in understanding and choosing the school reading program, their school was able to maintain higher scores even when no longer under the microscope of a reading study (Mackey et al., 2006). The schools where the principal did not actively participate in curriculum decision
making and in synchronous training were unable to raise their scores as much initially, and were unable to maintain their students’ scores when the school was no longer being directly observed (Mackey et al., 2006).

Reading Research, Reading Core Curricula, and Leader Decision Making

According to Calkins (2001), literacy is the foundation skill of all educational core curricula. Without the ability to read with comprehension, children may not be able to succeed at any grade level (Calkins, 2001; CEBP, 2003). As part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2007), the Reading Report Card showed a persistent downward national trend for students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades (CEBP, 2003; Viadero & Hoff, 2006). In addition, the 2005 Brookings Papers on Educational Policy (Ravitch, 2005) show that 37% of 4th graders read below basic level, which renders them essentially illiterate (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008). To this date, using the limited resources made available by the nation, schools have been unable to close this gap between student achievement and national expectations (CEBP, 2003; Uline & Johnson, 2005; Viadero & Hoff, 2006).

According to Ornstein and Levine (2003), Jean Piaget serves as one of the cornerstones of early educational practice. Piaget focused on the developmental stages involved in children’s cognition, thought, and language, including the ways in which children conceptualized logic, numbers, space, geometry, morality, and physical reality (Ornstein & Levine, 2003). One of Piaget’s main arguments was that children go through four stages of development: a) first, the sensorimotor stage; b) then the preoperational stage;
c) followed by the concrete operations stage; and d) the formal operations stage (Ornstein & Levine, 2003). Piaget argued that, while children pass through all these stages during relatively predictable periods of time, the stages should not be used in a way that becomes rigid or doctrinized; the stages are not merely chronological; they depend on the children’s exploration, experiences, and qualitative understanding of the world (Ornstein & Levine, 2003). Thus, for every child, since their experiences are different, their progression through the stages of developmental learning will proceed at a different pace (Ornstein & Levine, 2003).

Vygotsky’s (1962) social development theory draws upon Piaget’s cognitive stages theory. The works of Vygotsky, a Russian-born psychologist, were originally banned by Stalin, and then began to be reprinted in the 1960’s (Williams, 2005). Since that time, Vygotsky’s books, *Mind in Society*, *Thought and Language*, and *Pedagogical Psychology*, have continued to influence psychologist and educators in America (Williams, 2005). Essentially, Vygotsky argued that each individual’s development of cognitive thought is shaped by their society and culture through the mechanism of socialization and human interaction (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Thus, learning can be considered culturally or socially determined, with language holding a crucial position in its development (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Essentially, Vygotsky (1962, 1978) argued that all learning occurs between an expert and a novice, wherein the novice is able to assimilate ideas and concepts that are more complex than they would otherwise be able to manage through the structure, prompts, and scaffolding
provided by the expert (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) labeled this area of potential learning the zone of proximal development. The principle of the proximal zone is that children are able to accomplish alone what they are first able to do in cooperation, which then argued that the best instruction is that which moves ahead of development and leads it (Vygotsky, 1978). Another principle Vygotsky presented as important to language skill is the idea of symbolic literacy, or the use of signs or symbolic mediators to represent understanding and development of concepts (1962).

The subject of reading has long been a prolifically researched topic in the field of education and reading instruction, as well as a primary focus of research at the elementary school level (Cortese, 2007). Researchers have traditionally attempted to solve problems related to disadvantaged children’s classroom behavior and lack of reading skills, to a lack of quality teachers, and to the diagnosis of reading problems (Cortese, 2007). As an example, in 1934 Gates and Bond presented the results of research which had examined the relationship between reading skills and behavior among 100 slow-reader or non-reader children. The research of Gates and Bond (1936) identified a number of classroom behaviors associated with children with reading difficulty: loud or defiant behavior, tension or nervousness, withdrawal, submissiveness, and bullying. Gates and Bond (1936) argued that there was a strong positive correlation between reading difficulties and acting out in class, and that by detecting and correcting children’s inability to read, educators may be able to eliminate many serious future problems for the child.
In 1967 the Carnegie Corporation published a reading study (Chall) titled *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*. Chall’s (1967) study dealt with the results of research conducted over three years during a time when controversy was high regarding best practice for beginning reading instruction. Chall (1967) began by reexamining the existing research, and then by describing various instructional methods and interviewing proponents of each method. In this study, Chall (1967) compared various methods of first-grade reading-instruction which were considered new or experimental. Essentially, Chall (1967) found that instruction in word-analysis, phonics, sound-symbol relations, and decoding was superior to whole-word instruction, and that beginning reading was different than mature reading. Good teaching, good instructional materials, and good language also proved to be important (Chall, 1967).

One program which demonstrated success was Carnegie’s First-Grade, which demonstrated statistically significant outcomes based on strong systematic phonics instruction (Chall, 1967). This went against the conventional wisdom of the time which argued that initial reading for meaning based on learning sight words, context, and sound letter correspondence (Chall, 1967).

In 1999, Chall studied early childhood education programs again and found a number of specific interventions that were effective in randomized control trials. For example, it was found that at-risk readers in grades 1-3 were able to read with a higher degree of proficiency after one-on-one tutoring by qualified tutors than 75% of students who did not receive tutoring (Chall, 1999). Reducing class size was also found to be significant, since average small-class students
score higher the Stanford Achievement Test than 60% of students in standard size classes (Chall, 1999). Early reading instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness was shown to help students read more proficiently than 70% of students who did not receive such instruction (Chall, 1999).

In 1997, Sanacore dealt with another issue, the necessity for good leadership in elementary education, in an article titled “Guidelines for Successful Reading Leaders,” Sanacore (1997) explained that the building principal must able to simultaneously manage a number of necessary factors. For example, the principal must ensure that there is a shared vision of the program, that all the teachers are highly competent, that needed instructional resources are available, and that the children’s parents are actively involved (Sanacore, 1997). This requires the principal to be fully cognizant of the teacher’s strengths and expectations, the schools strengths and budget, and learning environment of the surrounding culture (Sanacore, 1997). School reading education decision making must consider the needs of the school and must be supported through the comprehension and cooperation of the school faculty and staff (Sanacore, 1997).

Maxwell (2001) also wrote about the importance of leadership and cooperation in choosing a school’s reading curricula. Maxwell (2001) argued that successful leaders are those who are able to keep the broad goals of the organization always in their people’s thoughts. Similarly, Maxwell (2001) states that good leaders must recognize the correct people and give them the correct
opportunities, accurately size up situations, line up the right resources, and give
up personal agendas in order to step up to a higher level of leadership.

Barbara Taylor (2008), writing from the Minnesota Center for Reading
Research (Minnesota’s NCLB mandated State Reading Lab) discussed the areas
and problems which teachers and principals must focus their attention if they are
to provide excellent reading instruction. According to Taylor (2008), research
shows that educators must concentrate on phonics, phonemic awareness,
fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension if they want their students to become
good readers. At the same time, Taylor (2008) argued, teachers must use data
from ongoing assessment in order to meet the individual needs of their students.
Taylor (2008) explained that the reading research report of the National Reading
Panel (NRP) in 2000 supported a balanced approach to reading education in
which reading skills and strategies are taught, opportunities to listen to and read
engaging texts are provided, and the students are asked to write about and
discuss what they’ve read (NRP, 2000).

According to Squires, Canney, and Trevisan (2009), highly qualified
teachers are necessary if student literacy outcomes are to be improved
nationwide. Idaho state law, due to the impetus supplied by the NCLB,
mandates that preservice K-8 teachers pass the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy
Assessment (ICLA) before achieving certification (Squires et al., 2009). In an
article published in the 2009 Journal of Teacher Education, Squires et al. (2009)
report on a study designed to determine areas where pre-service teacher
candidates lacked adequate knowledge of research-based literacy pedagogy and
research-based reading assessment. As a side effect of the law, an investigation was launched into teacher preparation at Idaho’s seven teacher-training institutions (Squires et al., 2009). The review found that some of the training institutions had been offering the minimum required six-semester developmental reading credits stipulated for certification in elementary education, but with no required course work focused on reading diagnosis or intervention (Squires et al., 2009). While some of the institutions offered more credit hours in reading, they were only designated elective hours for teachers pursuing a reading minor (Squires et al., 2009).

Due to NCLB, interest in teacher knowledge about scientifically based literacy pedagogy and assessment increased all across the nation (Squires et al., 2009). In 2002, the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) was convened in order to create a synthesized national report summarizing the existing and ongoing research of factors affecting children’s development of early literacy skills (NELP, 2008). The project involved the cooperation and support of The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), The National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008).

The National Early Literacy Panel’s report was focused on the school and home factors, which influenced early childhood literacy development (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). The purpose of the project was to allow for informed decisions whereby families and teachers might better support children’s
reading through better educational practice and policy (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). Specifically, through synthesis of the scientifically developed data, literacy-specific materials could be created for teachers and parents, and improved staff-development programs could be devised for family-literacy practitioners and early childhood educators (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). Areas studied included: reading, early literacy, cognition, language, pediatrics, English as a second language, research methodology, special education, and early childhood education (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). In order to determine which parenting activities, interventions, and instructional activities helped children develop early literacy skills, the NELP asked four questions:

1) What are the skills and abilities of young children (age birth through five years or kindergarten) that predict later reading, writing, or spelling outcomes?

2) Which programs, interventions, and other instructional approaches or procedures have contributed to or inhibited gains in children’s skills and abilities that are linked to later outcomes in reading, writing, or spelling?

3) What environments and settings have contributed to or inhibited gains in children’s skills and abilities that are linked to later outcomes in reading, writing, or spelling?
What child characteristics have contributed to or inhibited gains in children’s skills and abilities that are linked to later outcomes in reading, writing, or spelling? (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008, p. 2)

In answering these questions, the NELP conducted an electronic search of professional studies and articles in PsycINFO and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), supplemented by hand searches of research journals considered important in the field of early literacy, reference checks, and expert nominations (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). The end result of the study was a summarization of the data showing the correlations between later literacy development and children’s early skills and abilities, as well as the impact on children’s learning of various instructional interventions (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008).

It was found that the reading and writing skills developed between birth and age 5 (conventional reading and writing skills) showed a consistently strong and clear relationship with later literacy skill (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). In addition, multiple studies with large numbers of children showed that six different variables, each representing a precursor/early-literacy skill, demonstrated medium-to-large predictive relationships in regard to measures of later literacy ability, even when socioeconomic status (SES), IQ, and other affecting variables were taken into account (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). These six variables were:

- alphabet knowledge (AK): knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters
• phonological awareness (PA): the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning
• rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of random letters or digits
• RAN of objects or colors: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating random sets of pictures of objects (e.g., “car,” “tree,” “house,” “man”) or colors
• writing or writing name: the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one’s own name
• phonological memory: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time. (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008, p. 3)

Other variables found to be potentially important included:
• concepts about print: knowledge of print conventions (e.g., left–right, front–back) and concepts (book cover, author, text)
• print knowledge: a combination of elements of AK, concepts about print, and early decoding
• reading readiness: usually a combination of AK, concepts of print, vocabulary, memory, and PA
• oral language: the ability to produce or comprehend spoken language, including vocabulary and grammar
• visual processing: the ability to match or discriminate visually presented symbols. (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008, p. 4)

Collectively, these eleven variables were able to consistently predict later literacy achievement or lack of achievement for children. In terms of relationships among the variables, oral language showed more importance when broken down into components such as the ability to define words, grammar, and listening comprehension, rather than simply single-word knowledge of vocabulary. Children's early phonological awareness was found to be important in predicting literacy success later in life (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008).

An additional agenda of the National Early Literacy Panel was to categorize and determine the effectiveness of various instructional programs, strategies, and practices in terms of their ability to impart precursor skills or conventional literacy skills to children (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). After studying the available peer-reviewed studies and literature, the panel (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008) determined that intervention strategies could be divided into five categories:

• Code-focused interventions [78 peer-reviewed studies]: Interventions designed to teach children skills related to cracking the alphabetic code. Most code-focused interventions included PA instruction.

• Shared-reading interventions [19 peer-reviewed studies]: Interventions involving reading books to children. These interventions included studies of simple shared reading and those that encouraged various forms of reader-child interactions around the material being read.
• Parent and home programs [32 peer-reviewed studies]: Interventions using parents as agents of intervention. These interventions may have involved teaching parents instructional techniques to use with their children at home to stimulate children’s linguistic or cognitive development.

• Preschool and kindergarten programs [33 peer-reviewed studies]: Studies evaluating any aspect of a preschool or kindergarten program. Ten studies in this category concerned one particular intervention (the Abecedarian Project). Other studies evaluated effects of educational programs, curricula, or policies, such as extended-year experience, on kindergartners.

• Language-enhancement interventions [28 peer-reviewed studies]: Studies examining the effectiveness of an instructional effort aimed at improving young children’s language development. (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008, pp. 4-5)

Collectively, it was found that the different instructional strategies and intervention methods had significantly different effects on different portions or aspects of children’s early literacy ability (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). For example: interventions that were code-focused were found to consistently help build conventional literacy skills; interventions centered around book-sharing helped build oral language skills and print knowledge skills; home and parent programs were shown to be effective in developing children’s cognitive abilities and oral language skills; kindergarten and preschool programs
were effective for improving reading readiness and spelling; and interventions focused on language-enhancement were shown to significantly increase children’s oral language skills (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). When examined all together, the findings of these many studies suggest that different approaches may be appropriate for different age-groups, or for groups at different developmental levels, and that specific interventions can be tailored to meet the assessed needs of any particular group, such as children raised in poverty (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008).

The researchers (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008) stated that there was a pressing need for more studies involving age-level comparisons of the effectiveness of different intervention methods. For example, language interventions were found to be most effective early on (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008). Similarly, the researchers (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008) argued that there was a need for studies to determine whether or not early instruction focused on improving skills such as alphabet knowledge (AK), oral language development, or concepts of print, would prove to causally connected to children’s later literacy achievement levels (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008; NELP, 2008).

Unfortunately, not all reports about effectiveness studies have been so optimistic (Viadero & Hoff, 2006). The What Works Clearinghouse, operated by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Science, was designed to allow policy-makers and practitioners to quickly and easily see the results of effectiveness studies on various educational practices and programs designed to
raise student achievement. However, the Clearinghouse’s review of beginning-
reading programs found very few supplemental or comprehensive programs
demonstrated actual scientific evidence to support their claims of effectiveness in
raising student achievement (Viadero & Hoff, 2006). Furthermore, none of the
commercial reading programs which are currently most popular on the
educational market turned out to have validating studies which were sufficiently
rigorous to be included for review by the clearinghouse (Viadero & Hoff, 2006).
In other words, many of the full-year curricula that are prominently used by
schools across the country did not actually have studies utilizing experimental
designs or randomized-control trials able to meet the minimal standards of the
clearinghouse (Viadero & Hoff, 2006).

In fact, the majority of the programs which were labeled by the
clearinghouse as having definite or potentially positive effects were intervention
programs, or supplemental programs, rather than core reading programs
(Viadero & Hoff, 2006). Even in these cases, the results came only from only
one or two studies which were able to meet the clearinghouse’s scientific
standards of rigor (Viadero & Hoff, 2006). Very few studies were vetted as
effective in several areas, and only one program was shown to have positive or
potentially positive effects across the board, in alphabetic, comprehension,
fluency, and general reading achievement (Viadero & Hoff, 2006). One reason
for this lack of strong evidence, according to the Coalition for Evidence-Based
Policy (CEBP, 2003), is the fact that the efficacy of many educational
interventions has only been demonstrated by studies which were advocacy-driven or simply poorly designed.

To help principals and teachers sort through the claims made by the providers of educational practices, strategies, curriculums, and programs, the CEBP (2003) released a guide to help practitioners distinguish between interventions which were supported by scientifically-rigorous evidence from interventions which had no such support. The idea behind the guide was that practitioners could create major improvements in both their schools and in the entire education system if they were able to recognize and choose scientifically-proven interventions (CEBP, 2003). In this manner, the CEBP (2003) argued, practitioners would be able to improve the educational outcomes, as well as the life outcomes of the children in their schools.

The CEBP’s (2003) guide consisted of four main parts: first, an explanation of randomized control trials, and an argument that such trials are critical and the only valid way of establishing rigorous evidence of a particular intervention’s efficacy; second, a simple method, based on whether or not the intervention is backed by randomized control trials, of determining whether or not an intervention is truly effective; third, a method of evaluating whether or not an intervention is possibly effective, if it is backed by less-rigorous studies; and fourth, important factors such as cost and funding and the importance of sticking to the details of a chosen program, are outlined for practitioners (CEBP, 2003).

According to Taylor (2008), even when teachers and principals have acquired optimal reading curricula or intervention materials, they must
continuously focus and reflect on the content and pedagogy of their instruction, and make choices to meet the students' individual needs based on assessment data. Without constant attention to student assessment, the quality of the materials being used is irrelevant, since materials and strategies should be constantly adjusted to meet the ongoing needs of the students (Taylor, 2008).

*Reading Research, Program Evaluation, and Leader Decision Making*

According to Fitzpatrick et al. (2004), the noted lack of evidentiary reports demonstrating the success of earlier federally funded education programs led to concern while the ESEA of 1965 was being deliberated in Congress. Because of this, Title I and Title III of the ESEA were equipped with an evaluative component requiring decision makers who received block grants to write reports explaining how the money was spent (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Additionally, Congress mandated that ESEA evaluation reports should link objectives and outcomes in terms of standardized test scores (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Because they initially lacked expertise in evaluation of this sort, and because training programs were not supplied to address this, educational decision makers borrowed the methodologies of other sciences in order to accomplish the mandated program evaluations (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Nevertheless, ESEA marked the first real use of program evaluation in education, the beginning of educational evaluation research, a new focus on program feedback, and the development of the evaluation field as a profession (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004).

Despite more than four decades of work, education has still not lived up to the standards Americans generally expect (CEBP, 2003; Uline & Johnson, 2005;
Viadero & Hoff, 2006). Schmoker (2008), in a recent article published in the journal of *Educational Leadership*, argued that this is because educational program evaluation has not been measuring the things that really matter in regards to improving student outcomes. Schmoker (2008) argued that, if data-driven instruction is to succeed in transforming schooling, the focus needs to be shifted away from rigid accountability formulas. Instead, Schmoker (2008) suggested that standards must promote environments in which people from all economic and ethnic backgrounds are able to receive a modern, high-quality education. As a good example of program evaluation being done properly, Schmoker (2008) referred to the New York Performance Standards Consortium, wherein educational leaders in 28 New York schools use data-driven decision making to direct their learning choices, in a way that is both simple and effective.

In an article titled “The Promise and Pitfalls of Using Imprecise School Accountability Measures,” Kane and Staiger (2000) explained that most systems of school accountability focus on three separate elements: student testing, public reports of the school’s performance and progress, and a system of sanctions and rewards based on school performance. According to Kane and Staiger (2000), by the 2001-2002 school year almost all states had begun to issue reports of school performance. It has been somewhat less common for states to explicitly delineate sanctions or financial rewards for school performances, Kane and Staiger (2000) explained, however, by the 2001-2002 school year approximately 75% of the U.S. population lived in areas where states had mandated such practices.
NCLB of 2001 mandated testing for students in the third grade and again in the eighth grade; and while some states chose to use off-the-shelf testing packages such as the Stanford Achievement Test or the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills), many states instead chose to design their own tests (Kane & Staiger, 2000). While clear penalties were often imposed at the state level when students did not take the state-mandated tests, there was no uniformity from state to state regarding specific sanctions (Kane & Staiger, 2000). Most states also provided the public with an education report card which gave information about how well each state was doing in terms of student test score performances, often with letter grades (A-F) being assigned to the schools (Kane & Staiger, 2000). The sanctions, though clearly delineated, were seldom used by most states, although they could include such measures as: requiring the school to submit a plan for improvement, letting students transfer away from the school, and closing or reconstruction the school (Kane & Staiger, 2000). In judging the school achievement, about half the states only noted student test scores, while the other half also reported on attendance, dropout rates, and subgroup scores (Kane & Staiger, 2000).

A negative facet of measuring school performance, Kane and Staiger (2000) argued, comes from possible inconsistencies or variance in school scores due to the fact that a few children who are extremely bright or who are undisciplined, can significantly alter a school’s results when, as in most elementary schools there are as few as 69 students per grade. Similarly, smaller schools are likely to have greater degrees of fluctuation in score for a number of
reasons including issues of curriculum and student-teacher chemistry (Kane & Staiger, 2000). In order to address this variance, Kane and Staiger (2000) recommended that all measures involve comparisons with scores in the previous and following years, in order to assess whether or not the score is an actual reflection of the learning system or a one-time phenomena. In counterpoint, while the accountability systems of North Carolina and Texas have been used to support the argument that systems of this type are valuable guides for educational decision makers, results in other states have been far more ambiguous (Kane & Staiger, 2000).

Reading Research, Funding, and Leader Decision Making

Odden and Picus (2004) argued that the concern of school finance should be to provide those educational services necessary to insure student achievement. In order to accomplish this, daily leadership decisions must be made about the appropriate allocation and use of school funds (Odden & Picus, 2004). For much of the last century the issue of school finance has been wrapped around questions of equity (Odden & Picus, 2004). For example, the uneven distribution of the property taxes that provide funding for local education is visible in the large variances of per-pupil expenditures for different districts in each state (Odden & Picus, 2004).

In the 1990s, the link between individual districts, amounts of educational monies, decisions about specific uses of school funds, and student outcomes began to attract more attention (Odden & Picus, 2004). This contributed to a renewed interest in educational adequacy and productivity (Odden & Picus,
As the U.S. moved into the 21st century, stakeholders in education and policymakers began to publicly and officially ask a number of questions, such as: how much will it take, in terms of money, for students to attain high achievement; what is the fairest, most equitable, and most efficient way to distribute funding among students, school programs, and districts; and, is student performance affected by level of funding and use of funding (Odden & Picus, 2004).

According to Augenblick, Myers, and Anderson (1997) the problem of school funding in terms of insuring adequacy and equity, is one of the most difficult and complex issues state legislatures must deal with. For one thing, the concepts of adequacy and equity are abstract, and therefore both hard to measure and hard for decision makers to implement (Augenblick et al., 1997). Simultaneously state legislatures must deal with large numbers of school districts, all of which tend to vary considerably in terms of their needs and student characteristics, the costs of doing business in the area, and the ability of the local population to supply supporting taxes (Augenblick et al., 1997). Not only are all of these area characteristics difficult to manage, they are difficult to map comprehensively and to balance (Augenblick et al., 1997). Balancing per-pupil revenue from school district to school district is a continuous problem for state-level decision makers (Augenblick et al., 1997). The solution to equitable per-student spending does not always seem balanced, as it can involve the residents of poorer districts paying twice as much in terms of income taxes as the residents of richer areas. In cases where disputes over equity arise, state supreme courts adjudicate, though they refer to their state’s constitution rather than the U.S.
federal constitution (Augenblick et al., 1997). It terms of federal law, the school financial systems of 16 states had been found to be unconstitutional when the 1997 Winter volume of the *Future of Children* was published (Augenblick et al., 1997).

*Reading Research, Reading Assessment, and Leader Decision Making*

According to a report released by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare (DHEW) Office of Education in 1951, state testing programs began, in the U.S., with the introduction of graded schools (Segel, 1951). At that time, student scores were used, not to reflectively adjust pedagogy and curriculum, but to measure the effectiveness of each school (Segel, 1951). In this method, schools were originally rated in two ways: by the quality of their facilities and their number of books, and by visitation and observation to judge teacher effectiveness (Segel, 1951). This transitioned into a way of evaluating the effectiveness of teachers, and then eventually into a way of judging the effectiveness of school programs (Segel, 1951).

Testing by state departments of education was revised in 1940 such that the purpose of testing reflected the purpose of education, and thus began to focus more on evaluating students’ academic achievement (Segel, 1951). This led to the formation of formal reviews for elementary and secondary schools (Segel, 1951). Additionally, this change in evaluation led the implementation of improved national measurement programs such as the Kansas testing program and the Iowa testing program (Segel, 1951). However, these national
measurement programs were initially voluntary in nature and only taken by a small percentage of students (Segel, 1951).

Even with a shift in focus to student outcomes, assessment has not yet effectively dealt with low student scores across the country. For example, Vogel, Rau, Baker, and Ashby (2006) reported on four reform initiatives that took place in Illinois between 1993 and 2002, all attempting to connect school improvement, instruction, and curriculum to assessment. According to the authors (Vogel et al., 2006), the effectiveness of the reform policies was limited largely by limitations in the literacy assessment skills of teachers and principals.

The various reform policies enacted in Illinois showed that creating a capacity for effective local assessment cannot be viewed as a quickly or easily engineered outside solution, but rather as a collaborative, long-term, complex endeavor (Vogel et al., 2006). With this in mind, at the time of the authors’ research (Vogel et al., 2006) 49 states had implemented learning standards and had already developed or were in the process of developing assessment methods to hold schools accountable for the success or failure of implementation. For example, the Illinois SAC (Standards-Aligned Classroom) Initiative, in response to NCLB pressure for accountability, transitioned from a developmental approach focused on assessment literacy and classroom alignment to an instrument designed to coercively regulate schools which were not achieving mandated student performance levels (Vogel et al., 2006).

According to Vogel et al. (2006), the National Research Council (NRC) was concerned with the large-scale testing being used by many states to
measure student learning. For one, the NRC felt that many such large-scale assessments focused aspects of learning best described as superficial (Vogel et al., 2006). The NRC pointed out that with higher stakes associated with statewide assessment, administrators and teachers in public schools would begin, consciously or not, to teach-to-the-test (Vogel et al., 2006). When the knowledge being tested is superficial, the NRC pointed out, classroom instruction would be adversely affected as the students would begin to receive mostly superficial knowledge (Vogel et al., 2006). The NRC concluded that high-stakes assessments, particularly if they assess inappropriate knowledge, can unintentionally result in increasingly ineffective student learning (Vogel et al., 2006). The NRC was likewise concerned that many large-scale tests did not provide information helpful in letting administrators or teachers identify reasons for student underperformance, and also that the tests did not provide any formative feedback describing the progressive intellectual progress and growth of the students (Vogel et al., 2006).

The NRC was not alone in objecting to large-scale student assessment (Ervin, 1998). For example, first-grade teachers in Bangor, Maine objected to standardized achievement tests in 1990, arguing that the tests were imposing accountability without scientific validity, were assessing material that was instructionally irrelevant, and were only measuring student performance once in a given year (Ervin, 1998). When the administration responded by telling the teachers to design a better assessment system, the teachers failed to reach a consensus. This led to the readoption of the standardized tests after a year
(Ervin, 1998), but inspired the teachers to form a literacy assessment team, which, over the course of the next five years, designed and piloted an assessment system (Ervin, 1998). This process led to increased collegial discussion of literacy assessment, improved teacher and administrator assessment training, adoption of a different reading curriculum, and, ultimately, increased student outcomes in reading (Ervin, 1998).

According to Uline and Johnson (2005), classroom student assessments, combined with assessments for accountability, are necessary and critical to improve instruction and help increase student outcomes for all demographic groups. However, Uline and Johnson (2005) reported that the assumption that one pedagogical method is best, or right for all students, may be problematical, and suggest instead that instruction must be improved and aimed, by assessment, to match the cultural and test-demonstrated needs of the students. Uline and Johnson’s (2005) statements serve to argue that decisions about reading curriculum, materials, and assessment must be both data-driven, and also kept in the hands of local (building) decision-makers, such as the principals and teachers.

Shen and Cooley (2008) argued that, while data has been used as a tool for school improvement for years, the current attempts driven by the NCLB act can be viewed largely as being superficially focused on satisfying state requirements and on designating accountability, rather than on improving the learning process for students. Shen and Cooley (2008) maintained that due to this error in focus, the potentials of data-driven decision making in education
have not yet been achieved. While student scores are currently being used as a measure of effectiveness for students, teachers, principals, and school districts, Shen and Cooley (2008) pointed out that the scores are often not being used for decision making by administrators and educators. To actually achieve measurable improvement, curriculum, remediation, instruction, acceleration, professional development for teachers and administrators, and resource allocation all must be connected through assessment data (Shen & Cooley, 2008). Only in this way, Shen and Cooley (2008) argued, will schools become learning organizations such as those described by Senge (1990).

According to Shepard (2005), familiarity with learning theory is important if educators are to change their teaching practice. Shepard (2005) argued that practitioners must periodically examine the big picture if they are to decide what to do in cases where their past experience isn’t helping them solve the current problem. A key concept gained by examining learning theory, Shepard (2005) explained, is the idea of scaffolding, in which the teacher helps the student as they work on solving a problem by providing supports, such as encouragement, hints, or reminders, to ensure that the task is completed successfully. Shepard (2005) argued for a broad understanding of learning theory by pointing out how scaffolding is very similar to Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development. Shepard (2005) then explained how formative assessment, in which learners discussed their current understanding of the subject matter with the instructor, is similar to and compatible with scaffolding. One of Shepard’s (2005) closing points has to do with the fact that teachers should view prior knowledge
assessment as a common classroom practice, rather than as a pre-test technique. In this way, Shepard (2005) argued, students will continue to be able to make sense of the new things they encounter, through a more conscious awareness of what they already know.

In terms of overall student assessment, Della-Piana (2008) argued that assessment in American Schools, though it has improved since A Nation at Risk (1983) was released, is still suffering from a number of issues, including validity of the assessment tools, the under representation of constructs in the outcome measures utilized by intervention studies, and the cognitive workload poorly designed classroom assessment tools place on teachers. Validity, in this case, refers to the way in which assessment tools are no longer deemed valid simply for measuring that which they claim to measure (Della-Piana, 2008). Instead, validity for assessment tools is a measure of the degree to which inferences and interventions based on the assessment test scores are appropriate to remediate the students’ skill gaps (Della-Piana, 2008). In other words, the validity of assessment instruments must be construct validity, rather than subject validity (Della-Piana, 2008).

Conclusion

From the review of the literature, it is apparent that the problem of improving student outcomes in America is a vast and complex task. In order to improve student reading, professionals and politicians have been searching for an ideal pedagogy, an ideal curriculum, the best method of assessing students, the best method of assessing programs, and for the best way to achieve fair and
effective funding to support all students and all schools. Based on the premise that leadership and leadership decisions can be a force affecting student outcomes, this study is designed to investigate the role of leadership decision making regarding a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. The sample will be limited to the content area of reading, and the sample will consist of Title I schools receiving RFGs (Reading First Grants), and schools not receiving RFGs.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigated the relationship between student achievement and leader decision making concerning a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. To test these relationships, the curricular focus of the study was limited to the single content area, reading, and included comparable sample groups, namely selected staff from Title I districts in states which received Reading First grants (RFGs) and staff from Title I districts that did not receive RFGs. The research methodology employed regression analysis to discover any relationships among the independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV). For this study, an instrument designed by the researcher was distributed electronically.

Research Design

According to Mertler and Vannatta (2002) and Ruiz-Primo, Mitchell, and Shavelson (1996), multivariate techniques allow researchers to examine simultaneously all the relationships and interactions among all variables in a study. Therefore, in this study, multiple regression analysis (MRA) was used to determine which, if any, of the five independent variables (IV’s) predicted the dependent variable (DV). Consistent with Weiss and Hassett (1987) this study used inferential statistics to draw conclusions about the population based on data gathered from the sample. In addition, the research instrument was constructed
following the methodologies established by Dillman (1978; 2000), Total Design Method (TDM) and Fowler (1993), Total Survey Design (TDS).

The Richmond Questionnaire (RQ) (Appendix A) gathered data dealing with teacher and principal leader decision making regarding the five independent variables. Furthermore, the study gathered archival data (percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests) for the responding school districts.

*Research Questions*

The study pursued four main research questions that attempted to determine a) relationships between principal perceptions of the five independent variables and student reading achievement; b) relationships between teacher perceptions of the five independent variables and student reading achievement; c) relationships between principal and teacher perceptions; and d) relationships between the five independent variables and student reading achievement. Of further interest were the differences in these relationships when comparing Title I RFG recipient schools and non RFG Title I schools.

Specifically, this research addressed the following questions:

1(a). Is there a relationship among the following variables as reported by principals?

- Decisions about reading training
- Decisions about reading curriculum
- Decisions about program evaluation
- Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment

1(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

2(a). Is there a relationship among the following variables as reported by teachers?
• Decisions about reading training
• Decisions about reading curriculum
• Decisions about program evaluation
• Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment

2(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

3. Is the relationship model different for principals and teachers?

4. Do the following variables predict reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?
• Decisions about reading training
• Decisions about reading curriculum
• Decisions about program evaluation
• Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment
Sample

Population

Student Reading Achievement at the elementary level was examined in school districts in four states: Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, and Oklahoma. Because the response rates for Michigan were so low, it was dropped from the study. The study states were chosen, firstly, because they each received Reading First Grants in 2002, when the program was first implemented, and then continuously until 2008, when the program ceased. Secondly, these states were chosen because, in 2002, when RFGs began to take effect, all five states utilized the same standardized reading assessment for their RFG schools, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) (SEDL, 2006). For this study, the sample included principals and third-grade teachers from RFG schools and non RFG schools within the selected districts in each state. In these five states there were approximately 6,500 Title I schools, of which 500 received RFGs (SEDL).

Sample Size

The intent of this study was to compare data from two groups: Title I RFG school teachers and principals and Title I non RFG school teachers and principals. To calculate the necessary sample size for each group the researcher used G*Power 3.0.3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). Necessary sample size was calculated a priori using a moderate effect size (0.15) and a moderate power (0.7). The statistical test selected was a multiple regression omnibus ($R^2$ deviation from zero) with five predictors and an alpha of 0.05. A total sample size of 76 (teachers and principals) was calculated as necessary for
each group. Out of 500 RFG and non RFG schools, a response rate of 15.2% was necessary to ensure 76 respondents per group.

Data Collection

This study collected and analyzed the following data: teacher and principal responses to the research instrument (RQ); and District Report Card scores (percentages of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests) for each of the Title I Districts in each of the five study states in which at least one teacher or principal responded to the RQ.

Random Sampling

To ensure random sampling, the researcher identified all states with Title I and Reading First Grant Recipients that used the same reading assessment during 2002-2008. Five states (Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan, and Oklahoma) were chosen for this study because each used The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to assess reading in RFG schools in 2002 when the RFGI was implemented. The researcher then identified and created a database of Title I school districts within the five selected states, noting for each school district, the number of RFG schools and non RFG schools within the district. Among the five states, there were 2,066 total school districts, out of which 1,641 (79.4%) were Title I school districts. There were 10,249 total schools in the five states, out of which 2,856 (27.9%) were Title I schools. There were 475 RFG recipient schools, meaning that 16.6% of the Title I schools were RFG recipients, and 4.6% of the total schools were RFG recipients. School District data was retrieved from State Department of Education websites, and the RFG status of schools
within each district was obtained through the SEDL website (see Appendix B). It was found that, out of the approximately 6,500 Title I schools in the five selected states, approximately 500 had been RFG recipients during the study period. Invitations to participate were sent to teachers and principals in all identified RFG schools via email. As to the remaining non RFG Title I schools, 100 non RFG schools were selected from each state by a random process. Randomization was achieved by selecting every third non RFG school for the pool from each state until a sample size of 100 was achieved for that state. Districts with one school were not included. This resulted in a pool of approximately 500 randomly selected non RFG Title I Schools, drawn equally from each of the five states. Teachers and principals (or principal designees) in these 500 non RFG schools were invited to participate in this study via email. Respondents designated their districts when taking the RQ (Appendix A). Finally, returned surveys were matched to their districts. Growth over time was measured by using the district report cards from 2002 to 2008, or as reported from 2005 to 2008 per state. District Report Card scores (percentages of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests) were retrieved from State Board of Education websites (see Appendix B).

Instrumentation

The Richmond Questionnaire (RQ) (Appendix A) was developed by the researcher and was used to gather quantitative data pertaining to leadership decision making applying to five independent variables: a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student
assessment. Specifically, the questionnaire sought data regarding perceptions of principals and teachers related to the study variables. The data were used to determine which, if any, of the independent variables predicted the dependent variable, Student Reading Achievement. The Richmond Questionnaire (RQ) (Appendix A) consists of 39 questions dealing with teacher and principal decisions regarding five independent variables: Section I consists of seven questions (1-7) deal with Reading Training Decisions; Section II has six questions (1-6) which deal with Reading Curriculum Decisions; Section III has five questions (1-5) which deal with Program Evaluation Decisions; Section IV has six Questions (1-6) deal with Funding Decisions; and Section V has six questions (1-6) which deal with Student Assessment Decisions. Additionally, the survey contains Section A, which contains six questions (1-6) dealing with demographics, and Section B, which contains one question which deals with overall decision making.

The Richmond Questionnaire (RQ) (Appendix A) consists of 39 questions dealing with teacher and principal decisions regarding five independent variables:

- Section A (Demographic Questions) consists of six questions
- Section B (Overall Decision Making) consists of one question
- Section I (Reading Training Decisions) consists of eight questions
- Section II (Reading Curriculum Decisions) consists of six questions
- Section III (Program Evaluation Decisions) consists of five questions
- Section IV (Funding Decisions) consists of six questions
Section V (Student Assessment Decisions) consists of seven questions. Additionally, after taking the survey, participants were able to comment regarding the survey, Reading First, NCLB, and/or leader decision making.

Validity and Reliability

The Richmond Questionnaire (RQ) (Appendix A) is an assessment instrument designed to measure leadership decision making in five categories: a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. The RQ was tested for validity and reliability in a pilot study administered to volunteer participants who were a) elementary school teachers or administrators, and b) graduate students enrolled in classes in either the Curriculum/Instruction Department and/or the Educational Administration Department of a southern university and c) whose instructors have given permission to contact the class (at the beginning of the class period). During the pilot study, participation was voluntary, no willing participant was excluded, and responses gathered remained confidential. Pilot study participants were not part of the subsequent study that makes up this dissertation.

The pilot study for the RQ was conducted in classrooms of a southern university. The researcher explained the purpose of the pilot study, provided directions for participating, and answered participant questions. The researcher also provided all participants with assurances, both written and verbal, that the study was entirely voluntary and that withdrawal was permitted at any time. Pilot study participants were asked to log into a secure Web site (SurveyMonkey.com)
to complete the RQ (Appendix A) and then to provide feedback on a pilot study response sheet. Participation in the pilot study was estimated to take 30 minutes or less for each participant. Feedback obtained from the pilot study was used to revise the RQ (Appendix A) for validity. However, the return rate of the pilot study was too small to determine reliability. Data collected from the pilot study is currently stored in a locked area in the researcher’s home and will be destroyed after three years.

Variables

This study consisted of the critical examination of leadership decisions surrounding the following five independent variables (IVs):

1. Reading Training: represents level of participation by teachers and principals in reading and reading assessment training programs.

2. Reading Curriculum: represents level of participation by teachers and principals in choosing reading curricula, whether from the SBRR core curriculum list or from elsewhere.

3. Program Evaluation: represents level of participation by teachers and principals in internal constant and scheduled reflective discussion of every level of the reading program as well as utilization and response to external evaluation.

4. Funding: represents the level of participation by teachers and principals in pursuing and allocating funding within the school.
5. Student Assessment: represents level of participation by teachers and principals in reflective dialogue and analysis regarding choice, implementation, and utilization of assessment instruments. The essential question of this study was which, if any, of these variables moderated the dependent variable (DV), Student Reading Achievement. The dependent variable, Student Reading Achievement, was measured by reported percentages of students at or above proficient in third grade reading, which was reported on the annual report card NCLB required of each state. Although each state was required to report percentages of students achieving each proficiency level, each state was allowed to determine its own reading assessments and required levels for proficiency. For example, each state in this study may have used different reading assessments and set different criteria to determine proficiency.

Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining approval from The University of Southern Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (Appendix C), the researcher took the following steps.

In February of 2010, a packet containing a letter (Appendix D) and a flier was emailed to the principals of the 500 Reading First schools and the 500 randomly chosen Title I Schools in the following states: Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan and Oklahoma. The letter (Appendix D) explained the study and requested that the principals forward the survey link to their K-3 teachers and post the included flier in the teachers' lounge.
Simultaneously, the RQ questionnaire (Appendix A) was opened to participants via the Survey Monkey website. Within the week following the initial email packets being sent, the researcher counted returns from each school district and re-sent invitations (Appendix E) to districts with few or no returns. Both invitations included a URL allowing them to sign in to the Survey Monkey Web site and begin taking the RQ survey. Voluntarily signing in to the survey implies informed consent. Additionally, both invitations contained a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F).

Data Analysis Procedures

The questionnaire (Appendix A) remained accessible online for one month. After the survey closed State Department of Education Reading Report Cards (percentages of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests) were retrieved for each district in which at least one teacher or principal had responded. Specific district data included the percentage of K-3 students achieving at or above proficient on the state third grade reading assessments, for the last three years of the Reading First Grant, from 2005 to 2008. Proficiency levels (percentages of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests) were examined to ascertain student academic growth. While proficiency percentages were analyzed within each state, with no comparison was made from state to state.

District level third grade student reading outcomes for the participating districts were entered into SPSS v.15 for quantitative analysis. At the end of the questionnaire timeline, participant responses were imported into SPSS from
SurveyMonkey for analysis using multiple regression. The independent variables consisted of leadership decision making concerning a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. The dependent variable consisted of district level third grade student reading outcomes for responding districts. Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions about the population based on data gathered from the sample. Multiple regression analysis (MRA) was used to determine which, if any, of the five independent variables (IVs) moderated the dependent variable (DV), student reading achievement.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The impetus for this study was the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which was passed by the United States Congress on January 8, 2001, and the Reading First Grant Initiative embedded in NCLB. Because of the federal educational policy mandates inherent in the act, a series of educational changes occurred at both state and district levels.

This chapter consists of a presentation of the results of this research. The first section, below, restates the research questions of the study. The second section reviews the data collection method and presents a quantitative analysis of the Richmond Questionnaire data and the district level third grade student reading outcome data for responding RFG and non RFG districts. After the principals (or staff they designated to respond on their behalf [designees]) and teachers responded to the Richmond Questionnaire through SurveyMonkey, the results were exported into SPSS for analysis. Percentages of students at or above proficiency were obtained for the responding districts for the third grade level for the academic years 2005 – 2008; these were obtained from the archived district report cards located on each of the five states’ department of education web sites. The extracted reading outcomes (reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests), were analyzed to determine proficiency growth over time. Only districts with corresponding RQ survey responses were analyzed.
The next section of this chapter examines the collected quantitative data in order to investigate the four research questions of the study. Another investigates the qualitative data collected from the open-ended question found at the end of the online questionnaire (RQ). The final section of this chapter contains a summary of results and ancillary findings.

Research Questions

The study investigated four main research questions: a) the relationship between principal perceptions of leader decision making concerning the five independent variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests, b) the relationship between teacher perceptions of leader decision making concerning the five independent variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests, c) the relationship (similarities or differences) between principal and teacher perceptions of leader decision making, and, d) the relationship among the five independent variables and the dependent variable, reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests. Of further interest are the differences in these relationships when comparing Title I schools receiving Reading First Grants and Title I schools not receiving Reading First Grants. Specifically, this researcher sought to answer the following specific research questions:

1(a). Is there a relationship among the following variables as reported by principals?

• Decisions about reading training (training)
• Decisions about reading curriculum (curriculum)
• Decisions about program evaluation (evaluation)
• Decisions about funding (funding)
• Decisions about student assessment (assessment)

1(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

2(a). Is there a relationship among the following subscales as reported by teachers?
• Decisions about reading training
• Decisions about reading curriculum
• Decisions about program evaluation
• Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment

2(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

3. Is the relationship model different for principals and teachers?

4. Do the following variables predict reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?
• Decisions about reading training
• Decisions about reading curriculum
• Decisions about program evaluation
• Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment
Collection and Quantitative Analysis of Richmond Questionnaire Data

Sample Descriptive Characteristics

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between student achievement and leader decision making concerning a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment. To examine this relationship, this study limits itself to the single content area, reading, and to two groups: a) Title I schools receiving Reading First Grants (RFGs) and b) Title I schools not receiving RFGs. The study school districts were drawn from five states (Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan and Oklahoma) which, during 2002, the first year of RFG funding, all used the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to assess student performance in their RFG schools. However, due to low response rates, Michigan was dropped from the study. In addition, the researcher gathered archival data, namely reported percentages of third grade students achieving at or above proficient in reading, as reported on each state’s annual report card, available through each state’s Department of Education website. SPSS was used to analyze the data to determine if reading report card proficiency percentages demonstrated growth over time for the years examined by the study. (Note: while the study originally intended to examine the entire period of the RFGI, from 2002 to 2008, data was available only for all participating states for the period from 2005 to 2008.)

The researcher identified 571 Reading First grant recipient schools and invited them to participate in this study. Of these, 143 responded. One thousand Title I schools without Reading First status were invited to participate in the study.
with 101 responding. Title I districts were identified by respondents completing the survey.

To illustrate the scope of the number of schools in the population that participated in Reading First and Title I schools, Table 1 contains total number of districts, Title I districts, Title I schools, and RFG schools for each state. Oklahoma had the greatest number of Title I districts but had a comparable number of Title I schools as Georgia, which had the greatest number of RFG schools. All schools with RFG status also had Title I status.

Table 2 contains the number of study responses, delineated by Title I district, by the respondents' professional role, and also by the grant status of the respondents' schools. Michigan individuals opted not to participate in the study. Of the four states from which participants responded to the instrument, the majority of responses came from Georgia, whereas the smallest number of responses came from Idaho.

### Table 1

**Numbers of Districts, Title I Districts, Title I Schools, and RFG Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total No. of Districts</th>
<th>Title I Districts</th>
<th>Title I Schools</th>
<th>RFG Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to a low response rate, Michigan was dropped from the final analysis.*
Table 2

*Response Numbers and Response Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AK</th>
<th>GA</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>OK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of RQ Requests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed To RFG Districts</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed To Non RFG Districts</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate To RFG Districts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate To Non RFG Districts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses From Districts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading First Grant</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Reading First Grant</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to a low response rate, Michigan was dropped from the final analysis.

In addition, more teachers than administrators responded, and more respondents worked in Reading First Grant schools than in non Reading First Grant schools. Georgia had the highest response rate for both RFG and non RFG schools, whereas Oklahoma had the lowest response rates for both RFG and non RFG schools.

**Analysis of Data**

*District Reported Percent Proficient in Reading*

Participants were asked to identify their districts. After the response collection period ended, the researcher obtained district report card reading proficiency data for each district which provided at least one response. District reported percent proficient or above in reading were obtained from the four responding states’ department of education websites, for each year, from 2005 to 2008. To determine if each district had change in overall levels proficient or
above, or growth over time, the difference was calculated between 2005 and 2008. Table 3 contains the means for each of the states for these two years and Figure 3 provides a visual representation of these means. Three of the states had increased Reading percent proficient or above means (AR, GA, and OK) although one (ID) had a decrease. The percent of students achieving proficient or above increased in AR, GA, and OK.

Table 3

*State Reported Percent Proficient or Above on Third Grade Reading Assessments for 2005 and 2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>52.83 %</td>
<td>65.74 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>88.30 %</td>
<td>89.33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>83.33 %</td>
<td>82.57 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>80.24 %</td>
<td>89.00 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to a low response rate, Michigan was dropped from the final analysis. Additionally, while AR, GA, ID, and OK, all reported percent proficient or above in reading in order to assess student outcomes, the data is not truly comparable from state to state, because each state set its own benchmark levels.

Table 4 shows changes in reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above for Reading First Grant status schools and non RFG status schools for the period from 2005 to 2008 in the four responding states. Notably, both RFG and non RFG schools in Georgia maintained high reported levels of students achieving proficient or above with minimal change. Arkansas showed the greatest increase, followed by Oklahoma. Idaho schools, both RFG and
Figure 3. State Reported Percent Proficient or Above on Third Grade Reading Tests for 2005 and 2008. While AR, GA, ID, and OK, all reported percent proficient or above in reading in order to assess student outcomes, the data are not truly comparable from state to state, because each state determined its own reading assessment measures and proficiency levels.

Table 4

State Reported Percent Proficient or Above on Third Grade Reading Tests for 2005 and 2008 as a Function of Grant Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>GRANT STATUS</th>
<th>2005 % At or Above Proficient</th>
<th>2008 % At or Above Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>60.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>58.14</td>
<td>69.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>86.86</td>
<td>87.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>89.75</td>
<td>89.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>84.60</td>
<td>83.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>82.67</td>
<td>81.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>77.83</td>
<td>90.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>79.23</td>
<td>87.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Due to a low response rate, Michigan was dropped from the final analysis.
non RFG, showed a decline from 2005 to 2008. Figure 4 depicts changes in reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above for Reading First Grant status districts and non RFG status districts during the last 4 years of the Reading First Grant.

Survey Design and Instrument Reliability

The researcher began with 100 items pertaining to the study variables. A panel of five judges examined the questions. The consensus was that the instrument be pared down to fewer than 50 questions and that the questions be presented as 5-point Likert items. The final instrument consisted of 39 items, including 7 demographic questions, 6 multiple choice questions, and 26 Likert questions. Only Likert items were used for the statistical analysis of the data. During the process of determining internal reliability, four Likert items were discarded in order to optimize the internal reliability of each scale. The
Richmond Questionnaire’s internal reliability was determined by calculating Cronbach’s alpha using SPSS. The results are contained in Table 5 below; the questions contained in each variable are listed in Chapter III. A level of .70 was set for acceptable internal reliability. Although the final Cronbach’s alpha for two variables, Curriculum and Assessment, were lower than .70, the respective levels were considered close enough to permit statistical analysis, albeit with caution.

Table 5

*Richmond Questionnaire: Variable Scales and Internal Reliability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Scale</th>
<th>Multiple Choice Items</th>
<th>Total Likert Items</th>
<th>Likert Items</th>
<th>Final Cronbach’s Alphas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Response Rates to Survey Scales*

A total of 303 respondents began the survey process through SurveyMonkey; however, only 261 respondents completed the survey. Respondents were asked to indicate whether their school received a Reading First Grant or not, and whether they were an administrator or a teacher. Out of the 261 respondents who completed the survey questions, 143 indicated RFG
status, 101 indicated non RFG status, 113 identified themselves as administrators, and 146 marked that they were teachers.

Survey Scale Means and Standard Deviation

Survey questions asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement to statements within five subscales, each of which focused on one of the study variables (training, curriculum, evaluation, funding, and assessment). The subscales consisted of 5-point Likert questions wherein 1 indicated strongly disagree, 3 indicated neither agree nor disagree, and 5 indicated strongly agree while answers of 2 and 4 indicated milder levels of agreement or disagreement with the given statement.

Table 6 contains response rates, means, and standard deviation for each of the five variables according to the RFG status of the respondents. For every subscale, respondents from RFG districts had higher means (stronger agreement) than respondents from non RFG districts. In both RFG and non RFG cases, all respondents means were higher than 3.0 for all variables except funding. The highest mean for respondents from RFG districts was in training, while the highest mean for respondents from non RFG districts was in assessment. The lowest mean for respondents from both RFG and non RFG districts was funding, which also showed the highest standard deviation in both cases. For each decision making variable, the variability for RFG respondees was smaller than for non RFG respondees.

Table 7 contains means and standard deviations for each of the five variables according to the role of the respondents. The administrators provided
the highest means for the program evaluation variable. Teachers had the highest mean for the assessment variable. Funding was the lowest mean for both administrators and teachers. While the higher means for each group were slightly different, each group placed a high value on both the variable of program evaluation and the variable of student assessment.

Table 6

*Means and Standard Deviations for Decision Making Variables as a Function of Respondent RFG Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RFG School Respondents</th>
<th>Non RFG School Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Decision Making Variables as a Function of Respondent Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Richmond Questionnaire Analysis of Research Questions

The study investigated four main research questions with the first relating to the relationship between principal perceptions of leader decision making concerning the five independent variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests. The exact wording of the research question can be seen below.

1(a). Is there a relationship among the following variables as reported by principals?

- Decisions about reading training
- Decisions about reading curriculum
- Decisions about program evaluation
- Decisions about funding
• Decisions about student assessment

1(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

Table 8 on the following page contains descriptive statistics for administrators ($n = 113$) responding to the survey.

Correlation coefficients were computed among the five decision making scales for administrators. Using the Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error across the 15 correlations, a $p$ value of less than .05 was required for significance. The results of the correlational analyses presented in Table 9 show that 9 out of the 10 correlations were statistically significant and were greater than or equal to .29.

Table 8

**Administrator Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

*Pearson Correlations among Five Decision Making Variables for Administrators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.20 *</td>
<td>.56 **</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.39 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.38 **</td>
<td>.29 **</td>
<td>.36 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.33 **</td>
<td>.59 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.40 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There were moderate relationships among the five-decision-making scales related to reading training, reading curriculum, evaluation, funding, and student assessment. Reading training was significantly moderately related to reading curriculum \((r(108) = .20, p < .05)\), evaluation, \((r(104) = .56, p < .001)\), and student assessment, \((r(95) = .39, p < .001)\), but not to funding \((r(102) = .14, p = .161)\).

Reading curriculum exhibited a positive relationship with three other decision-making scales, evaluation: \((r(105) = .38, p < .001)\), funding: \((r(103) = .23, p, .003)\), and student assessment: \((r(96) = .36 p, < .001)\). Regarding the evaluation scale, the Pearson correlation showed a moderate positive relationship with both funding and student assessment, \((r(103) = .33, p = .001)\; \; (r(96) = .59, p < .001)\). Finally, a moderate positive correlation was found between funding and student assessment \((r(96) = .40, p < .001)\).

All decision making scales for administrators were found to be significantly correlated with each other, with the exception of training and funding \((r(102) = .}
.14, \( p = .161 \) ) and training and curriculum (\( r(108) = .20, p = .04 \)). The highest correlations among administrators were between evaluation and training (\( r(104) = .56, p < .001 \)) and evaluation and assessment (\( r(96) = .59, p < .001 \)).

The second main research question regards the relationship between teacher perceptions of leader decision making concerning the five independent variables. The exact wording of the research question can be seen below:

2(a). Is there a relationship among the following variables as reported by teachers?
   • Decisions about reading training
   • Decisions about reading curriculum
   • Decisions about program evaluation
   • Decisions about funding
   • Decisions about student assessment

2(b). Are these variables related to reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?

Table 10, on the following page, contains descriptive statistics for teachers (\( n = 146 \)) responding to the survey.

Correlation coefficients were computed among the five decision making scales for teachers. Using the Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error across the correlations, a \( p \) value of less than .05 was required for significance. The results of the correlational analyses presented in Table 11 show that 10 out of the 10 correlations were statistically significant and were greater than or equal to .32.
Table 10

**Teacher Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

**Pearson Correlations among Five Decision Making Variables for Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.39 **</td>
<td>.37 **</td>
<td>.32 **</td>
<td>.40 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.53 **</td>
<td>.46 **</td>
<td>.59 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>.43 **</td>
<td></td>
<td>.63 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>.41 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As for the strength of the relationship, the Pearson Correlations for all decision making variables were positively moderate. Reading training exhibited a positive relationship with the other four decision-making scales: reading training and reading curriculum ($r(140) = .39, p < .001$), reading training and evaluation ($r(138) = .37, p < .001$), reading training and funding ($r(136) = .32, p < .001$), as well as reading training and student assessment ($r(134) = .40, p < .001$). Reading curriculum was also found to be significantly correlated to evaluation
(r(139) = .54, p < .001), to funding (r(137) = .46, p < .001), and to student assessment (r(135) = .59, p < .001). Also, a moderate positive correlation was found between evaluation and funding (r(137) = .44, p < .001) as well as between evaluation and student assessment (r(135) = .63, p < .001). Finally, funding was significantly related to student assessment (r(135) = .42, p < .001).

Just as with administrators, the highest correlation among teachers was between evaluation and assessment (r(135) = .63, p < .001). However, while the second strongest significant correlation for administrators was between evaluation and training (r(104) = .56, p < .001), evaluation and training was the second lowest significant correlation for teachers (r(138) = .37, p < .001), after training and funding (r(136) = .32, p < .001), which for administrators was not found to be statistically significant.

Table 12 displays the decision making variable correlations for administrators and teachers, sorted from highest to lowest. For both teachers and administrators, evaluation and assessment were more highly correlated with the other study variables, while training and funding were less correlated with the other study variables. Correlations involving curriculum and funding were higher for teachers than for administrators. Correlations involving assessment were very similar for Teachers and Administrators. In almost all cases, correlations were higher for Teachers than for Administrators, with the exception of the correlation between training and evaluation, where the correlation was higher for administrators (r(104) = .563, p < .05) than for teachers (r(138) = .372, p < .05).
Table 12

*Teacher and Administrator Decision Variable Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlated Variables</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Overall r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** ( r(96) = .59 )</td>
<td>** ( r(135) = .63 )</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** ( r(96) = .36 )</td>
<td>** ( r(135) = .59 )</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>** ( r(104) = .56 )</td>
<td>** ( r(138) = .37 )</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>** ( r(105) = .38 )</td>
<td>** ( r(139) = .53 )</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** ( r(96) = .40 )</td>
<td>** ( r(135) = .41 )</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** ( r(95) = .39 )</td>
<td>** ( r(134) = .40 )</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** ( r(103) = .33 )</td>
<td>** ( r(137) = .43 )</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** ( r(103) = .29 )</td>
<td>** ( r(137) = .46 )</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Curriculum</td>
<td>* ( r(108) = .20 )</td>
<td>** ( r(140) = .40 )</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Funding</td>
<td>( r(102) = .14 )</td>
<td>** ( r(136) = .32 )</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Values for \( n \) are shown in parentheses: ( ). \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The third main research question regards the relationship (similarities or differences) between principal and teacher perceptions of leader decision making.

3. Is the relationship model different for principals and teachers?

Table 13, on the following page, contains descriptive statistics for teachers \((n=146)\) and administrators \((n=113)\) responding to the survey.
Table 13

Descriptive Statistics: Respondent Role Decision Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Variable</th>
<th>Teachers (n = 146)</th>
<th>Administrators (n = 113)</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if the relationship model was different by role of respondents. The independent variables were the five decision indices: decisions about reading training, decisions about reading curriculum, decisions about program evaluation, decisions about funding, and decisions about student assessment variables. No statistically significant differences were found to exist in this model for either Administrators or Teachers:

Administrators – $F(5, 87) = 1.83$, $p = .11$, $R^2 = .095$

Teachers – $F(5, 129) = .66$, $p = .66$, $R^2 = .025$.

The fourth main research question regards the relationship between the five independent variables and the dependent variable of student reading proficiency outcomes. This differs from the previous research questions in that no filters, such as role (principal or teacher) or RFG status (RFG or non RFG) were considered. The variables were simply examined, for all respondents
together, to determine if any of the variables affected student outcomes in reading.

The exact wording of the research question is as follows:

4. Do the following variables predict reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests?
   • Decisions about reading training
   • Decisions about reading curriculum
   • Decisions about program evaluation
   • Decisions about funding
   • Decisions about student assessment

For the multiple regression analysis, the predictors were the five decision indices: decisions about reading training, decisions about reading curriculum, decisions about program evaluation, decisions about funding, and decisions about student assessment variables. After a multiple regression analysis was conducted, none of the five leader decision variables was found to predict reported percentages of students at or above proficient in third grade reading $F(5, 222) = 1.12, p = .35, R^2 = .03$.

In addition to the main research questions, this study was interested in the relationship between the leadership decision making perceptions of respondents from RFG and non RFG schools. With this in mind, correlations were determined for RFG respondent decision making variables, and then for non RFG respondent decision making variables. Table 14 contains descriptive statistics for RFG and non RFG respondents, as well as for reported percentages
of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests from 2005 to 2008.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics: RFG Status Decision Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RFG School Respondents (n = 143)</th>
<th>Non RFG School Respondents (n = 101)</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Dif 05 08</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>11.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown by Table 14, for all decision making variables, means from RFG respondents were higher than means from non RFG respondents. As shown by Table 17, for both RFG and non RFG respondents, assessment, curriculum, and evaluation were most highly correlated with other variables, followed by funding. For both RFG and non RFG respondents training was least correlated with other variables. Additionally, as is shown by Table 18, the r values for non RFG respondents were higher for assessment and funding than they were for RFG respondents, whereas for RFG respondents, r values for training were slightly higher than for non RFG respondents.
For both RFG (Table 15) and non RFG schools (Table 16), all decision-making variables were found to be significantly correlated with each other and all correlations were positively moderate. For the correlation between decision-making variables and student achievement, the Pearson Correlation showed that the RFG schools decision-making variables were not related with reported student reading outcomes from 2005 to 2008. However, the Pearson Correlation showed that three out of the five decision making variables, reading curriculum $(r(95) = .24, p = .02)$, evaluation $(r(94) = .23, p = .02)$, and assessment $(r(87) = .22, p = .04)$ were related to reported percentages of students achieving proficient and above on state third grade reading tests in Non RFG schools.

Table 15

**RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.31 **</td>
<td>.46 **</td>
<td>.30 **</td>
<td>.28 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.50 **</td>
<td>.36 **</td>
<td>.43 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.36 **</td>
<td>.54 **</td>
<td>.54 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.41 **</td>
<td>.41 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. (n = 143)*
### Table 16

**Non RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.27 **</td>
<td>.36 **</td>
<td>.20 **</td>
<td>.46 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.42 **</td>
<td>.46 **</td>
<td>.55 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.48 **</td>
<td>.60 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.52 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* (n = 101)

### Table 17

**RFG and Non RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlated Variables</th>
<th>RFG</th>
<th>Non RFG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** $r(130) = .54$</td>
<td>** $r(88) = .60$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** $r(130) = .43$</td>
<td>** $r(88) = .55$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>** $r(134) = .50$</td>
<td>** $r(95) = .42$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** $r(130) = .34$</td>
<td>** $r(88) = .52$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** $r(133) = .36$</td>
<td>** $r(92) = .48$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** $r(133) = .36$</td>
<td>** $r(92) = .46$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>** $r(134) = .45$</td>
<td>** $r(95) = .36$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** $r(130) = .28$</td>
<td>** $r(88) = .46$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Curriculum</td>
<td>* $r(137) = .31$</td>
<td>** $r(96) = .30$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** $r(133) = .29$</td>
<td>* $r(92) = .20$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table 18

RFG and Non RFG Respondent Decision Making Variable Correlations by Difference in r Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlated Variables</th>
<th>RFG</th>
<th>Non RFG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** r(130) = .28</td>
<td>** r(88) = .46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** r(130) = .34</td>
<td>** r(88) = .52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** r(133) = .36</td>
<td>** r(92) = .48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** r(130) = .43</td>
<td>** r(88) = .55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** r(133) = .36</td>
<td>** r(92) = .46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>** r(130) = .54</td>
<td>** r(88) = .60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Curriculum</td>
<td>* r(137) = .31</td>
<td>** r(96) = .30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>** r(134) = .50</td>
<td>** r(95) = .42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>** r(134) = .45</td>
<td>** r(95) = .36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Funding</td>
<td>** r(133) = .29</td>
<td>* r(92) = .20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Analysis

Interaction of RFG Status and Role

Because the Pearson Correlation showed a positive relationship between all five independent variables, but not with reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests at the district level, the researcher conducted further analysis to determine the differences between RFG status and educational role in regards to the five independent decision making variables. Therefore, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. An additional benefit of the MANOVA is that it would verify whether there was an interaction between RFG Status and Role.
The results of the MANOVA showed that the interaction between RFG Status and Role was significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .926$, $F (5, 214) = 3.43$, $p = .005$, multivariate $\eta^2 = 074$). Additionally, the main effect for RFG status was significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .747$, $F (5, 214) = 14.48$, $p < .001$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .253$). This indicates that the linear composite of training total, curriculum total, evaluation total, funding total, and assessment total differs for schools that received a Reading First Grant and schools that did not receive a Reading First Grant. The main effect for Role also proved to be significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .849$, $F (5, 214) = 7.62$, $p < .001$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .151$). This indicates that the linear composite of the independent variables differs for administrators and teachers. Follow-up ANOVAs (see Table 19) indicate that the effect of both RFG status and Role were significant for training total, curriculum total, and evaluation total. For both RFG and non RFG responders, Administrators have higher mean responses for all five independent variables (see Table 20). Regarding the interaction between RFG Status and Role, the results show that the interaction was only significant for training and funding. These interaction effects indicate that the difference between whether or not a school received the Reading First Grant on the linear combination of the two variables, training and funding support were different for respondents with different roles (principal/teacher). However, the etas for training ($\eta = .15$) and funding ($\eta = .15$) support indicate a small effect on both variables.
Table 19

Effects of RFG Status and Role on Decision Making Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFG Status</td>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46.81</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49.22</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.33</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.07</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.18</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.84</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFG Status x Role</td>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>Training Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20

Means and Standard Deviations for Decision Making Variables as a Function of Respondent Role and RFG Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making Variable</th>
<th>RFG Status</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non RFG</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Open-ended Question Responses

To capture the experiences, thoughts, and insights of the respondents, written in their own voice, the researcher placed a comment box at the end of the Richmond Questionnaire with the following prompt:

Please share any additional personal experiences you may have regarding Reading First, No Child Left Behind, and/or Leader Decision Making.

Seventy-four individuals (24.4%) responded to the open-ended prompt. Some responses were word phrases while others were several paragraphs in length. Each comment was retyped and put into a slide presentation with one comment per slide. A panel of four educational experts was selected to identify the emerging themes among the participants’ comments. The panel, composed of educators representing two southern universities, was considered to have appropriate expertise due to the various roles the panel members assumed at their respective universities. One member was an associate professor of Reading, another was an associate professor of Educational Leadership, the third was an associate professor of Educational Studies and Research, and the fourth was a graduate assistant with seven years of experience working with at-risk students.

The reliability of the raters’ judgments was conducted in the following manner: a) the panel was given a list of 16 key words containing six of the study’s variables and a recording sheet; b) comments were displayed in a slide show and each slide was viewed for 30 seconds while the panelists matched
variable concepts with each comment. At the fifth slide and at the tenth slide the panelists paused to confer and discuss the conceptual domains of the emerging themes for congruency. After the conferences, the panelists concurred that three new themes had emerged, and applied the new themes to the comments they had already rated. The panelist continued this process until all 74 comments had been rated.

The composite breakdown of comment themes and the frequency with which they occurred in participants' responses can be found in Table 21. Comments that were included in this study were organized thematically upon agreement of the majority of panelist. The most common theme that emerged was NCLB and/or RFG \(n=26\), followed by Program Evaluation \(n=17\), Training \(n=16\), Student Achievement \(n=13\), and Decision Making \(n=10\). Some responses were positive towards NCLB and/or the Reading First Grant program, while others were quite negative. Many respondents praised some aspects of the programs while pointing out areas in which improvements could be made, or in which problems currently existed.

Tables 22-26 contain selected examples of various comments, divided into the themes they represented. In Table 21 the five original leader decision making themes are marked with asterisks for the readers' convenience. The majority of the respondents felt that funding was an area where they had no input. Nine people wrote comments concerning funding while nine people wrote comments concerning collaboration.
Some respondents explained that questions involving the identification of those most responsible or involved in making decisions about the study variables should have allowed multiple answers, since the respondents felt that any single choice as an answer was not precise enough to describe the situation.

Table 21

*Frequency of Themes in Open-Ended Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants: NCLB and/or RFG</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation*</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training*</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB Criticism</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding*</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment*</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Format</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * Themes consistent with quantitative study research variables.
Table 22

*Selected Reading Training Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Grant Status</th>
<th>Reading Training Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>… For three years I was a Reading First Literacy Coach at a low-achieving school. I found Reading First training invaluable in helping those teachers meet the needs of their students. I now teach first grade at a high-achieving school, and I am finding that so much of the Reading First training would have benefited teachers in schools of all socio-economic levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal / Designee</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>… Before we implemented the program our teachers were allowed to teach whatever and however, they chose. Now that we have consistency in curriculum and teaching methods we are seeing improvements throughout the K-3 grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal / Designee</td>
<td>Non RFG School</td>
<td>… Funds for training were provided by the Oklahoma State Legislators. It has been invaluable to all concerned - teachers, administrators, and especially the students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23

*Selected Reading Curriculum Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Grant Status</th>
<th>Reading Curriculum Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal / Designee</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>… Reading First was a great blessing for our school as we were able to learn more about teaching reading and assessing children. Much of this knowledge was useful across curriculum…much of what we learned remains in place at my school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>… Reading First is great in that it allows teachers time to get in reading and everyone is teaching the same things together… At my school, the teachers really get to pick our textbooks. I was on a committee that picked our reading progress monitoring after much research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 24

**Selected Reading Program Evaluation Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Grant Status</th>
<th>Reading Program Evaluation Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal / Designee</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>“... It has been the most effective literacy program that I know about. It has changed the culture of our school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal / Designee</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>“... Reading First/Balanced Literacy is the best program I have worked with, providing much needed core instruction in the five areas for my low and at risk children. My test scores came up in a 98% free lunch school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>“... I love Reading First. I have taught for many years and it has been the best thing we have ever done to meet the needs of all of our children. It was hard work, but well worth it!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 25

**Selected Reading Funding Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Grant Status</th>
<th>Reading Funding Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>“... Reading First provided our school the chance to analyze our reading curriculum, purchase an assessment tool (DIBELS), receive numerous resources, and fund a literacy coach. All of these things have greatly increased our teachers' knowledge and positively impacted our students' learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
<td>“... Reading First Grant money has positively impacted our students academically. We have grown &amp; are seeing great gains in reading assessments as we watch our students grow to love reading.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Non RFG School</td>
<td>“... The Reading First Grant was only extended one year. There were no funds this year. The mandates for NCLB are done, but as you know, funding for schools in Oklahoma is not good and will not be very good next year either.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Selected Reading Student Assessment Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Reading Student Assessment Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Grant Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Non RFG School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…Evaluation of test data, strategies for improving scores are done every year for the school sites (by the entire staff). This is part of the Title I requirement and it does address issues without costing any money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal / Designee</td>
<td>RFG School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…We do feel as if the students are making progress but will not be satisfied until all students are working up to their potential. We are constantly monitoring the students and to some degree feel as if it in overkill mode. Between the DRA and DIBELS and preparing for the high stakes end of year testing the students are missing out on the fun activities that stand out in their minds in the years to come.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal / Designee</td>
<td>Non RFG School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…We are not a Reading First school. No Child Left Behind has some good qualities, but I feel the assessments need to be changed. We acknowledge all the different learning styles of children and emphasize interventions for individuals because all children really do learn differently. However, we still assess them all the same way, whether they are gifted, average, or special education. It seems like a contradiction to me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The U.S. government’s involvement in education has deep roots. During the 1950s educational laws and mandates began their transition from persuasion to persuasion and control. In addition, the federal governments’ mandates began to include equity, pedagogy, curricula, assessment, training, and program evaluation (ESEA, 1965; GOALS 2000, 1994; Manna, 2006; National Defense Education Act [NDEA], 1958; the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999; Rippa, 1997).

Government analysts, educational leadership, and theorists are in accord that improved principal and teacher training; program evaluation, assessment, curriculum and funding must happen to meet state standards, close the achievement gap and sustain school improvement (A Nation at Risk, 1983; Coleman et al., 1967; GOALS 2000, 1994; Langley & Jacobs 2006; Marzano et al., 2005; NCLB, 2001). For example a noted organizational theorist, Collins (2001) argued that organizations only improve if this cycle is repeated continuously, over and over, and that it is only successful if the leaders and the entire organization face the “brutal facts” of the situation as they prepare to make decisions.

In a 2002 interview, John Kotter, author of the 1996 book, Leading Change, argued that wherever adaptation is essential, such as in the struggle to keep pace with a changing world, quality leadership and decision making is
Kotter also explained that companies and organizations are frequently over-managed and at the same time under-led. When people argue that something is their bosses’ job rather than their own, the organization is setting itself up for failure (Bencivenga, 2002). In order to follow the tenants of Collins, Jago, and Bencivenga, educational leaders must find a balance between the parallel universes of school culture and community involvement, and analyze the behavior and perception of leader decision making at all levels, from the school, to the district, to the state. It was with this in mind that this study was implemented, to examine the effects of leader decision making and the perception of leader decision making on student outcomes.

This chapter summarizes the data provided in Chapter IV and links the findings to the relevant current literature discussed in Chapter II. Additional sections summarize the limitations of the study and discuss the implications of the findings for future studies.

Purpose

This study set out to examine the relationship between leader decision making and student outcomes, while also investigating the perceptions of principals and teachers about the effects of leader decision making behaviors. An additional aspect of this research was to determine whether significant differences existed between either the reported perceptions of teachers and principals in Title I schools receiving Reading First Grants and Title I schools not receiving Reading First Grants, or the results obtained at RFG and non RFG Title I schools.
In order to explore these issues, this study centered around four main research questions. The first research question investigated the relationship between principal perceptions of the five independent variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests. The second research question investigated the relationship between teacher perceptions of the five independent variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests. The third research question investigated the similarities and differences between the perceptions of principals and teachers. The fourth research question investigated the relationship between the five decision making variables and reported percentage of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading tests. Lastly, this study examined the differences in these relationships when comparing Title I schools receiving RFGs and Title I schools not receiving RFGs.

Research Questions

The Reading First Grant Initiative (RFGI, 2001) was a grant embedded in Public Law 107–110—JAN. 8, 2002; the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The RFG, which was authorized in 2002 for at-risk students in grades K-3, provided both the impetus and the framework for this study. Combined, the NCLB and the RFGI suggested the independent variables of this study by mandating that school administrators and teachers focus on and make decisions regarding those five areas. With that in mind, the specific questions examined by this research are as follows:
1. Is there a relationship among the following decision variables as reported by principals: reading training, reading curriculum, program evaluation, funding, student assessment? In addition, are these variables related to student achievement in reading?

2. Is there a relationship among the following decision variables as reported by teachers: reading training, reading curriculum, program evaluation, funding student assessment, In addition, are these variables related to student achievement in reading?

3. Is the relationship model different for principals and teachers?

4. Do the following decision variables predict student achievement in Reading: reading training, reading curriculum, program evaluation, funding, and student assessment?

A mixed methodology approach was used to answer these questions. A survey instrument, the Richmond Questionnaire (RQ) (Appendix A) was used to gather qualitative data regarding principal and teacher opinions of leader decision making regarding the five study variables, in both RFG recipient and non RFG recipient Title I schools. Data regarding the dependent variable, student reading outcomes (percentages of students achieving at or above proficient for the years 2005 to 2008), were gathered from a variety of state and federal websites (Appendix B). Additionally, an optional question at the end of the RQ gathered qualitative data, in the form of open-ended responses, from participating principals/designees (administrators) and teachers.
Subjects

The participants in this study consisted of 113 principals and 146 teachers from Title I schools in Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, and Oklahoma. These states were chosen because, initially, in 2002, the RFG schools in all five states used the same standardized reading assessment, the ITBS (SEDL, 2006), to measure student proficiency in reading in their RFG schools. After data collection, so few responses were obtained from Michigan that it was left out of the analysis. Out of the returned surveys, 143 individual responses came from schools that had RFG Grant status during the years 2005 to 2008, while 101 came from schools without RFG grant status.

Limitations

A number of factors limited this study:

1. The first limitation of this study was unequal sample size. There were more teachers \( (n = 146) \) than principals \( (n = 113) \) in the final returned sample. This limitation is inherent in studies that investigate schools or school districts because there are far more teachers in the population than principals.

2. A second limitation lay in the fact that there was no single source to identify teacher and principal contact information (email addresses) or the RFG status of K-3 schools. Similarly, there was no single source to identify school district information such as percentages of students achieving proficient or above in reading. For this reason, the researcher had to rely on multiple data sources, including state
department of education websites and state and federal websites. This necessary multiplicity of sources may have resulted in inconsistencies, omissions, and/or errors.

3. The original intent of this study was to examine the entire duration of the Reading First Grant, from 2002 to 2008, using archival data regarding the percentage of students achieving at or above proficient at the state reading assessments. However, while archival K-3 student reading proficiency data was available for three of the study states (Arkansas, Georgia, and Oklahoma) for the full period of the Reading First Grant (2002 to 2008), for the other two states (Idaho and Michigan) K-3 student reading proficiency data was only available for the period extending from 2005 to 2008. Because of this, this study examined only the period extending from 2005 to 2008.

4. This study was limited by a lack of comparable reading assessments across states. NCLB allowed each state to determine its own statewide assessments and definitions of proficiency. Each state chose its own reading assessments and criteria for determining levels of proficiency in reading, thereby limiting the ability of the researcher to track changes across states or even within states from year to year. All that can be determined are the levels of reading proficiency reported each year by each state in compliance with NCLB.

5. Another limitation of the study lies in the fact that reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above on state third grade reading
tests were only examined at the district level, rather than in comparison to each responding school.

6. All districts and schools surveyed were classified as Title I, which placed them categorically in the same socioeconomic status. The researcher was able to obtain Title I funding allocation data at district levels, but RFG funding distribution data was only available at state levels. This made it impossible to draw statistical comparisons between RFG funding and student outcomes.

Findings

One of the major purposes of this study was to determine whether or not there was a relationship between perceptions of the five leader decision making variables and student reading outcomes, for principals/designees (administrators) and/or teachers, in RFG and/or non RFG Title I schools. For the most part, all statistical analysis revealed no significant correlation between the responses of participants and student reading outcomes. For example, for teachers, no leader decision making variable was found to be significantly correlated with student reading outcomes, while for principals/designees (administrators), only Curriculum was found to be positively correlated with student reading outcomes. For RFG status respondents, no leader decision making variables were found to be significantly correlated with student reading outcomes, whereas for non RFG status respondents, three leader decision making variables, Curriculum, Evaluation, and Assessment, were found to be significantly correlated with student reading outcomes.
However, as will be discussed in greater detail below, the qualitative responses obtained implied a strong correlation between leader decision making and student reading outcomes. Respondees were given the option of responding to the following prompt, after answering the rest of the RQ survey questions:

Please share any additional personal experiences you may have regarding Reading First, No Child Left Behind, and/or Leader Decision Making.

Seventy-four individuals chose to comment on a variety of different themes. Responses ranged in length from short phrases to several paragraphs.

Many survey respondents, in making their open-ended statements, were very positive about the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and/or the Reading First Grant Initiative (2001), indicated that NCLB and the RFGI had dramatically impacted their schools. For example, an RFG teacher stated, “I have seen big improvement in the students reading since we were under the grant;” while an RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported:

Reading First/Balanced Literacy is the best program I have worked with, providing much needed core instruction in the five areas for my low and at risk children. My test scores came up in a 98% free lunch school.

Two issues are notable in terms of the responses indication of how decision making affected student reading outcomes: first, more RFG status respondents chose to respond to the open-ended question than non RFG respondents. Secondly, most of the RFG respondents spoke very positively about the impact
of NCLB and the RFG on their students’ reading outcomes. On the other hand, the majority of the non RFG respondents were more negative in their assessment of the impact of NCLB and the RFG on their students reading outcomes. For example, a non RFG teacher reported:

No Child Left behind and focusing on test scores, reduces the amount of time teachers can spend on reading intervention. There are too many pass objectives to teach, therefore teachers cannot spend enough time on an area for students to master that area.

Similarly, a non RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported:

No Child Left Behind has some good qualities, but I feel the assessments need to be changed. We acknowledge all the different learning styles of children and emphasize interventions for individuals because all children really do learn differently. However, we still assess them all the same way, whether they are gifted, average, or special education.

The more numerous and more positive responses volunteered from RFG respondents seems to strongly imply that the decision making variables mandated for RFG recipient schools had a significant impact on student reading outcomes in RFG schools.

Supporting the positive impact of the Reading First Grant (2001), several of the non RFG respondents, despite their tendency towards more negative responses, reported that NCLB and RFG had definitively impacted their schools in a positive way. Illustrating this, a non RFG teacher reported:
The Reading First program has caused us to rethink the way we teach.

There are many strong points to the program. However as with any program there are areas which are less than perfect. I feel I am a stronger teacher for having gone through the training. Just remember we teach children not statistics.

and a non RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported:

We have participated in the Literacy First Process now for three years. Funds for training were provided by the Oklahoma State Legislators. It has been invaluable to all concerned - teachers, administrators, and especially the students. Our instruction is driven by data and assessments. It is totally differentiated and also fills in those learning gaps that many low students have.

The quantitative findings seem to suggest either no particular relationship between the leader decision making variables and student outcomes, or that the relationship is stronger for non RFG schools than RFG schools. In an apparently incongruous fashion, the volunteered qualitative comments seem to imply that RFG schools were far more significantly impacted by the RFG, and thus the associated leader decision making variables, than non RFG schools. The question is then, how to make sense of the apparently opposing qualitative and quantitative results obtained from RFG and non RFG respondents?

Two theories present themselves, both related to limitations of the present study. The first potential explanation lies with the nature of the Richmond Questionnaire scales and measures. The RQ survey questions asked
respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed with statements categorized within five subscales, each focused on one of the study variables (training, curriculum, evaluation, funding, and assessment). These questions were 5-point Likert questions scaled from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 3 indicating neutrality (neither agree nor disagree) and answers of 2 and 4 indicating lesser levels of agreement or disagreement to each given statement.

It is important to note that these scales were not designed such that each item asked about the importance of the decision making variable in determining student outcomes; rather the items were investigating the respondents’ perceptions of the decision making behaviors related to that variable in their school and district. In fact, once the open ended responses were coded by a panel of experts, themes emerged in the responses and concerns of the RQ respondents. These themes, once identified, can be seen within different questions in each scale in the RQ, but coded in an unfortunately random fashion. The researcher now suspects that, perhaps some or all of these identified themes played a higher role in mediating student outcomes in reading than the five leader decision making variables originally chosen by the study. This may be one factor contributing to this study’s inability to firmly link the leader decision making variables to student reading outcomes.

Another factor which may have prevented accurately comparing leader decision making variables and student reading outcomes lies in one of the previously mentioned limitations of the study. Essentially, student reading
outcomes were only examined at the district level. This may have negated this study’s ability to draw accurate relationships between the leader decision making responses of individual schools and student reading outcomes.

While this study was able to show little firm relationship between teacher and principal/designee (administrator) perceptions of leader decision making variables and student reading outcomes, a number of significant relationships were found at different levels, in terms of the perceptions within each group, teachers, principal/designees (administrators), RFG respondents, and non RFG respondents. Among principals/designees (administrators), all variables were significantly correlated with each other with the exception of training and funding and training and curriculum. Among teachers, all decision making variables were found to be significantly correlated with each other. For both administrators and teachers, the highest correlation was between evaluation and assessment. However, while the second strongest correlation for administrators was between evaluation and training, this was the second lowest correlation for teachers, after training and funding, which, for administrators, was not significant.

In terms of mean response, both teachers and administrators returned high mean responses for the variables program evaluation and student assessment, while funding was the lowest mean for both groups. An even more notable pattern was visible when comparing the mean responses of RFG respondents and non RFG respondents. For every subscale of leader decision making, RFG respondents had higher mean responses than non RFG respondents. The highest mean for RFG respondents was for the decision
making variable, training, while the highest mean response for non RFG respondents was for the variable, assessment. For both RFG and non RFG respondents, funding was again the lowest mean response and showed the highest standard deviation. Additionally, RFG respondent mean responses for all variables were closer together than the mean responses of non RFG respondents.

Noticing these patterns, the next problem is one of interpretation. It seems clear that RFG status, and, to a lesser extent, role, each have a mediating influence on response to the RQ scales. Funding consistently receives the lowest response, below the median value, perhaps because the leader decision making regarding funding often takes place at the District Office, rather than in individual schools. The responses of RFG status personnel were consistently higher, and consistently closer together in terms of means than the responses of non RFG personnel. Interpreting this, it is important to remember that the decision making scales did not measure the importance of the relevant concept, but rather impressions about where, in terms of hierarchy, the decisions related to that variable had been made, and simultaneously, the level of collaboration and discussion that were involved in the decisions. Due to the stipulations of the RFG, school personnel at all levels were intended to be more involved in the decision making process; it may be that their higher responses to the RQ scales show that their perception of their own involvement, and the level of collaboration present, was higher than that of non the RFG respondents.
According to Datnow and Castellano (2001) school-wide reform is dependent on decision making, among the school leadership that is simultaneously strong and collaborative. Datnow and Castellano (2001) further explain that schools will never be strengthened unless administrators and the teachers they oversee begin to work together. Datnow and Castellano (2001) argue that administrators and teachers must establish a connection for the organizational structures they inhabit to become centered on work that is more productive. Essentially, Datnow & Castellano (2001) argue that the operational relationships of organizations and educational leadership must shift and change at all levels, and that educational organizations should model themselves on schools wherein principals have successfully demonstrated involvement in change, reform, and restructuring.

Emergent Themes

The open-ended questions, while not originally envisioned as a major element of this research, in fact yielded a great deal of qualitative data. Upon analysis by a panel of experts, a number of themes and concepts emerged in the responses of RFG and non RFG principal/designees (administrators) and teachers. These themes addressed the crucial issues surrounding the relationship between leader decision making and student achievement in K-3 Title I schools and reading First Elementary Schools. Additionally, the comments showcase the passion, strength, and resiliency of teachers and administrators within the educational system as well as their desire for a voice in regards to decisions about reading training, reading curriculum, program evaluation,
funding, and student assessment. With that being said, this section examines
the qualitative responses gained from participants who chose to leave comments
at the end of the RQ. In the following section, comments pertaining to each
decision theme or making variable are reported, along with literature pertinent to
the concept being discussed.

Grants: NCLB and/or RFG

The most common theme within the comments of respondents was
commentary on the grants associated with NCLB or the RFGI. These comments
ranged from very positive to quite negative. Mid-level comments are provided
below. For example, an RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported the
following:

For the most part I like Reading First. We have had to alter and even
bring back some things like vocabulary and grammar skills to help the
students that were beginning to fall back because these are not hit as hard
as other criteria. The program has its benefits and disadvantages as well
to helping get the kids ready for testing and have better test scores.

Similarly, a RFG teacher explained:

Reading First is great in that it allows teachers time to get in reading and
everyone is teaching the same things together. It does however hinder
teachers’ creativity at times as writing and grammar are excluded from the
block and cannot be included during reading which I find to be ridiculous.
The professional development that I have had to attend over the past 4
years has been pointless. Teachers do not like to get information from
I find these meetings to be a waste of time. However, the meetings where we discuss data are beneficial. I think Reading First has helped bring more data to the table and open teachers’ minds to look at data when making decisions.

Despite these two examples, RFG respondents’ comments tended to be mostly very positive, with non RFG respondents making more negative statements. This seems consistent with what one might expect. While states allowed non RFG personnel to attend workshops held for grant status schools (RFGI, 2001), any positive effects of the training would be most strongly felt in RFG schools, where more personnel attended training, more frequently.

**Program Evaluation**

According to Fullan (2005), a problem often faced by leaders trying to lead in times of change is the desire to move quickly, from one hypothesized solution to the next, in order to meet goals which are poorly thought out, superficial, or impossible. Fullan (2005) explained that a focus on capacity and sustainability is necessary to achieve successful change. With this in mind, a second theme important to the respondents related to the significance and/or effect of program evaluation on the school environment. Below is an example illustrating this theme, given by an RFG principal/designee (administrator):

The first few years of Reading First were difficult for us as we were finding our way through our new reading program, learning all the different and new assessments we were giving, went through high turnover with people leaving that wasn’t willing to change their methods of teaching to
accommodate Reading First. If we had given up on the program after the first three years we would have probably judged that the program was unsuccessful. However, by implementing it the full six years of the grant we saw things start turning around in the 4th year and our scores began to improve. Now we are scoring the highest in the district in not only reading but writing. Even though writing is not taught in the literacy block, the students' achievement in reading is improving their writing skills. Our teachers have become very adept at analyzing data and differentiating instruction based on the students' needs. They are beginning to take some of the same key ingredients that has made Reading First work for us and apply it to their math instruction (frequent progress monitoring, small groups, centers, differentiated instruction, etc.) Reading First was successful at our school but it took time to work many of the adjustments we had to make out. So often in education, we are quick to move from one thing to the next in hopes of "higher test scores" without really giving a program a chance to work.

This desire to rapidly change strategies in order to quickly make progress is discussed by Avery (1993), Peterson (1992), and Senge et al. (2000) who examined the ways schools learn, and the challenges faced by schools adapting to change.  

*Training*

Mackey et al. (2006) noted that principals who lacked a background in reading also frequently avoided or abstained from participating in teachers'
training for the schools’ reading program. When this occurred, Mackey et al. (2006) observed that components critical to the delineated reading program were often missing from classrooms or actually replaced by contradictory components. Henk et al. (2000) pointed out that lack of informed dialogue or discussion on the subject of the school’s reading training, between either teachers and administrators or between teachers and other teachers, would greatly impede the school’s ability to meet students’ literacy needs. This, Henk et al. (2000) argued, necessitated finding a way of establishing academic dialogues around pedagogy. The following comment, by an RFG principal/designee (administrator) serves to illustrate the veracity of these concepts:

Our district designee, our principal, our literacy coach, and our academic coach have participated in RF training offered by the state. I have seen our school move from "whining" about significant instructional changes to wondering why everyone else doesn't teach the way they do! That is a huge shift in culture within our school. I think it is significant that our administration has been active in all levels of training, coaching, and data analysis for students. When teachers know that it is just "how we do it here", then the level of expectation rises to meet that expectation.

Similarly, a non RFG principal/designee (administrator) tells us:

We have participated in the Literacy First Process now for three years. Funds for training were provided by the Oklahoma State Legislators. It has been invaluable to all concerned - teachers, administrators, and especially the students. Our instruction is driven by data and
assessments. It is totally differentiated and also fills in those learning gaps that many low students have.

Mackey et al. (2006) pointed out that the principal’s background significantly affects their success in choosing and supporting a school’s reading program. Essentially, those principals who lack expertise related to reading, either from prior experience or due to a lack of synchronous training with their teachers, tend to rely on others to choose their school’s reading programs. Leech and Fulton (2007) argue that, regardless of prior experience, principals must participate in training to act effectively as facilitators of shared decision making.

**NCLB Criticism**

While many of the comments given by respondents were quite in favor of NCLB and the RFGI, a major theme that emerged was criticism of one or both of the federal education initiatives. The following example comes from an RFG teacher:

I disagree with No Child Left Behind, as I feel in my 13 years of teaching it has only caused my bright students to not receive enough stimulation for their minds and not allowed significant intervention with my lower performing students. Instead of providing appropriate leveled instruction in leveled classrooms which could provide the best education to all my students, I am forced to teach the bare essentials to all, letting my weakest students "fall through" and my gifted ones bored to the point that school is "a joke", as my own 4th grade son has many times stated. My students know who is gifted and who needs help, putting them all together
does not "save" anyone's ego, or pride, or self-worth, it only creates an environment which the students do not receive the best that we, as teachers, can provide. I have a unique view of this law, being both a teacher and a parent of 2 children, the older of whom is a "twice exceptional" child who SUFFERED the hardships of being different in a regular classroom and the younger being identified as gifted but HATES school as he is so far advanced that he has nothing to challenge him at all. I beg of you, and any whom you share your information with, to see that the state and the federal government are not making a stronger tomorrow; to please come and spend a few weeks in just one room, not class-hopping, really BE in the room, and see what we are asked to do.... and SO much will change!

This comment is very much in line with the arguments presented by Taylor (2008) who maintained that it is critical for teachers and principals to continuously reexamine and reflect on their instruction, in terms of content and pedagogy. Taylor (2008) pointed out that, without making choices to meet each students needs, based on their individual assessment data, the quality of available materials being used is irrelevant, since materials and strategies should be constantly adjusted to meet students’ ongoing demonstrated needs.

The following criticism of NCLB is given by another RFG teacher, who also believed that NCLB was not tied closely enough to individual students:

No Child Left Behind has left so many of my students behind. It is really just the special education kids. I agree with regular education kids having
to take and pass a test to assess knowledge. By saying that, I think it would be better to assess students with a pretest and a posttest to assess growth rather than testing them all on the same level. I have taught all six years in an inclusion class. I don’t see why we label special education kids if their IEPs are overrun by federally mandated legislation that they must pass the same standardized test. Each year I feel for those kids who read 6 words a minute and try really hard but they cannot pass the same test my gifted kids take. Where is the justice with special ed students? At my school, the teachers really get to pick our textbooks. I was on a committee that picked our math progress monitoring and reading progress monitoring after much research. Teachers do have input with our principal in the decision making process. She empowers us to be leaders!

This complaint and others in a similar vein are in line with the concepts discussed by Uline and Johnson (2005), who argue that instruction must be improved, via assessment, to match the test-demonstrated needs of students. Uline and Johnson (2005) point out that any assumption that one particular pedagogical method is right for all students is problematical, at best. Ultimately, the statements made by Uline and Johnson (2005) serve as an argument that curriculum, materials, and assessment must be simultaneously data driven, and still kept in the hands of local decision makers, such as the principals and teachers.

This moves us into the next major emergent theme in the open-ended responses, comments about student achievement. One RFG principal/designee
(administrator) shared the following:

Our school has only been in Reading First for 2 years and we are seeing improvements in our reading scores. I am a firm believer in Reading First. Before we implemented the program our teachers were allowed to teach whatever and however [sic] they chose. Now that we have consistency in curriculum and teaching methods we are seeing improvements throughout the K-3 grades. I do have one complaint about the program. Principal accountability needs to be improved. Being the reading coach I did not have support or follow through with my principal. The principal sets the tone of the school and when you have a principal who is uninvolved the system begins to break down. I would also like to see the program go up to 6th grades. I think the lesson maps would help with consistency throughout the system.

Other RFG administrators explained that the significant raise in their students’ reading outcomes occurred because of hard work and collaboration between the teachers, administrators, and literacy coaches, as well as due to increased awareness of state frameworks.

*Decision Making*

The panel of experts stated that, ten of the respondents directly addressed the concept of decision making. While one RFG teacher reported that “Financial decisions were almost completely made by the Central Office.” Another RFG teacher stated:
It has been frustrating for us as teachers to watch the district employees make the decisions for the reading curriculum. The new Houghton-Mifflin curriculum just adopted really lacks a lot of skills necessary for students to become successful readers. It would be nice if they would work in the classroom or really listen to those that do.

A third RFG teacher explained:

Teachers need to be given more flexibility on what and how to teach students. Reading First is a good program, but it could be a great program if teachers were included more in the decision making process.

A number of those who volunteered qualitative responses in the RQ discuss their dissatisfaction with their level of involvement in decisions about curriculum and teaching. Considering the importance NCLB and the RFGI have placed on accountability, this, according to Henk et al. (2000) puts many teachers and other school staff in the position of defending their results but having little choice regarding the decisions, tools, or strategy employed.

This is unfortunate, because, in order to achieve a viable professional learning community, as well as a quality work environment, and an active learning organization, such as those discussed by DuFour et al. (2005), Fullan (2002a), Marzano et al. (2005), Schmoker (2006), and Senge (2005) collaboration and communication between administrators and teachers is vital. Additionally, letting teachers be involved in curricular decisions helps keep them feeling valued and motivated, which, according to Bolman and Deal (2003) are both tasks belonging to the principal.
Collaboration

A number of leadership and decision making theories focus on efficacy, educational outcomes, and the problems which can lead a school away from success (Avery, 1993; Doud & Keller, 1998; Hall et al., 1984; Peterson, 1992; Senge et al., 2000). Another important theme in the literature is the necessity to deal with continuous change at every level in the organization (Tirozzi, 2003).

Several respondents, both from non RFG and RFG schools, noted that multiple parties collaborated to make decisions. A non RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported that: “As the principal I rely on my building leadership team to help make decisions related to curriculum, professional development, and spending.” Another non RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported: “Our elementary and secondary directors work with committees of teachers to select curriculum, so there is teacher input in textbook selection.” A third RFG principal/designee (administrator) echoed this perspective:

In my school we are working through the process of being more collaborative in seeking input and direction from the classroom teacher, coaches, principals, and district level administrators. The instructional coaches are being utilized more in the day to day curriculum through modeling and professional development.

Several other respondents indicated that this collaboration in decision making was critical to their achieving successful student outcomes. One RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported:
With all of [the areas of leader decision making], teachers, district personnel, all school administrators and the LC were involved. It is significant to us that ALL of these people were involved in the actions. I don't think any single group would have the impact that participation by all groups has had.

Another RFG principal/designee (administrator) echoed this perspective:

The _____ Elementary School is in our 5th year of implementing Reading First. Our 5th grade class scored the best of disadvantaged schools in the state. All the hard work, long days, team meetings, crying, and gnashing of teeth has paid off for the students of _____ Elementary.

The success of collaborative scholastic dialogue in improving student outcomes is unsurprising in light of Henk et al. (2000), who point out that informed dialogue between teachers and teachers, and teachers and administrators, can greatly improve a school’s success at meeting student literacy needs.

Funding

On January 8, 1964 President Johnson declared a War on Poverty, which in turn led the Gardner Commission to propose targeting federal educational aid to specific categories of need, particularly towards the education of children living in poverty (Borman et al., 2001). However, to date, using the resources available, schools have not yet closed the gap between national expectations and student achievement (CEBP, 2003; Uline & Johnson, 2005; Viadero & Hoff, 2006). With this in mind, a number of respondents to the open-ended question
explained that RFG funding had significantly impacted the success of the school in question. For example, an RFG teacher reports:

Reading First provided our school the chance to analyze our reading curriculum, purchase an assessment tool (DIBELS), receive numerous resources, and fund a literacy coach. All of these things have greatly increased our teachers' knowledge and positively impacted our students' learning.

Another RFG teacher supports this view:

Reading First initiatives and funding helped provide the resources and training this school needed to improve reading instruction at this school.

A third RFG teacher reports similarly:

Reading First Grant money has positively impacted our students academically. We have grown & are seeing great gains in reading assessments as we watch our students grow to love reading.

Some responses, on the other hand, such as the following comment by a non RFG teacher, related to the impact of inadequate funding:

In Oklahoma, while some schools use Reading First and the DIBELS assessment, others use the Literacy First Model. Budget crisis in OK is seriously impacting acquisitions and funding for supplemental materials.

Another non RFG teacher relates a similar message:

No child left behind is a great idea, but funds were not provided to purchase appropriate materials and staffing to provide interventions.
Materials purchased and minimal extra staffing came at the expense of other curricular needs.

According to Odden & Picus (2004) inequity has been a long term problem in school finance. An example of this can be seen in the large variances of per-pupil expenditures for different districts in each state, linked to the uneven distribution of the property taxes that fund local education (Odden & Picus, 2004). The issue of funding inequity between schools continues to influence student outcomes, as can be seen by the achievement gap still present between Caucasian students, African American students, and Latino students, particularly at age 13 and beyond (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Assessment

Uline and Johnson (2005) argue that two critical elements for improving instruction and thus student outcomes, across demographic lines, are classroom student assessments, and assessments for accountability. A number of respondents indicated the value they placed on Assessment, caused by or inspired by NCLB and the RFGI. For example, an RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported:

RFG principal/designee (administrator): Our teachers have become very adept at analyzing data and differentiating instruction based on the students' needs. They are beginning to take some of the same key ingredients that has made Reading First work for us and apply it to their math instruction (frequent progress monitoring, small groups, centers,
differentiated instruction, etc.) Reading First was successful at our school but it took time to work many of the adjustments we had to make out.

Similarly, a non RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported:

*We have participated in the Literacy First Process now for three years. … It has been invaluable to all concerned - teachers, administrators, and especially the students. Our instruction is driven by data and assessments. It is totally differentiated and also fills in those learning gaps that many low students have.*

However, there were also negative comments regarding NCLB assessment. An RFG teacher made the following comment:

*No Child Left Behind has left so many of my students behind. It is really just the special education kids. I agree with regular education kids having to take and pass a test to assess knowledge. By saying that, I think it would be better to assess students with a pretest and a posttest to assess growth rather than testing them all on the same level.*

The fear that the assessment procedures currently spurred by the NCLB are not yet optimized for increasing student outcomes is not unique. Shen and Cooley (2008) argued that the current assessment plans inspired by the NCLB can be viewed as designed to superficially satisfy state requirements and designate accountability, rather than on actually improving the student learning process. However, Shen and Cooley (2008) maintain that, if this error in focus were to be remedied, education could then benefit from the full potential of data-driven decision making. Shen and Cooley (2008) argue that the only way to achieve
measurable improvement is to simultaneously apply the lens of assessment data analysis to curriculum, instruction, remediation, acceleration, resource allocation, and professional development for both teachers and administrators. It is only through this comprehensive approach to assessment, Shen and Cooley (2008) argue, that schools will become true learning organizations, such as those described by Senge (1990).

Culture, Curriculum, Survey Format

A number of comments specifically addressed the theme of Culture, pointing out that RFG training, when attended synchronously by both administrators, teachers, and reading coaches, had positively enhanced the culture at their school. For example, an RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported that the RFGI “has been the most effective literacy program that I know about. It has changed the culture of our school.”

Further comments focus specifically on the theme of Curriculum. For example, an RFG teacher reports: “I enjoy the Reading First program because it really benefits the at risk or struggling learners. It also helps me plan and implement instruction that is developmentally appropriate for all learners.”

Additional comments focused on the theme of the RQ Survey Format. These comments were usually noting that the online survey format of the RQ had prevented the respondent from indicating all of the people involved in their school with the decision making process regarding the five study variables. For example, a RFG principal/designee (administrator) noted: “Some of the questions didn’t allow for multiple responses for who was involved.” A non RFG
principal/designee (administrator) similarly notes: “The survey did not allow me to mark two choices. In some cases, this would have allowed me to give more accurate responses.” Originally, the RQ had been intended to contain large select-all-that-apply questions investigating involvement in the decision making related to each study variable. However, to simplify an instrument that was already growing cumbersomely long, these questions were reduced to smaller, forced-choice questions.

Key Concepts

After examining the body of qualitative comments returned by RFG and non RFG administrators and teachers, the following concepts seem critical to obtaining positive outcomes when attempting to change school practices. First, collaboration between administrators, teachers, and all school personnel is fundamentally necessary to successfully improve student outcomes in reading. Witness the following comment by an RFG principal/designee (administrator):

Our school has collaboration between the School Leadership Team (Principal, Asst. Principal, the Academic Coach, the Literacy Coach, the Counselor) and the K-3 teachers. Each member of the team has provided quality feedback and has been involve in the decision making. Stakeholder input has been used to make continuous reading improvements that has shown a growth in our state reading scores over the past 3 years.

Another key point lies in perception of funding as an obstacle. A number of respondent teachers and administrators were dismayed by lack of available
funding. Others, however, found that RFG reading training and assessment training provided a permanent boost to their success in teaching reading. For example, a RFG principal/designee (administrator) reported:

Reading First was a great blessing for our school as we were able to learn more about teaching reading and assessing children. Much of this knowledge was useful across curriculum. Even though we no longer have the funds, much of what we learned remains in place at my school.

Similarly, a non RFG teacher commented:

The Reading First Grant was only extended one year. There were no funds this year. The mandates for NCLB are done, but as you know, funding for schools in Oklahoma is not good and will not be very good next year either. Evaluation of test data, strategies for improving scores are done every year for the school sites (by the entire staff). This is part of the Title I requirement and it does address issues without costing any money.

Another RFG principal/designee (administrator) also agreed with this point:

We were a Reading First School for three (3) years. I think the model helped us be successful in making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for six consecutive years. Although we are no longer considered a Reading First School by funding, we continue to use the model. We have also kept the uninterrupted reading block.

The important concept here is that, while funding will vary from year to year, positive changes can still be made within the culture of the school. This is particularly true in regards to the amount of collaboration between administrators,
teachers, reading coaches and others. Changes in school culture can lead to sustainable improvement, regardless of fluctuating funding. Illustrating this, an RFG principal/designee (administrator) reports:

I have seen our school move from "whining" about significant instructional changes to wondering why everyone else doesn’t teach the way they do! That is a huge shift in culture within our school. I think it is significant that our administration has been active in all levels of training, coaching, and data analysis for students. When teachers know that it is just "how we do it here", then the level of expectation rises to meet that expectation.

Essentially, the principal must facilitate a system in their school that encourages, examines, and facilitates new ideas (Johnson, 2009). In particular, Johnson (2009) notes, leaders must examine the ways in which their system handles both teaching and innovating.

Implications for Future Research

While the five decision making variables identified for this research (reading training, reading curriculum, program evaluation, funding, student assessment) proved to be significantly correlated with each other, except for in four cases they were not shown to be statistically significantly correlated with the dependent variable, reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above in state third grade reading tests. Qualitative results, however, imply strongly that these decision making variables, and others revealed in this research, do have a significant impact on student reading proficiencies.
Further research, then, should attempt to clarify the vitally important question, what leader decision making variables do have a statistically significant impact on student outcomes? Such research will need to:

- In terms of “leader decision making,” investigate “amount of cross-hierarchical communication,” “comfort in cross-hierarchical communication,” “cross-hierarchical collaborative decision making,” and “cross-hierarchical continuous synchronous training” in mediating “student outcomes.”
- Investigate the relationship between “student outcomes” and frequency of “Best Practice observation,” by teachers and administrators, at schools which have shown sustained levels of improvement and excellence.
- Investigate the utility of different types of “immediate assessment” and “long-range assessment” in precipitating comfortable and open school cultures while also promoting higher student outcomes.

This study utilized data from several states in order to gain a large sample size. Unfortunately, after the initial year of the RFGI, each state utilized different assessments to measure reading proficiency. Furthermore, each state set its own criterion for establishing proficiency, and it is likely that the cut scores indicating proficiency changed several times, in each state, during the entire period of the RFGI. To date there is no universally used national assessment which would allow an accurate comparison of data across states. Therefore, future research attempting to compare student reading proficiency to leader decision making should identify a sufficiently large population, in one or more
states, during a time period when the assessment instrument and cut scores for all targeted educational agencies are constant.

Regarding statewide comparisons, if National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests are further developed and become more widely and consistently utilized, they may provide useful data. However, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE, 2005) cautions that NAEP achievement levels, though they will continue to be used on a trial basis, should currently be interpreted and used with caution. According to a government mandated evaluation conducted by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in 1998:

NAEP’s current achievement level setting procedures remain fundamentally flawed. The judgment tasks are difficult and confusing; raters’ judgments of different item types are internally inconsistent; appropriate validity evidence for the cut scores is lacking; and the process has produced unreasonable results. (Pellegrino, Jones, & Mitchell, 1998, p. 182)

Hopefully, when these problems are overcome, the NAEP will be able to provide data useful for comparisons of reading proficiency across states, or for comparisons of reading proficiency outcomes and leader decision making.

Implications for School Leaders

Both the quantitative and qualitative results of this research have implications for practitioners. The Reading First Grant, in focusing on data driven assessment, student outcomes, and synchronous reading training, inspired a multi-stage evaluation and selection of new curricula in order to achieve
mandated results. An incidental byproduct of this has been an increase, in many schools, in both communication and collaborative decision making between school administrators, teachers, reading coaches, and other knowledgeable and concerned parties. It is in this respect, perhaps, that the RFGI has had the greatest impact.

Based on the Literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; DuFour et al., 2005; Fullan, 2002a; Marzano et al., 2005; Schmoker, 2006; Senge, 2005), the results of the statistical analysis, and the emergent themes found within the open-ended responses, the following recommendations are offered for school administrators, designed to allow educational leaders to foster the collaborative problem-solving approach obtained by some RFG and non RFG schools.

- For schools to sustainably improve their students’ reading proficiency, it is important that communication be open and frequent in all directions, between administrators and teachers, between teachers and teachers, and between teachers and administrators. Partnerships between faculty and administrators, based on collaboration, research, assessment, and action, are likely to lead to increases in student reading proficiency, particularly when decision making is shared between faculty and administrators. Furthermore, schoolwide discussions that focus on student assessment, curriculum, and training, help ensure that faculty and administrators share an understanding of every facet of sustainable school success.
• It is beneficial if principals know what lessons are embedded in their school’s curriculum, and what those lessons, in practice, should look like. This is essential for program evaluation, teacher evaluation, and student assessment to be added-value entities that promote constant and sustained school improvement. With this in mind, it is important that administrators attend training and staff development workshops and seminars, synchronously, if possible. Schools where administrators participate in classroom activities and give the teachers immediate evaluations and feedback are more likely to follow best practice, in reaching short term and long term goals.

Summary

The study utilized a survey instrument, the Richmond Questionnaire (RQ) to investigate four main research questions concerning five areas of leader decision making (reading training, reading curriculum, program evaluation, funding, and student assessment) and student reading achievement (from 2005 to 2008) in RFG and non RFG schools in four states (AR, GA, ID, OK). RFG schools are Title I schools which received a Reading First Grant during the study period, while non RFG schools are Title I schools which did not receive a Reading First Grant during the study period.

The first research question investigated the relationship between principal perceptions of the five independent variables and student reading achievement. A total of 113 principals/designees (administrators) responded to the RQ. For principals/designees (administrators), most of the decision making variables were
found to be significantly correlated with each other, but only one variable, curriculum, was found to be statistically significantly correlated with reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above in state third grade reading tests from 2005 to 2008. The second research question investigated the relationship between teacher perceptions of the five independent variables and student reading achievement. A total of 146 teachers responded to the RQ. For teachers, all decision-making scales were found to be significantly correlated with each other, but no decision-making scale was found to be related with reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above in state third grade reading tests from 2005 to 2008.

The third research question investigated the relationship (similarities or differences) between principal and teacher perceptions of the five independent variables. Considering only the decision making variables, the highest correlations for principals/designees (administrators) were between evaluation and assessment. The highest correlation for teachers, when considering only the decision making variables, was also between evaluation and assessment. However, while the second strongest significant correlation for principals/designees (administrators) was between evaluation and training, evaluation and training was the second lowest significant correlation for teachers, after training and funding, which for principals/designees (administrators) was not found to be statistically significant. A multiple regression analysis showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the model for either administrators or teachers.
The fourth main research question regards the relationship between the five independent variables and the dependent variable of reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above in state third grade reading tests from 2005 to 2008. This differs from the previous research questions in that no filters, such as role (principal or teacher) or RFG status (RFG or non RFG) were considered. The variables were simply examined, for all respondents together, to determine if any of the variables affected student outcomes in reading. After a multiple regression analysis was conducted, none of the five leader decision variables was found to predict reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above in state third grade reading tests from 2005 to 2008.

An additional interest of this study lay in the differences between RFG and non RFG respondents. For both RFG (see Table 16) and non RFG schools, all decision-making variables were found to be significantly correlated with each other. In addition, all correlations were positively moderate. For the correlation between decision-making variables and student achievement, the Pearson Correlation showed that the RFG schools decision-making variables were not related to reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above in state third grade reading tests from 2005 to 2008. However, the Pearson Correlation showed that three out of the five decision making variables, reading curriculum, evaluation, and assessment were related to reported percentages of students achieving proficient or above in state third grade reading tests from 2005 to 2008 in non RFG schools.
The results of a MANOVA showed that the interaction between RFG Status and Role was significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .926$, $F(5, 214) = 3.43$, $p = .005$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .074$). Additionally, the main effect for RFG status was significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .747$, $F(5, 214) = 14.48$, $p < .001$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .253$). This indicates that the linear composite of training total, curriculum total, evaluation total, funding total, and assessment total differs for schools that received a Reading First Grant and schools that did not receive a Reading First Grant.

The main effect for Role also proved to be significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .849$, $F(5, 214) = 7.62$, $p < .001$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .151$). This indicates that the linear composite of the independent variables differs for administrators and teachers. Follow-up ANOVAs (see Table 22) indicate that the effect of both RFG status and Role were significant for training total, curriculum total, and evaluation total. For both RFG and non RFG responders, Administrators have higher levels of agreement for all five independent variables. Regarding the interaction between RFG status and role, the results show that the interaction was only significant for training and funding. These interaction effects indicate that the difference between whether or not a school received the Reading First Grant on the linear combination of the two variables, training and funding support were different for respondents with different roles (principal/teacher). However, the etas for training and funding support indicate a small effect on both variables.

At the end of the Richmond Questionnaire, respondents were given the option of sharing their experiences, thoughts, and insights regarding the RFG,
NCLB, and/or Leader Decision Making. Seventy-four individuals (24.4%) responded to the open-ended prompt. Some responses were word phrases while others were several paragraphs in length.

Upon analysis by a panel of experts, a number of themes and concepts emerged in the responses. Most common were comments about NCLB or RFG grants ($n = 26$), followed by comments about program evaluation ($n = 17$), training ($n = 16$), NCLB criticism ($n = 14$), student achievement ($n = 13$), decision making ($n = 10$), collaboration ($n = 9$), funding ($n = 9$), assessment ($n = 7$), culture ($n = 4$), and curriculum ($n = 4$).

The quantitative findings of this study seem to suggest either no particular relationship between the leader decision making variables and student outcomes, or that the relationship is stronger for non RFG schools than RFG schools. However, the volunteered qualitative comments seem, overall, to imply that RFG schools were far more significantly impacted by the RFG, and thus the associated leader decision making variables, than non RFG schools, and that, even for non RFG schools, the areas of decision making delineated by the RFGI were very significant in moderating student outcomes.
APPENDIX A

THE RICHMOND QUESTIONNAIRE

Reading First Grant, No Child Left Behind, and Leader Decision Making: The Impact on Reading Scores of K-3 Students

This study investigates the relationship between student performance and leader decisions related to five variables:

(a) reading training
(b) reading curriculum
(c) program evaluation
(d) financial support
(e) student assessment

Your open, honest answers will help us better understand the nature of this relationship. The study includes early elementary teachers (K-3) and administrators from Title I schools with representation from schools receiving Reading First Grants (RFG) and those not receiving RFG.

Your responses to the following questions are for data analysis purposes only. No attempt will be made to identify individual participants. Complete confidentiality will be maintained throughout the duration of the study. Thank you for your time and effort in this endeavor.

Directions: Please complete the following questions by selecting the most appropriate choice(s).
1. Please select your Arkansas District from the drop down menu.

District:

Next

Demographics

2. Please describe your school:
   - My school is a Title I school that received a Reading First Grant.
   - My school is a Title I school, but did not receive a Reading First grant.

3. Please identify your professional role:
   - Teacher (Lead Teacher, Regular Education Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Assistant Teacher)
   - School Staff (Librarian, Counselor, Assistant, Media Specialist)
   - School Administrator (Principal, Assistant Principal)
   - District Staff (Superintendent, Director of Special Education, Director of Federal Programs, ELL Coordinator)

4. In the past 5 years, have you:
   - Served as an administrator at the early elementary (grades K-3) level
   - Served as a literacy coach at the early elementary (grades K-3) level
   - None of the above

5. What grade do you currently teach?

6. What is the level of your current assignment?
### Section 8: Overall Decision Making

1. Who was most responsible for the overall decision making process at your school in the area of staff development in reading instruction?

- District Staff (Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Director of Special Education, Director of Federal Programs, ELL Coordinator)
- School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal)
- School Staff (Library Coaches, Guidance Counselors, Librarians, Media Specialists)
- Teachers (Lead Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, Education Teachers, Assistant Teachers)
- I'm not sure.
# Richmond Leader Decision-Making Questionnaire

## Section 1: Reading Training Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Believe State Department of Education reading training was a significant factor in improving reading scores at my school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>State Department of Education reading training was only effective at my school when head teachers, classroom teachers, and principals all attended.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>At my school, the principal frequently attended State Department of Education reading training.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>At my school, teachers and principals have a similar understanding of student reading needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 6. Lecture modeling by resident teachers significantly improved my instruction in reading.

7. What Teachers, School Personnel, and District Personnel have frequently participated in Reading Training from the State Department of Education Regional Training Centers?

- District Staff (Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Director of Special Education, Director of Federal Programs, ELL Coordinator)
- School Administrators (Principals, Assistant Principals)
- School Staff (library, coaches, guidance counselors, librarians, media specialists)
- Teachers (Lead Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, Education Teachers, Assistant Teachers)
- I'm not sure.

8. What Teachers, School Personnel, and District Personnel have frequently participated in Reading Training provided by curriculum or assessment publishers?

- District Staff (Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Director of Special Education, Director of Federal Programs, ELL Coordinator)
- School Administrators (Principals, Assistant Principals)
- School Staff (library, coaches, guidance counselors, librarians, media specialists)
- Teachers (Lead Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, Education Teachers, Assistant Teachers)
- I'm not sure.
Section II: Reading Curriculum Decisions

1. Schools in my district have a lot of freedom in choosing their reading curriculum.  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree

2. My school's primary reading curriculum meets or surpasses the needs of at-risk and struggling readers.  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree

3. My school's reading curriculum was chosen by the District Office.  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree

4. My school's core curriculum meets the needs of all students for all components of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension).  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree

5. The principal encouraged and participated in collaboration among colleagues (teachers and administrators) in the development of choice and analysis of reading materials.  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree

6. Who was significantly involved in the selection of your school's primary reading curriculum?  
   - District Staff (Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Director of Special Education, Director of Federal Programs, ELL Coordinator)  
   - School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal)  
   - School Staff (Library Coaches, Guidance Counselors, Librarians, Media Specialists)  
   - Teachers (Lead Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, Education Teachers, Assistant Teachers)  
   - I'm not sure.
Richmond Leader Decision-Making Questionnaire - Marilla Elementary

Section IV: Financial Support Decisions

1. Funding for my school's reading program is substantially less than adequate.
2. Funding decisions for my school are made at the district office.
3. Faculty and staff are significantly involved in financial decisions at my school.
4. My school frequently conducts needs assessments to determine how funds will be spent.
5. At my school, budgetary knowledge and collaboration among teachers...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section V: Student Assessment Decisions

1. The principal provided office staff to assist in administering and/or analyzing reading assessment batteries.

2. At my school, interventions based on assessment analysis are prompt and meet or surpass the needs of at-risk students.

3. Our school purchased one or more reading assessment packages.

4. In response to student assessment scores, I frequently and significantly altered my classroom reading instruction.
6. Which personnel have frequently participated in Student Assessment Training provided by State Department of Education Regional Training Centers?
- District Staff (Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Director of Special Education, Director of Federal Programs, ELL Coordinator)
- School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principals)
- School Staff (Librarian, Guidance Counselors, Librarians, Media Specialists)
- Teachers (Lead Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, Education Teachers, Assistant Teachers)
- I'm not sure.

7. Which personnel have frequently participated in Student Assessment Training provided by curriculum or assessment publishers?
- District Staff (Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Director of Special Education, Director of Federal Programs, ELL Coordinator)
- School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principals)
- School Staff (Librarian, Guidance Counselors, Librarians, Media Specialists)
- Teachers (Lead Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, Education Teachers, Assistant Teachers)
- I'm not sure.

Please share any additional personal experiences you may have regarding Reading First, No Child Left Behind, and/or Leader Decision Making.

Please provide your email address in order to be included in the gift card drawing:

Thank you for your participation, your time and assistance are greatly appreciated.
## APPENDIX B

### TITLE I DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Source Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Districts</td>
<td>252</td>
<td><a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Schools</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td><a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&amp;State=05">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&amp;State=05</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Schools</td>
<td>582</td>
<td><a href="http://www.arkansased.org/index.html">http://www.arkansased.org/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RFG Schools</td>
<td>115</td>
<td><a href="http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx">http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Districts</td>
<td>183</td>
<td><a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Schools</td>
<td>917</td>
<td><a href="http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/">http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RFG Schools</td>
<td>147</td>
<td><a href="http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx">http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Districts</td>
<td>115</td>
<td><a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Schools</td>
<td>729</td>
<td><a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&amp;State=16">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&amp;State=16</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Schools</td>
<td>354</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sde.idaho.gov/">http://www.sde.idaho.gov/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RFG Schools</td>
<td>40</td>
<td><a href="http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx">http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Districts</td>
<td>552</td>
<td><a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Schools</td>
<td>93</td>
<td><a href="http://www.michigan.gov/mde">http://www.michigan.gov/mde</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RFG Schools</td>
<td>191</td>
<td><a href="http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx">http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Districts</td>
<td>539</td>
<td><a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy09recovery/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Schools</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td><a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&amp;State=40">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&amp;State=40</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title I Schools</td>
<td>910</td>
<td><a href="http://sde.state.ok.us/">http://sde.state.ok.us/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RFG Schools</td>
<td>78</td>
<td><a href="http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx">http://readingfirstdataonline.org/awards/school-list-report.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee 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: 29092902
PROJECT TITLE: The Relationship Between Leader Decision Making and Student Achievement at K-3 Title I/Reading First Elementary Schools
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 08/15/09 to 08/14/10
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation or Thesis
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Emily K. Richmond
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership & School Counseling
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 09/29/09 to 09/28/10

Lawrence A. Hoseman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair
APPENDIX D

FIRST MAILING INVITATION EMAIL

Hello.
My name is Emily Richmond. I am a graduate student pursuing a PhD in Educational Administration at The University of Southern Mississippi. In order to complete my dissertation, I am engaged in a research project examining The Relationship Between Leader Decision-Making and Student Achievement at K-3 Title1/Reading First Elementary Schools.
For this research it is critical that I get feedback from both Principals and Teachers at K-3 schools regarding their perceptions of various issues related to the No Child Left Behind act (NCLB 2001) and Reading First Grants.
Thus, I am humbly requesting your help. I would like for you and your K-3 Teachers to fill out the Richmond Questionnaire (a survey regarding your perceptions), which I have made available online through a secure website (SurveyMonkey). The survey link is: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RLDMQ
Enclosed you will find my Institutional Research Board (IRB) Participants' Information sheet, which I believe will answer any questions you may have. In addition, if you decide to help me with this research I have enclosed/attached a flyer for the teacher’s lounge area and or teacher mailboxes. I want to assure you and your faculty that the confidentiality of your responses is completely guaranteed. Survey results will only be reported in compiled form, at district levels, and data will be kept on a secure password-locked computer.
Thank-you for your consideration (and hopefully assistance) in this matter. I believe that feedback from both Principals and Teachers is critical. Please feel free to call me at any time.

Sincerely,

Emily Richmond
118 College Dr. #6653
Hattiesburg MS. 39406
601-543-9941
APPENDIX E
SECOND MAILING INVITATION EMAIL

Hello,
This is Emily Richmond again. I am in the midst of collecting data regarding The Relationship Between Leader Decision-Making and Student Achievement at K-3 Title1/Reading First Elementary Schools.

This email is to thank those of you who have responded already, and particularly those of you who took the time to write notes or letters explaining or expanding on your answers to the survey questions. I also appreciate feedback regarding the survey instrument itself. Your responses are giving me (and hopefully others) a greater understanding of the difficulties and accomplishments of K-3 administrators and educators dealing with decisions, legislation, and student achievement as affected by NCLB and RFG.

An additional purpose of this email is to try to achieve a higher response rate. The more responses are returned the more useful the study becomes. Therefore, I humbly request additional help. Please distribute the survey link one more time to your K-3 teachers, in the hopes that anyone who meant to fill it out but was too busy at the time will be reminded that I would still love to hear from them. The survey link is: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RLDMQ

As before I have attached my Institutional Research Board (IRB) Participants’ Information sheet, and a copy of the survey flier. As before, I promise that confidentiality of responses is completely guaranteed. Survey results will only be reported in compiled form, at district levels, and data will be kept on a secure password-locked computer.

Thank you again for your time and assistance in this matter. I believe that feedback from both Principals and Teachers is critical. Please feel free to call me at any time.

Sincerely,

Emily Richmond
118 College Dr. #6653
Hattiesburg MS. 39406
601-543-9941
APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Richmond Questionnaire – Participant Information

The Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi has approved this study.

Thank you for volunteering your time and expertise to this educational research endeavor. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between student achievement and leader decision-making concerning a) reading training, b) reading curriculum, c) program evaluation, d) funding, and e) student assessment.

You are being asked to complete a survey and answer a few questions online. It is estimated the process will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. While it is hoped that you will complete the process, your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to answer any question and can withdrawal from this study at any time without penalty.

Your participation is completely anonymous; all responses will remain confidential; and there are no known risks associated with participation. If you have questions, feel free to contact Emily Richmond at any time (601-543-9941) or Dr. Thelma Roberson, Associate Professor of Educational Studies and Research (601-266-4556).

The most important benefit of this study is that future studies using the RQ may produce findings that can lead to a variety of indirect benefits to families and schools through the development of greater school-wide efficacy. In addition, as an individual incentive, participants who a) complete the survey, and b) who then sign up for an opt-in drawing, will have at least a one in 500 chance to win a $100 Visa Gift Card.

Please go to the following link to participate:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RLDMQ

Again, thank you for volunteering your time, expertise, and experience to this educational research endeavor.

~ Emily Richmond

118 College Dr. #6653
Hattiesburg MS. 39406
601-543-9941

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601-266-6820).
REFERENCES


doi: 10.1080/135406002100000530


