Closing the Achievement Gap: A Study of Leadership Behaviors of Principals at Title I Distinguished Schools

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CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: A STUDY OF LEADERSHIP
BEHAVIORS OF PRINCIPALS AT TITLE I DISTINGUISHED SCHOOLS

by

Liss Althea Maynard

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

May 2012
ABSTRACT

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: A STUDY OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF PRINCIPALS AT TITLE I DISTINGUISHED SCHOOLS

by Liss Althea Maynard

May 2012

Education, a fundamental privilege in America, has been deemed the great equalizer that should afford each individual access and opportunity (Hale, 2004). However, research has proven that for many students of color, the American dream is simply a nightmare. Many minority students have lagged behind academically, failing to graduate and failing to become productive, law abiding citizens. A huge educational disparity has evolved and closing the achievement gap has become crucial in today’s educational system. However, despite the many challenges, there are schools across this nation that experience noteworthy achievement for all students including high minority and high poverty schools.

Researchers have identified leadership as an essential component of schools that increase student achievement. For example, the Effective Schools (Edmonds, 1980) research identified the common characteristics of successful schools–schools in which all children learn. Among the Correlates of Effective Schools was strong instructional leadership. The 90/90/90 Schools research (Reeves, 2003) clearly supported high academic achievement for high poverty, high minority schools. What Works is Schools by Marzano (2003) named 12 key factors that impact student achievement. In addition, he identified leadership as the single most important facet.
If leadership is at the heart of school improvement and student achievement, what characteristics do school leaders possess or implement that leads to improved student achievement of all students? This study examined leadership behaviors of Title I Distinguished school principals that have led to increased student achievement and narrowed the achievement gap at high minority, high poverty schools.

This was a quantitative study that focused on five supervisory behaviors or domains (human relations, trust/decision-making, instructional leadership, conflict and control) of Title I Distinguished School principals from a suburban school district in southeast Georgia. Nine schools participated in the study—six Title I Distinguished Schools and three Title I Non-Distinguished Schools. Surveys were used as the data collection instrument.

A number of analyses were conducted to answer the research questions. The research unveiled a difference, in favor of non-distinguished school principals, in human relations. That is, teachers at non-distinguished Title I schools perceived their principals as having better human relation qualities than as perceived by teachers at Distinguished Title I schools. Of the 13 factors that encompass human relations, principals who lead distinguished schools were perceived by their faculty as having a less caring attitude and providing less positive reinforcement as their counterpart. In addition, principals at distinguished schools do not interact as much with their staff as do principals at non-distinguished Title I schools nor do they complement their staff as much.
The University of Southern Mississippi

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Liss Althea Maynard

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

Approved:

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May 2012
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who always support me in all of my endeavors. I love you!
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It is with great pleasure, humility, and gratefulness that I acknowledge those who aided me through this extraordinary experience. First, I would like to thank God for being my guiding force all the time. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee members–Dr. Rose McNeese, Dr. Tammy Greer, Dr. David Lee, and Dr. Ronald Styron–for their commitment, assistance, guidance, and patience. I thank Dr. Wanda Maulding for coordinating the Georgia Cohort and being there for us from the beginning.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background of the Problem

Education, a fundamental privilege in America, has been deemed the great equalizer that should afford each individual access and opportunity (Hale, 2004). However, research has proven that for many students of color, the American dream is simply a nightmare. Many minority students have lagged behind academically, failing to graduate and failing to become productive, law abiding citizens. A huge educational disparity has evolved and closing the achievement gap has become crucial in today’s educational system. Public schools across this country are charged with educating all children regardless of race, national origin, or ethnicity. However, the zip code, socio-economic status, and other demographic indicators have somewhat pre-determined the educational prosperity of a child.

In September 2010, Oprah Winfrey discussed the state of America’s schools, or the lack thereof, on her show entitled The Shocking State of Our Schools (Oprah Winfrey Show, 2010). Among the several expert guests interviewed was then Chancellor Michelle Rhee of the Washington, D.C. Public School System. Rhee stated, “Clearly, our education system is in dire straits, so who’s at fault? Children are not the problem; adults are” (Oprah Winfrey Show, 2010). With so many children receiving an inadequate education or dropping out at staggering rates, education is a priority for all of America.

It has been decades since integration in public schools which was intended to assist minority students in receiving an education equivalent to that of White students. Today, however, minority students, particularly low-income Black and Hispanic, are not achieving at a rate comparable to White students (Diplomas Count, 2008). Instead, they
are dropping out, graduating at a lesser rate, and failing to attend or graduate from college. These underachieving minority students are suspended at a higher rate and are failing overall to be contributing citizens in society. It is a major concern in communities and states across the nation (Dillon, 2009). The total number of dropouts in Georgia in 2008 was 59,291 (Diplomas Count, 2008).

In an analysis of 2008 unemployment rates, 54% of dropouts aged 16–24 were jobless compared to 32% for high school graduates and 13% for those with a college degree. That statistics are even higher for Black dropouts whose unemployment rate was 69% compared to 54% for Whites and 47% for Hispanics (Dillon, 2009).

From the east coast to the west coast, school districts across this nation have employed various strategies to help all students be successful. President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into law in 2002 to address the high number of school age students who were not achieving at an acceptable level despite school attendance (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). NCLB is a federal law, with an emphasis on reading and mathematics that was established to fund several programs to assist in improving the performance of schools in the United States by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts, and schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2002).

In addition, NCLB (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) provides parents with more flexibility in selecting schools their children will attend. The law expected all children to be proficient readers by the end of third grade and to meet state academic achievement standards in order to reach their full potential through improved programs. Statewide implementation of accountability systems based on rigorous state standards and annual testing for all students in third through eighth grades was required. To assure no child or group of children are left behind, assessment results and progress objectives
are disaggregated by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency. Per the Georgia Department of Education, school districts and schools are expected to implement programs that address the diverse needs of all children in order to meet statewide proficiency goals and make adequate yearly progress (AYP). Failure to make AYP or adequate yearly progress will subject schools and school districts to improvement through corrective action and restructuring measures to increase student achievement. State Academic Achievement Awards are given to schools that meet or exceed AYP objectives or close achievement gaps (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

In response to NCLB, Georgia’s Department of Education (2010) outlined a framework to support the efforts for closing the achievement gap among diverse populations of students in Georgia schools. The guiding questions for this research included: Why are students of color performing at a much lower standard? Why are students of color graduating at a much lower rate than White students are? Why are students of color being suspended or expelled at a much higher rate than other ethnic groups? What characteristics do school leaders possess or implement that leads to improved student achievement of all students? Directly or indirectly, the answers to these questions affect education and America’s economic competitiveness throughout the United States as indicated by extensive research (Dillon, 2009).

Studies have proven that quality schools with strong, effective leadership nurture student achievement by implementing various techniques, strategies, and programs to obtain the desired academic results (Lezotte, 1991). These results indicated an improvement in the quality of education for minority students thus closing the achievement gap. For example, Canada, founder and president of Harlem Children’s Zone (2010), has made a lifelong commitment to educate children in Harlem. He leads
with an understanding that closing the gap begins early, before birth. For that reason, his educational program begins with the pregnant mother and continues until the child’s graduation.

Canada’s leadership has proven to be effective for the Harlem Children’s Zone as evidenced by his consistent increase in student achievement. Canada exemplifies the strong instructional leadership needed to close the achievement gap and improve student academic ability. Canada has been named to Time Magazine’s list of 100 most influential people of the world. Under Canada’s visionary and no nonsense leadership, the cycle of generational poverty for thousands of children is becoming extinct (Harlem Children’s Zone, 2010).

The Harlem Children’s Zone has set out to prove that poor, Black students can and do succeed. Through coordinated efforts, the Harlem Children’s Zone has established a new method to end the cycle of generational poverty. By addressing the needs of the entire community, HCZ is not simply helping children beat the odds; it is helping to change the odds. HCZ has a 90% success rate from their students. Ninety out of 100 public school students who participate in Harlem Children’s Zone attend college. In addition, 100% of their third-grade students are either on or above grade level in mathematics.

President Obama has recognized that HCZ has a major impact on student learning as well as the community. He stated, “Harlem Children’s Zone is an all encompassing, all hands-on-deck, anti-poverty effort that is literally saving a generation of children” Harlem Children’s Zone (2010). Through the huge efforts of its leader to implement a vision of excellence and no excuses, the Harlem Children’s Zone has defied the odds for
minority students and afforded children of color the opportunity to live the American dream.

Canada (Harlem Children’s Zone, 2010) has been referred to as a modern day Marva Collins (1992). Dissatisfied with public and private education, Collins founded the Westside Preparatory School in inner-city Chicago in 1975. Collins believed that all children can learn including learning disabled, problem children, and even children who are labeled borderline mentally retarded. At the end of her first year, every child enrolled in Westside Preparatory School scored at least five grades higher, dispelling the labels (Collins, 1992). Collins has received many accolades and much recognition for her work in education. Today, Collins trains teachers in her educational program and methodology to ensure all children receive a quality education.

*If you want a strong economy, if you want economically healthy communities, if you don’t like unemployment and high incarceration rates, you’ve got to transform schools and the broader school community to give every child a fair shot at learning.*

–Dr. Michael Lomax, President and CEO, UNCF

According to the Diplomas Count (2008), the high school graduation rate in 2008 for Georgia was 56% with a college readiness rate of 31%; constituting a dropout rate of 44% of which 41% were females and 52% were males. Disaggregating the dropout data by race resulted in the following: 41% White, 61% Hispanic, 56% Black, and 25% Asian Americans. These statistics were startling across the nation. To continue to be a competitive, global market, America must be the source of competent, competitive, and global students who are adequately equipped to enter the world of work (Reeves, 2009).
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measures student achievement in the United States state by state. NAEP provides results on subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences and school environment for populations of students and groups within those populations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

According to the 2007 results from NAEP, Georgia is ranked 39th among all the states with 26% of fourth-grade students reading at or above proficient as compared to 87% on the state test. Ranking 38th on achievement in mathematics, Georgia’s fourth-grade students had a 30% achievement rate in comparison to 75% on the state test (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Only 25% of eighth-grade students were proficient in reading on the NAEP and 23% were proficient in mathematics. State tests yielded 83% and 69% respectively. The implications of the results are profound, including the significant difference between the results of the NAEP and state test (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Theoretical Foundation

The NLCB legislation set the bar for all students to meet the minimum standard (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Several researchers have identified the characteristics of schools that increase student achievement despite a plethora of challenges. Edmonds (1979), Lezotte (1991), Marzano (2003), and Reeves (2000) have explicitly outlined their research for school improvement including the impact of leadership, culture, and climate on student success.

The effective schools researchers identified the common characteristics of successful schools—schools in which all children learn (Edmonds, 1979). This research expelled the notion that schools had no impact on learning and identified the Correlates
of Effective Schools that improve student achievement. The correlates outlined guiding principles to achieve high and equitable levels of student learning (Edmonds, 1979). All children were expected, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or race to learn at least the essential knowledge, concepts, and skills needed to be successful at the next grade level. Furthermore, when the school improvement processes based upon the effective schools research were implemented, the proportion of students who achieved academic excellence improved, or at the very least, remained the same (Edmonds, 1979).

It is important to know and understand each correlate in order to improve academic achievement for all students. Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979) outlined the correlates as follows: (a) a clear and focused mission; (b) high expectations for success; (c) instructional leadership; (d) frequent monitoring of student progress; (e) the opportunity to learn; (f) student time on task; (g) a safe and orderly environment; and (h) a home-school relationship that supports the school’s mission. The correlates are unique in that they are the only set of research-based characteristics of a school’s climate associated with improved student learning (Edmonds, 1979). They are the only set of identified constructs with which to analyze that complex social organization called a school in order to cause the school as a whole to improve (Edmonds, 1979).

All of the correlates of effective schools are essential to creating schools that produce students who are able to compete globally. However, schools that teach poor children successfully have strong leadership and a climate of expectation that students will learn (Edmonds, 1979). As a result, school administrators are selected for the skills they possess as instructional leaders and are evaluated on how well they execute that role (Flowers & Keating, 2005). In an effective school, the principal is an instructional leader
of leaders (Lezotte, 1991). Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) noted that instructional leadership is one of the most frequently mentioned educational leadership concepts in North America. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) described instructional leadership, from research of the Smith and Andrews (1989), as encompassing four dimensions, or roles: (a) research provider, (b) instructional resource, (c) communicator, and (d) visible presence.

As stated in the effective schools research, regardless of a student’s socioeconomic status, schools do have an impact on student learning (Edmonds, 1979). In some of the nation’s poorest and most challenged school districts, dynamic public schools are helping students to succeed against the educational odds (Schmoker, 2001). For example, in Ohio, the Department of Education has identified and recognized the progress of high-performing schools in an effort to determine the school characteristics that set them apart and to explore concrete strategies for replicating their successes in other low-income communities (Johnson, 2005).

Johnson (2005) stated, “We are talking about those schools that have high levels of poverty and often high percentages of Black students, but also have high levels of academic achievement.” The 113 high-achieving Schools of Promise have a student population of more than 40% considered low-income and comply with all state and federal yearly academic progress requirements. Additionally, at least 75% of the total student body was proficient in reading or mathematics, of which 75% are economically disadvantaged and minority students. More than 73% of the students graduate, a higher percentage than the national average for schools in other disadvantaged communities in America (Johnson, 2005).
In a study of Schools of Promise practices, the Ohio Department of Education (Johnson, 2005) found five elements that reflect the unique community of each school. The five constant elements are: (a) rigorous standards and instructions; (b) strong instructional leadership; (c) instruction designed for the success of all students; (d) parent and community involvement; and (e) a positive school culture. According to Johnson, there is a level of instruction that is similar to what is seen in highly affluent schools—a very literacy-rich, numeracy-rich curriculum. The integration of this curriculum into every aspect of the school day and the high academic expectations set the norm of educators who adopt the attitude that all students can and will excel and who celebrate the potential of their students for success (Johnson, 2005).

Present in Schools of Promise are well-defined standards and strong school leadership. Educators feel truly supported by their leaders; they had the administrative supports and the materials they needed to do a great job with their students, they knew how to win and they got the support they needed to do it (Johnson, 2005). In addition to providing structure and support, school administrators in the Schools of Promise often brought a hands-on approach to their work, spending as much as 50% of their time in the classroom with their teaching staffs focused on the details of instructional issues (Johnson, 2005).

Extensive professional development opportunities and a dynamic culture of collaboration and peer support are also common. Johnson (2005) stated, “Professional development is not simply a workshop, it occurs on a daily basis as teachers learn from each other. There is this continuing process of adapting instruction and perfecting their craft” (p. 9). Another factor of success for Schools of Promise was teachers dedicated to trying new and creative teaching methods to engage students from all different
backgrounds and cultures. “Instead of just saying ‘turn to page 22’,,” noted Johnson, “teachers seem to be asking themselves ‘what is the standard I want to teach and how do I present it in a way that comes alive for them?’”

Ohio’s Schools of Promise were able to create and sustain a culture of value where students reported that learning was fun and that they were treated with respect (Johnson, 2005). Ohio’s goal was to identify the characteristics of schools closing the achievement gap for all students especially the poor. Reeves (2001) conducted extensive research on the common characteristics of high achievement schools. The 90/90/90 Schools research examined the extent to which there was a common set of behaviors exhibited by the leaders and teachers in schools with high achievement, high minority enrollment, and high poverty levels (Reeves, 2001). As a result, five characteristics common to all 90/90/90 Schools emerged: (a) a focus on academic achievement; (b) clear curriculum choices; (c) frequent assessment of student progress; (d) multiple opportunities for improvement; (e) an emphasis on nonfiction writing; and (f) collaborative scoring of student work (Reeves, 2003). Each of these characteristics is driven by the leadership of the school.

In the report *Ensuring Effective Teachers for All Students*, Robin Chait (2009) reiterated that effective teachers matter a great deal to all students, and more so for those students in schools with large concentrations of low-income and minority students. Teacher effectiveness was defined as the demonstrated ability of a teacher to help students learn to high levels. Chait (2009) explained that ability is complex and consists of content knowledge, pedagogical skills, attitudes, and behaviors.

Many teachers avoid employment at schools with high levels of poor and minority children; others leave within three years (Chait, 2009). Inequity regarding the access to
effective teachers is a great contributor to the large gap in achievement between poor and minority students and other students. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011), for example, 43% of White fourth-grade students achieve at or above the proficient level in reading, while only 14% of Black students achieve at that level. Haycock and Crawford (2008) reported that providing low-income and minority students with highly effective teachers can significantly boost their learning ability and narrow achievement gaps. In fact, if all Black students were taught, consecutively, by four highly effective teachers, it would close the average Black-White achievement gap (Haycock & Crawford, 2008).

Marzano’s (2003) book, What Works in Schools, provided another synthesis of research that named 12 key factors that have been shown to impact student achievement. Marzano stated, “My basic position is quite simple. Schools can have a tremendous impact on student achievement if they follow the direction provided by the research” (p. 4). The 12 factors were organized into school-level factors, teacher-level factors, and student-level factors. Each factor identified specific characteristics or key elements that supported improved student achievement (Marzano, 2003).

The school-level factors included: (a) a guaranteed and viable curriculum; (b) challenging goals and effective feedback; (c) parent and community involvement; (d) a safe and orderly environment; and (e) collegiality and professionalism. Instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design embodied teacher-level factors. Finally, the student-level factors include home environment, learned intelligence, background knowledge, and student motivation (Marzano, 2003).

The final factor Marzano considered was the critical role of leadership which he says, “Could be considered the single most important aspect of effective school
reform…it influences every aspect of the model presented in this book” (p. 172). A critical role discovered for school leadership was to guide a school community to examine the unique, individual strengths and needs of its students, staff, and community.

Reeves (2001) conducted extensive research on effective schools and found that schools with high percentages of minorities coupled with a large percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunch can, in fact, achieve at high levels. Reeves’s research, branded 90/90/90 Schools, focused on academic achievement while providing clear curriculum options. In addition, these schools assessed frequently and provided multiple opportunities for improvement. Because they understood the importance of literacy, these schools emphasized non-fiction writing and used a collaborative scoring process for a systematic approach to determine student success in regards to meeting the writing standard (Reeves, 2001).

The 90/90/90 Schools research clearly supported high academic achievement for high-poverty, high-minority schools (Reeves, 2003). However, doubts and challenges that students living in high poverty are able to perform well in school is a current reality in many schools. The premise was that a comprehensive accountability system is disadvantageous for poor schools.

Carter (1999), author of the No Excuses Heritage Foundation case studies, provided a conservative viewpoint; while a politically liberal point was often associated with Haycock (2001b) and the Education Trust. Their landmark research on student success in high poverty schools made a striking case that these schools were not isolated anecdotes. The fundamental finding from the Education Trust studies was that no matter how important demographic variables may appear in their association with student
achievement, *teaching quality* is the most dominant factor in determining student success (Carter, 1999).

Teacher quality was also validated by Marzano (2003) as the most important factor in student achievement. These studies showed that teaching quality and *subject matter certification* are much more likely to occur in economically advantaged schools. The case made by Haycock (2001b) and others at the Education Trust was clear: the key variable was not poverty, but teaching quality. While poverty and other demographic variables may be important, they are not determinative in predicting student success (Haycock, 2001b).

Haycock’s (2001b) research revealed that schools do make a difference in the lives of students. Many schools across the United States have experienced noteworthy achievement among all students, especially for minority students living in poverty. Strong leadership, at all levels, coupled with research-based best practices has proven to help students overcome obstacles and challenges. Essential components are necessary and evident in schools that have closed the achievement gaps and provided hope for a brighter future (Reeves, 2003).

**Problem Statement**

The United States is considered one of the best and richest countries in the world; and the impact of not obtaining a quality education forces everyone to have a stake in our educational system (Dillon, 2009). There is a direct correlation between the quality of education offered and obtained by each student enrolled in any school across this nation and the continued success of this country (Dillon, 2009). Because of the disparities in education for minorities and the economically disadvantaged, President George Bush
signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) into law on January 8, 2002 (U. S. Department of Education, 2002).

NCLB (U. S. Department of Education, 2002), which was designed to help all students meet high academic standards, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964. This reform set standards for student achievement and held students and teachers accountable for results. According to the statutes of NCLB, states are required to disaggregate data for students by poverty, race, ethnicities, disabilities, and limited English proficiencies to ensure that no child, regardless of his or her background, was left behind. Not only did NCLB invest in research based teaching practices, but it also provided options for parents which would assure that their children received the best possible education.

NCLB (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) aimed to foster an environment in which every child can learn and succeed. States required schools to meet minimum levels of achievement. Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) refers to the percent of students who must be proficient on state exams. Not only must the school as a whole meet the annual measurable objective, but subgroups of students must also meet the minimum expectation. The goal of NCLB is to have all students be proficient in language arts and mathematics by 2013–2014 (U. S. Department of Education, 2002).

Title I, a component of NCLB, is designed to help economically disadvantaged students to achieve proficiency on challenging academic achievement standards set by the state (U. S. Department of Education, 2011a). According to the U. S. Department of Education (2011a), more than 17 million children were served by Title I in 2006–2007 school year. Of this number, approximately 60% were in kindergarten through fifth grade, 21% in grades six through eight, 16% in grades nine through 12, 3% in preschool,
and less than 1% ungraded. The U. S. Department of Education (2011a) specifically explained the purpose of Title I, for improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged. Its function is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and to reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic assessments (U. S. Department of Education, 2011a).

Statement of the Purpose

All students deserve a quality education and the opportunity to receive an equitable education regardless of their zip code. Effective teachers have been identified as the single most important factor for increasing student achievement. Strong administrative leadership is another characteristic of successful schools (Edmonds, 1979; Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2001). Educators have worked endlessly to equip all students with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to meet the minimum state standards. Unfortunately, many students still do not attain the minimum bar of academic success (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to explore how the achievement gap is closing among Black and White, rich and poor students and the leadership behaviors that principals demonstrate in low-income schools in order to meet the diverse needs of all students and increase student achievement. There is a plethora of research on effective schools as well as on closing the achievement gap. Throughout the United States, many Title I schools have made promising gains and have been acknowledged by earning the Title I Distinguished School honor (U. S. Department of Education, 2011a). The purpose of this study is to identify specific leadership behaviors of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools that lead to closing the achievement gap that exists among minority and White students.
Research Questions

In an effort to provide valuable and pertinent information in closing the achievement gap for any school, three research questions were investigated, analyzed, and reported in this study are:

RQ₁: Do teacher perceptions regarding leadership characteristic profiles differ for Title I Distinguished Schools versus Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?

RQ₂. What specific leadership characteristics of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools distinguish them from their counterparts at Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?

RQ₃. Is there a relation between years of teaching experience and teacher ratings of supervisory behaviors?

Rationale/Significance of the Study

All children, regardless of where they live or of their socioeconomic status, deserve an equal opportunity at educational success and for a quality life. Because the quality of education children attain plays an essential role in their futures, schools do make a vast difference in the lives of students. Many schools across this nation experience noteworthy achievement for all students especially minority and poor students.

Strong leadership coupled with research-based best practices has proven to help students overcome obstacles and challenges in the education process. Essential components have been identified and are evident in schools that have closed the achievement gaps or improved student achievement within certain student populations. These gains have provided hope for a brighter future for students living in poverty. This study will examine leadership behaviors that have led to increased student achievement
and closed the achievement gap at high poverty schools. It will provide meaningful leadership information to the participating schools, as well as, to other schools looking to improve academic achievement.

Assumptions

This study assumed that an adequate and representative number of participants will respond candidly, openly, accurately, and honestly to the questions presented in order to draw appropriate conclusions. It is also assumed that the leadership behaviors revealed will support the current research or literature on continuous school improvement that has proven to close the achievement gap for minority students in anticipation that the resulting data will assist other schools with improving academic achievement.

Limitations

This study researched Title I Distinguished Schools and Title I Non-Distinguished elementary schools from a large suburban school district in northeast Georgia and might potentially pose factors that affect the attainability and transferability to other schools especially non-elementary schools. The demographics of the school, including size or grade span, may also limit the findings of schools with similar profiles. School sites were specific and purposeful and sampling was used. Due to time constraints and accessibility, the researcher’s inability to receive input from all stakeholders limited the generalization to the educational community at large. Failure to survey an all-inclusive representative sample of all individuals that may affect closing the achievement gap limited the results.

The biases of the researcher presented other limitations. As a minority studying the achievement gap for minority students, personal and professional prejudices and biases may have manifested and been confronted throughout the study. However,
researcher biases and prejudices were minimized by triangulation and data to support the study.

Time was also a limitation due to the particular time framework. Data were collected and analyzed in a short period from the schools participating in the study and therefore provided only an indication of the overall leadership behaviors exhibited. As a result, other viable factors that improve student achievement and close the achievement gap for minority students may have been omitted or may not have been identified in the research data.

This study was also limited by the definition and criteria used to determine how schools are closing the achievement gap by improving student achievement for all students. All schools studied are located in the district in which the researcher works, giving the researcher prior knowledge of the local school leadership. However, the researcher had no prior knowledge of the specific schools studied.

Definitions

The following definitions were provided for the purposes of this study:

*Achievement Gap* refers to the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic status (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

*Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO)* are the minimum levels of improvement, based on student performance on state standardized tests, that school districts and schools must achieve within time frames specified in law in order to meet the 100% proficiency goal. These levels of improvement are set to ensure that all student groups, schools,
school districts, and the State as a whole reach this goal by 2013–2014 (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

_Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)_ is one of the cornerstones of NCLB, is an annual measure of student participation and achievement of statewide assessments and other academic indicators (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

_At-risk students_ are those students who are not experiencing success in school and are potential dropouts. They are usually low-academic achievers who exhibit low self-esteem. Disproportionate numbers of them are males and minorities. Generally, they are from low-socioeconomic status families. Students who are both low income and minority status are at higher risk; their parents may have low educational backgrounds and may not have high educational expectations for their children (Pallas, 1989).

_No Child Left Behind (NCLB)_ is an act aimed at closing the achievement gap of minority and non-minority students and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers (U. S. Department of Education, 2011b).

_Socioeconomic status (SES)_ is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person’s work experience and of an individual’s or family’s economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995).

_Title I_ is a federally funded program created to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

_Title I School_ is a school with large concentrations of low-income students; at least 40% of the student population must receive free or reduced lunch in order for the entire school to receive funding under this program (Great Schools, 2012).
Title I Distinguished Schools are Title I schools that recognized for showing exceptional results either in sustainable student achievement or closing the achievement gap (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

Summary and Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, the researcher introduced and provided the foundation and defined the purpose of the study. Chapter II contains the conceptual framework for the study and includes a review of the literature that was conducted to identify research that has been done in regard to closing the achievement gap as it relates to leadership. The review of the literature was organized around the following topics: (a) school leadership; (b) engaged time; (c) socioeconomic and equity issues; and (d) student achievement. A theoretical perspective precedes the review of literature and establishes educational theory around which the study was constructed. Using a quantitative methodology of the study, Chapter III contains a detailed description of the sample and statistical analyses. The results are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V, the final chapter, contains the conclusions and implications of the research, as well as, the recommendations for future research.
Almost 60 years after Brown versus the Board of Education (1954) in Topeka, Kansas, Blacks are still receiving an education that is not comparable to their White counterparts. State laws made it legal to have separate schools for Black and White students; however, the landmark 1954 decision by the United States Supreme Court deemed it unconstitutional for state laws to establish separate schools. This segregation of students in fact denied equal educational opportunities for Blacks (La Morte, 2008).

Brown v. the Board of Education (1954), which dismantled the legal basis for racial segregation in schools, overturned Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), which allowed segregation and supported the separate but equal premise. The purpose of this decision was to afford all children the opportunity to receive a quality education (La Morte, 2008).

Obtaining a quality education is considered a leveling of the playing field for all. If, indeed, the purpose of an education allows for an even playing field, those who fail to receive an education or a quality education are not even in the game. That is, students who drop out or fail to receive a high school diploma or graduate equivalency diploma (GED) will not have the many opportunities available to them as those who have earned a diploma or GED (Greene & Forster, 2003).

While the dropout rate continues to be a widespread issue among all races or ethnic groups, it appears that Black and Hispanic children are more likely to fail to complete or to obtain their high school diplomas. Over a million ninth graders who enter school each fall fail to graduate with their classmates 4 years later. In fact, about 7,000 students drop out every school day. Overall, far too many students are not graduating on time with a regular diploma and low-income and minority students fare the worst in the
dropout epidemic. Each year, approximately 1.2 million students fail to graduate from high school, more than half of whom are from minority groups (Greene & Forster, 2003).

In many states, the gap that exists among White and minority students’ graduation rates is startling with some instances of disparity as much as 40 or 50 percentage points. Seventy-two percent of White students enrolled in ninth grade graduated from high school on schedule as compared to only just over half of Black and Hispanic students of the same group in 2001 (Greene & Forster, 2003). The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) reported the dropout rate for 2008 as follows: 2.3% White, 6.4% Black, and 5.3% Hispanic. The percentages, by race/ethnicity, represent the dropout rates of 15–24 year olds who dropped out of 10th through 12th grades. In reference to income, a person between the ages of 16 to 24 in the highest quartile of family income is about seven times more likely to have graduated from high school as a 16 to 24 person from the lowest quartile. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2011) revealed an 8.7% dropout rate of 15–24 year olds who dropped out of grades 10–12 in low-income families. Low income is defined as the bottom 20% of all family incomes.

The consequences of dropping out of school are profound not only to those specific individuals but to society. Dropouts significantly reduce their likelihood of obtaining a good job and establishing a promising future. The considerable financial and social burdens consequently affect society as a whole. The implications and consequences of not receiving a high school diploma, caused by the lack of the essential basic skills to be a productive member of society, is understood. When children lack the basic skills to live productive lives, they tend to lead lives of drugs, crime, and violence. Therefore, it is necessary for every child to be provided with and to achieve a sound
education in order for America to continue to thrive and be prosperous (Palma, Sum, Khatiwanda, & McLaughlin, 2009).

Schools across America have been forced by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) to address the needs to groups of students who typically have not performed well academically. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; U. S. Department of Education, 2002) was proposed by President George W. Bush, who signed the bill into law on January 8, 2002. Henceforth, schools have implemented school reform initiatives aimed at ensuring that all students meet or exceed state standards.

With the academic disparities still occurring among Black and Hispanic students, closing the achievement gap is in the forefront of education. According to Christie (2002), the achievement gap in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. It is used to describe the troubling performance gaps among many Black and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic White peers. The achievement gap also relates to the similar academic disparity between students from low-income families and families of higher income brackets. The achievement gap is reflected in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college completion and success statistics and therefore, has become a focal point of education reform efforts (Christie, 2002).

The disparity in a child’s education begins early for children of color. According to the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (2001), 30% of White kindergarten students go on to graduate from college. However, only 16% of Black kindergarten students attend college and earn bachelor’s degrees. The U. S. Department of Education (2000a) released data showing that Black and Hispanic kindergarten students already
trailed their White and Asian American counterparts on tests of general knowledge and early reading and mathematics skills.

Disparities exist in students’ course-taking patterns as well. More data from the U. S. Department of Education (2000c) indicated that approximately 62% of White, Black, and Hispanic high school graduates each were enrolled in an Algebra 1 course in high school in 1998. That pattern did not hold for higher-level Math courses. While 64% of White students took Algebra 2, only 55% of Black and 48% of Hispanic students were also enrolled. Even larger gaps appear in honors course enrollments: 7.5% of White students, 3.4% of Black students, and 3.7% of Hispanic students took Advanced Placement calculus (U. S. Department of Education, 2000c).

Haycock (2001a) found some history of improvement for minority Black and Latino students during the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1970 and 1988, the achievement gap between Black and White students diminished by half, and the disparities separating Latinos and Whites declined by one-third. By 1988, that progress came to a halt and the gaps have continued to widen (Haycock, 2001a).

The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) revealed significant reading and math achievement gaps among student groups by race/ethnicity since 1992. For example, in 2009, the average National Assessment for Educational Progress reading scale scores of White students in Grades 4, 8, and 11 were higher than their Black and Hispanic peers’ scores. In 2009, the average reading score of Black fourth-grade students was less than that of White fourth-grade students by 20 points. There was a 25-point reading achievement gap between Hispanic and White fourth-grade students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).
Scores of White, Black, and Hispanic eighth-grade students have all increased from 1992, yet neither the 2009 reading achievement gap between Black and White eighth-grade students (-26 points) nor the gap between Hispanic and White eighth-grade students (-24 points) was measurably different from the corresponding gaps in 2007 and 1992. White twelfth-grade students scored 27 points higher in reading than Black students and 22 points higher than did Hispanic students. The average reading scale score, with a range from zero to 500, was 269, 272, and 296 respectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Math achievement was dismal as well. Dating back to 1992 until 2009, the average National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics scale scores of White fourth, eighth, and twelfth students were higher than the scores of their Black and Hispanic peers. The achievement gap between Black and White fourth-grade students in 2009 (-26 points) was not measurably different from the gap in 2007, but it was smaller than the gap in 1990 (-32 points). The 21-point achievement gap between White and Hispanic fourth-grade students in 2009 was not measurably different from the gap in 2007 or the gap in 1990 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

White, Black, and Hispanic eighth-grade students’ scores increased between 2007 and 2009, again, neither the 2009 achievement gap between Black and White eighth-grade students (-32 points) nor the 2009 achievement gap between Hispanic and White eighth-grade students (-26 points) was measurably different from the corresponding gaps in 2007 or 1990. In 2009, White twelfth-students scored 30 points higher in mathematics than did Black students and 23 points higher than Hispanic students. Neither achievement gap was measurably different from the corresponding gaps in 2005 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).
Achievement gaps between students in schools with high percentages of low-income students and students in schools with low percentages of such students existed at all three grade levels in reading and math. In 2009, the low-income mathematics achievement gap at Grade 4 was -31 points, at Grade 8, the gap was -38 points, and at grade 12, the gap was -36 points. The low-income gaps in 2009 were not measurably different from previous gaps reported by NAEP (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

In fact, by the end of high school, Black and Latino students demonstrate skills in both Reading and Math that are equivalent to those of White students in eighth grade (Haycock, 2001a). Haycock (2001) reported significant differences in the rates at which diverse groups of students complete high school and in their postsecondary education experiences. Within the group of 18- to 24-year-old students, approximately 90% of White and 94% of Asians earned their high school diploma or GED. Blacks graduated from high school or earn a GED at a rate of at least 10 percentage points lower (81%), while Latinos graduated an even lower rate (63%).

Haycock (2001a) also revealed that approximately 76% of White and 86% of Asian high school graduates went directly to college, compared to 71% of Black and 71% of Hispanic graduates. While minorities attended college, their success or completion rate was lower. Blacks were only about half as likely as were White students to earn a bachelor’s degree; whereas Latinos were approximately one third as likely as were Whites to earn a college degree (Haycock, 2001a).

Lee and Burkam (2002) noted that not all children attain an education that allows them the opportunity to have choices for a successful and productive life. There were numerous opinions as to why such an achievement gap existed and even persisted and
prohibited education from serving the role as *the great equalizer*. Historically, schools that served low-income students received fewer resources and were challenged with greater difficulty attracting qualified teachers although NCLB (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) required schools to have highly qualified teachers. These low income schools also encountered many more challenges in addressing student’s needs and received less support from parents. This inequity of school quality was recognized as a direct cause of poor student achievement (Lee & Burkam, 2002). The basic right to equal school access became a reality several decades ago. However, equal access has not led to equal achievement (Barton, 2004).

The disparities in achievement were often attributed to socioeconomic factors. According to the U. S. Census Bureau, 27% of Hispanic children and 30% of Black children live in poverty, compared with roughly 13% of White children (Proctor & Dalaker, 2002). According to data from the U. S. Department of Education’s (2000d) Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, the average cognitive score of pre-kindergarten children in the highest socioeconomic bracket was significantly higher than the average score of students in the lowest socioeconomic bracket. The composition of these socioeconomic brackets was closely tied to race. Thirty-four percent of Black children and 29% of Hispanic children were in the lowest socioeconomic bracket, compared with just 9% of White students (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Acknowledging the effects of poverty on learning is a vital step to closing the achievement gap (Rothstein, 2008). Research from the U. S. Department of Education (2000c) has also shown that dropout rates tend to be higher for children who live in poverty. In 2000, young adults living in families with incomes in the lowest 20% of all family incomes were six times more likely than are their peers from families in the top
20% of income distribution to drop out of high school (U. S. Department of Education, 2000c).

Lee and Burkam (2002) reported in *Inequality at the Starting Gate*, that the dissimilarity of children’s cognitive ability was substantial right from *the starting gate*. They found that disadvantaged children began kindergarten with significantly lower cognitive skills than did their more advantaged counterparts. These same disadvantaged children were then placed in low-resource schools, which magnified the initial disproportion (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Lee and Burkam (2002) drew statistics from the data of the U. S. Department of Education’s (2000d) Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, a comprehensive data collection effort that provided a nationally representative picture of kindergarten students. This data was used to report the observed differences in young children’s achievement scores in literacy and mathematics as distinguished by race, ethnicity, and SES as they began kindergarten. Differences by social background in a wide array of children’s families, home conditions, and activities were also studied. The conclusions from the study produced significant information necessary to increase student achievement and reform education (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Lee and Burkam (2002) also discussed several conclusions based on an analysis of the U. S. Department of Education’s (2000d) Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (1998–1999). According to the study (Lee & Burkam, 2002), even before entering kindergarten, the average cognitive scores of children in the highest SES group were 60% above the scores of the lowest SES group. White students achieved at a higher rate in relationship to average mathematics achievement. In comparison to White students,
Blacks were 21% lower, and Hispanics were 19% lower in Mathematics accomplishment (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Levels of poverty were linked with race and ethnicity. Black and Hispanic children were in the lowest quintile of the socioeconomic status as compared to White children; 34% of Black children and 29% of Hispanic children were at the lowest poverty level in contrast to only 9% of White children (Lee & Burkam, 2002). In addition, the cognitive skills were much less closely related to race and ethnicity after accounting for SES. After race differences were considered, children from different SES groups still achieved at different levels (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Family structure and educational expectations have important associations with socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity, and with young children’s test scores, though their impacts on cognitive skills were much smaller than the impact of either race or SES (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Single-family homes were at a disproportionate rate for Black and Hispanic children. There was a 40-percentage point difference between Black and White children being raised by a single parent and a 12-percentage point difference for Hispanic children. Fifteen percent of White children lived in single-parent homes, while 54% of Black and 27% of Hispanic children lived with only one parent.

Socioeconomic status reported disproportionate results as well. The more income a family earned the smaller the likelihood of being a single parent home. Forty-eight percent of families in the lowest SES quintile were headed by a single parent, compared to only 10% of families in the highest quintile (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Socioeconomic status and cognitive skills had a strong correlation to one another. Of all the categories of factors considered, including race and ethnicity, family educational expectations, access to quality childcare, home reading, computer use, and
television habits, income level or SES accounted for more of the unique variation in cognitive scores than any other factor (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Poor children began kindergarten in systematically lower quality elementary schools than their more economically advantaged peers. School quality was defined in terms of higher student achievement, more school resources, more qualified teachers, more positive teacher attitudes, better neighborhood or school conditions, private vs. public schools. The least advantaged U. S. children began their formal education in consistently lower quality schools thus reinforcing the inequalities that developed even before children reached school age (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

The U. S. Department of Education (2000d) early childhood longitudinal study was one of the most comprehensive and detailed study to collect data on the characteristics of children entering kindergarten. The findings from the study were apparent–disadvantaged children fell behind at a very early age, before they ever entered a classroom. This pertinent information assisted in the attempt to close the achievement gap for minority and low-income students. While factors over which the schools had no control existed, schools were held accountable for raising the achievement for all students. Findings from this study were used to implement proactive plans and develop learning opportunities that gave underprivileged and minority students an equal learning opportunity (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979) coined the Correlates of Effective Schools. The correlates provided a framework for the continuous improvement of schools. The Effective Schools research identified the common characteristics of successful schools–schools in which all children learn. The research found that schools that (a) possessed a clear and focused mission, (b) effectual instructional leadership, (c) a
safe and orderly environment, (d) a climate of high expectations, (e) frequent monitoring of student progress, (g) positive home-school relationships, (h) an opportunity to learn and student time on task ultimately improved student achievement (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979).

Understanding each of the seven correlates was critical in order to improve academic achievement for all students. According to Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979), effective schools have a clear school mission in which faculty and staff accept the responsibility for the acquisition of the curriculum for all students. Effective schools clearly articulate their school’s mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and are committed to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. The high expectation for success for teachers and students establishes a climate conducive of achievement in effective schools. The effectual staff believed and demonstrated that all students are able to attain proficient mastery of the essential content and skills. They were also confident of their adequate capabilities to help all students achieve that mastery (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979).

The third correlate, Instructional Leadership was led by the principal; who conveyed the school’s mission to the staff, parents, and students. The instructional leader understood and applied the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program. To ensure students are learning, frequent monitoring of student progress was evident in effective schools. Student academic progress was measured regularly and an array of assessment procedures was used. The results of the assessments were used to improve individual student performance and the instructional program (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979).
Schools identified as effective provided a variety of opportunities for students to learn and had high levels of students on task. A significant amount of classroom time was allotted to instruction in the essential content and skills areas. During the high percentage of instructional time, students were engaged in whole class, or large group, teacher-directed, or planned learning activities in an efficient, purposeful, atmosphere that was free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate was uplifting and conducive to teaching and learning. Effective schools understood the importance of parental involvement and engagement and ensured that parents understood and supported the school’s basic mission. Parents were afforded the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission. At the helm of effective schools were effective leaders (Edmonds, 1979; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979).

Effective schools exhibited each of these correlates regardless of the poverty level under which it operated. Research revealed that assistance existed for those schools that had a large percentage of disadvantaged students. Schools that served a high population of disadvantaged, low-income students received Title I funds that aimed to bridge the gap between low-income students and students of other socioeconomic backgrounds (Georgia Department of Education, 2010). Supplemental funding was granted to local school districts to meet the needs of at-risk and low-income students (Georgia Department of Education, 2010). Title I schools were defined as schools with a certain level of poverty as was reflected by the number of students who received free or reduced meals. A school was classified as a Title I school if at least 40% of the students were enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. These schools were eligible to receive additional funding from the federal government (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).
The U. S. Department of Education provided Title I for improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged (Miller, 2003). The purpose of Title I was to ensure that all children had a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. Title I outlined several fundamentals to ensure no child is left behind under Title I. Schools ensured that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials were aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement (Miller, 2003).

Title I funded schools were also expected to meet the educational needs of low achieving children in our nation’s poorest schools. Those Title I schools were characterized by the enrollment of limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance. Decreasing the disparities between high-and low-performing students, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their advantaged peers, assured that all students achieved minimum proficiency at Title I schools (Miller, 2003).

Accountability was essential under No Child Left Behind, which held schools, local educational agencies, and states accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students (U. S. Department of Education, 2002b). These proponents of the educational system were responsible for identifying and turning around low-performing schools that had failed to provide a high quality education to their students. In the process, educational leaders in such schools were expected to provide alternatives
to students to enable them to receive a high quality education. These measures have assisted in accomplishing the goal of all students—meeting or exceeding minimum standards by 2014.

Among other strategies used to increase achievement for students at Title I schools, children were provided an enriched and accelerated educational program that included the use of school wide programs or additional services that increased the amount and quality of instructional time. In addition, schoolwide reform was promoted and children were ensured the access to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content.

Title I schools that are reaching new heights in student success have become numerous. Since 1996, the National Title I Distinguished School Program has honored schools across the country for their innovation in helping Title I populations achieve high educational standards. Selected from each state by members of the National Title I Association, these schools represent examples of superior Title I programs in one of two categories: (a) exceptional student performance for two or more consecutive years; or (b) closing the achievement gap between student groups (Georgia Department of Education, 2010). Title I Distinguished schools employ a variety of research-based best practices that benefit all children (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

Although Title I schools received additional funding from the federal government to assist the disadvantaged and to support and increase academic success and achievement, the achievement disparities remained in place (National Center on Education Statistics, 2011). Researchers have tried to pinpoint why race and class are such strong predictors of students’ educational attainment. In the 1990s, the controversial *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) claimed that gaps in students’ achievement
were the natural result of variation in students’ genetic makeup and natural ability. This principle drew severe criticism from various research fields (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

Many experts highly contested the findings and asserted that achievement gaps were the result of more subtle environmental factors (Rothstein, 2008). They contended, for example, that children reared in low-income families often had fewer educational resources at home. In addition, they explained that those children receive poor health care and experience nutrition factors that can contribute to lower academic performance (U. S. Department of Education, 2000a; Viadero, 2000). Others point directly to factors within school such as peer pressure, student tracking, negative stereotyping, and test bias (U. S. Department of Education, 2000a; Viadero, 2000).

Strong teachers are needed in order for students to succeed in school and research has shown that high-quality teaching matters (Teaching Commission, 2004; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1998). It has been proven that it is difficult to segregate the factors that directly influence student achievement. Orlofsky (2002) found that many inner-city, minority students attended schools which are often underfunded and staffed with teachers who are not highly prepared. As a result, these students were inclined to receive poorer-quality instruction and to have access to fewer resources.

In a report released by Olson (2003), minority and low-income high school students were twice as likely to have a teacher who was out-of-field or under qualified to teach that subject. That is, these teachers did not hold certificates in their specific teaching fields. For example, in high poverty schools, 40% of middle and high school mathematics classes were taught by teachers who did not possess the certification in the subject that they were assigned to teach nor did they major in that subject (Olson, 2003).
In schools that did not have a large percentage of low-income students, only 16.9% of their teaching staff was out-of-field. The data is even more profound in schools with high percentages of minority students. Over 30% of mathematics classes are led by out-of-field teachers. Black and Latino students have a one in three chance of having a math teacher who is not highly qualified to teach that particular subject.

As indicated by the 2003 Phi Delta Kappan and Gallup poll, the public supports closing the achievement gap (Rose & Gallup, 2003). This national opinion poll on Americans’ attitudes toward public education denoted that 90% of those polled believed that closing the achievement gap between White, Black, and Hispanic students was of importance. Although the results showed that most people think the gap is a result of factors unrelated to the quality of schooling, a 2001 poll revealed that more than half of those participating thought it was the responsibility of public schools and educators to close the gap (Rose & Gallup, 2003).

What have schools done to close the achievement gap? Schools are employing a variety of tactics to address the gap. Common reform recommendations include, but are not limited to reducing class sizes, creating smaller schools, expanding early childhood programs, and raising academic standards. In addition, other initiatives include improving the quality of teachers serving poor and minority students and encouraging more minority students to take higher-level courses. Finally, schools that narrow the achievement gap have strong leadership that is viable to the success of any school, especially those serving disadvantaged students (Viadero & Johnston, 2000).

Georgia’s Camden County School District has received recognition as a regional leader in student achievement by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, SACS (Flowers & Keating, 2005). This low-performing school district dramatically
improved academic success by focusing on substantial, targeted instruction, data-driven assessment, and shared leadership to help close the achievement gaps for children living in poverty. Flowers and Keating shared their strong sense of urgency to address the issues that hindered their district as a whole from attaining the desired student achievement results.

Norfolk Public Schools, the first public school system in Virginia, is an urban district that serves a diverse population: 67% of students are Black and 28% are White with more than 65% of students qualifying for free and reduced price lunches (Reeves, 2003). Despite their number of low-income and minority students, they have seen noteworthy results in Writing, Science, and Reading and Literature. All grades in all of the Norfolk schools met the state benchmarks in writing. In addition, 100% of the high schools met the state benchmarks in Chemistry and received full accreditation for all of their middle schools in Earth Science. As for Reading, Literature, and Research, all middle and high schools showed upward trends (Reeves, 2003).

The Norfolk Public Schools reduced the achievement gap between White and Black students in third, fifth, and eighth grades, with both groups continuing to progress. Schools decreased disciplinary infractions by 15%, the number of long term suspensions by 14%, and the number of expulsions by 66%. The school system has two 90/90/90 schools as well (Simpson, 2003).

The keys to improved academic achievement were identified as professional practices of teachers and leaders, not the economic, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics of the students (Reeves, 2001). Doug Reeves conducted extensive research to address closing the achievement gap. His 90/90/90 research dealt with high poverty, high minority populations, and elevated student achievement. Schools branded as 90/90/90
were characterized by having more than 90% of enrollment receiving free or reduced lunch, more than 90% are minorities, and more than 90% met or achieved high academic standards on academic achievement tests (Reeves, 2003).

From *In Search of Excellent*, Reeves (2001) and his research group sought to examine the common characteristics of schools accomplishing success with all students especially those serving the disadvantaged. They found five common threads: (a) focus on academic achievement; (b) clear curriculum choices; (c) frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement; (d) an emphasis on nonfiction writing; and (e) collaborative scoring of student work. The research showed that in order for these common threads to prevail, strong leadership centered on the results is essential to lead the organization to its destiny. These findings are not the cure all but strategies were found very useful in increasing student achievement in high poverty schools (Reeves, 2001).

Reeves (2001) also identified nine characteristics that distinguished the schools with the greatest academic gains. *Teacher collaboration*, the first of these characteristics, was a priority. Teachers were given devoted time to analyze and define proficient student work. Second, schools provided timely, sound, and significant *frequent feedback* to students to improve their understanding of concepts. Time has often been an issue; schools that yielded maximum growth had made changes to their schedule, *optimizing every minute of every day*. *Supporting changes with data*, teachers participated in *action research* as well as *mid-course corrections*. Fifth, teachers were assigned to teaching areas that capitalized on their strengths.

*Constructive data analysis* was sixth. That is, they disaggregated data from multiple sources to get a varied perspective into teaching and learning by comparing
individual student achievement growth from year to year. The essential use of *common assessment* allowed teachers to know exactly what skills students were mastering as a grade level or subject area team. This information clearly gave teachers the course they need to follow to reach the desired goals. Every member of the school was considered a valuable resource. Successful schools utilize every adult in the system and recognize their contributions to the overall success of students. Lastly, cross-disciplinary integration is incorporated. Cross-disciplinary integration is a connection among every subject taught including art, music, and physical education, where in collaboration is evident and crucial among these teachers as well (Reeves, 2003).

In her article *Closing the Achievement Gap*, Katy Haycock (2001b) suggested that schools concentrate on four lessons: (a) standards; (b) a challenging curriculum for all students; (c) extra help for students; and (d) quality teachers. She suggested that these four crucial elements will increase student achievement for minority students. The article proposed that for such characteristics to exist in schools, the educational leadership would have to create an atmosphere of high expectations (Haycock, 2001b).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s (Read, 2008) education program has a clear-cut *theory of change* that seeks to achieve the following: *One day, all young people in tough neighborhoods will graduate from school prepared to succeed as adults in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship.* The foundation believed that quality choices plus robust connections equals core result. The development of quality school choices for young people and their families, and the encouragement of vigorous connections among themselves, families, and community institutions, make it possible for all young people to graduate from school prepared to succeed (Read, 2008). To achieve core results, The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s education portfolio has invested nearly 35 million dollars
over seven years in two program areas that is believed to hold special promise for diminishing the achievement disparities and helping low income children in harsh neighborhoods do well in life: creating quality education choices for low-income families and building strong connections among schools, communities, and families (Read, 2008).

Dr. Joseph Johnson (2005) of the Ohio Department of Education researched the characteristics of schools that highly impacted the education of their students and closed the achievement gap. The data presented at the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights highlighted 102 schools of promise. The five characteristics identified in these schools to close the achievement gaps were; (a) deliver rigorous instruction aligned to standards; (b) provide leadership that results in continuous instructional improvement; (c) design instruction to ensure every students’ success; (d) engage parents and community; and (e) create a culture in which individuals feel valued (Johnson, 2005).

The criteria of the schools that have demonstrated improvement and have met adequate yearly progress were characterized by the following: 75% of students proficient in Reading or Math (85% for 10th grade). In addition, 75% of economically disadvantaged students were proficient in Reading or Math (85% for 10th grade) and they had a 73.5% graduation rate. Finally, 40% of students met low income criteria, experienced two years of strong achievement, and the criteria applied to all student groups with five or more test takers.

As mentioned earlier, What Works in Schools, Marzano (2003) named 12 key factors that impact student achievement. The 12 factors, aimed to produce increased student achievement, have been organized into three categories: school-level, teacher-level, and student-level.
School-level factors include a guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals and effective feedback, parent and community involvement, a safe and orderly environment, and collegiality and professionalism. Researchers declared that curriculum is simply what is to be taught. Marzano (2003) suggested that in order to have a guaranteed and viable curriculum that the content considered essential for all students must be identified, communicated, sequenced, organized, and taught in the specified amount of time so students are able to seize the opportunity to master or learn the content. The instructional time must be protected in order to address achieving the curriculum component. Determining the level of mastery or assessment and constructive feedback was determined to be critical to improvement. Therefore, the establishment of school-wide goals, as well as specific goals for individual students, merged with an assessment system that provided timely and explicit feedback and has been identified as what works in schools (Marzano, 2003).

Parent and community involvement established a variety of methods and governing parameters for parents and the community to be involved in the daily functioning of the school. Developing and implementing effective means of communication proved to be paramount to achieve this factor. Without order, there is chaos. Marzano (2003) proposed that by creating an instructional environment conducive to learning begins with comprehensible rules and procedures. A system was established to allow for early identification of students at risk for potential violence and extreme behaviors that distract from teaching and learning.

The final school-level factor deals with collegiality and professionalism. This factor was characterized by norms of conduct that promote teamwork and professionalism. Governance structures were established that allow for teacher
involvement in school decisions and policies. Teachers also participated in meaningful professional development activities to increase their knowledge and skill base (Marzano, 2003).

Instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design comprise the teacher-level factors (Marzano, 2003). Instructional strategies involved employing research-based strategies to teach the curriculum through an instructional framework. Classroom management is the second indicator under teacher level factors. An instructional environment that promotes order and learning must be created and managed. Marzano (2003) stated that the state board of education sets the curriculum and the classroom teacher sets the classroom curriculum design. He confirmed that this teacher-level factor entails integrating and presenting the content in a variety of models and engaging students in tasks that are complex.

As for student-level factors, home environment, learned intelligence and background knowledge and student motivation are the key indicators (Marzano, 2003). In his work, Marzano (2003) referred to home environment as the factor that entails providing training and support to parents so they can better help their children. Students who participate in quality experiences acquired learned intelligence and background knowledge. With this factor, he emphasized reading and vocabulary. Student motivation, the last student-level factor, was listed as one that teaches students about the dynamics of motivation and their direct impact.

Marzano noted that the final factor, leadership, could be considered the single most important aspect of effective school reform. Leadership is all encompassing of each of the three levels.
Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, McRel, indicated in their research the critical role of leadership on student achievement. In her article School, Teacher, and Leadership Impact on Student Achievement, Miller (2003) touched on the aspects of the administrative policy and practices, stating, “Effective leadership adds value to the impact of classroom and teacher practices and ensures that lasting change flourishes. Awareness of the school and teacher practices that impact student achievement is critical, but without effective leadership, there is less of a possibility that schools and districts will address these variables in a coherent and meaningful way.”

This article touched on the aspect of the administrative policy and practices (Miller, 2003).

Twenty-one statistically significant leadership responsibilities have been identified by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005). These obligations have a direct link or relationship to student achievement that, when consistently implemented, had a substantial impact on student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Leadership responsibilities include culture; order; discipline; resources; curriculum, instruction and assessment; focus; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment; and visibility. In addition to these, contingent rewards, communication, outreach, input, affirmation, change agent, optimizer, ideals/beliefs, monitors/evaluates, flexibility, situational awareness, and intellectual stimulation are also elements of the many responsibilities of those in educational leadership roles (Waters et al., 2003).

Waters et al. (2003) also reported that the average effect size between leadership and student achievement is .25. Waters et al. explained this correlation as follows:

Consider two schools (school A and school B) with similar student and teacher populations. Both demonstrate achievement on a standardized,
norm-referenced test at the 50th percentile. Principals in both schools are also average—that is, their abilities in the 21 key leadership responsibilities are ranked at the 50th percentile. Now assume that the principal of school B improves her demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities by exactly one standard deviation. Our research findings indicate that this increase in leadership would translate into mean student achievement at School B that is ten percentile points higher than School A. That is, one standard deviation improvement in leadership practices is associated with an increase in average student achievement from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile representing a statistically significant difference in achievement. (Waters et al., 2003, p. 39)

The research findings indicated that this increase in leadership ability would translate into mean student achievement at school B that is 10 percentile points higher than school A (Waters et al., 2003).

Achieving academic success for students has definitely been considered a priority in education. Research-based strategies and techniques were used among schools that have shown progress. These strategies and techniques are available to all schools. Research and studies have established that if schools across this nation concentrate on the themes, elements or standards proven to make a difference, all students, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, will have an equal opportunity, based on a sound educational background, to achieve the American dream (Reeves, 2001).

*Without vision, the people will parish* is an old adage and true today. Leadership has been researched by many (Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Maxwell, 1999; Reeves, 2003). Each of these researchers has pinpointed what
makes an appropriate leader who obtains results. However, in order to be a leader, you must have followers. Transformational leadership theory has improved the motivation, moral, and performance by creating a positive change in followers. This leadership style focuses on the care of each other’s interest in which the leader serves in the best interest of the entire group as a whole. Four transformational leadership components comprise transformational leadership theory: charisma or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personal and individual attention. Collectively, each skill is necessary for school principals to meet the challenges of the 21st century (Waters et al., 2003).

Leadership is at the heart of sustaining school improvement and student achievement. Literature from dependable research has communicated that sustaining leadership must begin with the system, the highest level, and manifest down to involve everyone. In his book, Leadership & Sustainability, Michael Fullan (2005) spelled out how to sustain improvement through leadership. He outlined eight elements of sustainability including a long lever of leadership. Leadership capacity is not isolated; it is at all levels of the organization. This represents the long lever of leadership (Fullan, 2005).

Doug Reeves (2000, 2003) has done extensive research regarding school improvement. He has confirmed his belief that leadership is a critical factor in achievement and can yield 100/100/100 Schools. In his book, The Learning Leader (2009), he provided an in-depth look at variables associated with student achievement, educational equity, and strategies for improvement (Reeves, 2009). With an emphasis on shared leadership, Reeves discussed reflection, collaboration, and action needed for this type of leadership.
Despite the lack of achievement in some schools, Reeves shared that many districts are dramatically improving achievement each year (Reeves, 2009). These schools have one 100% free and reduced lunch, are 100% minority, and 100% score proficient or higher on state Reading tests and in assessments of Math, Science, And Social Studies. He stated that a focus on test scores without analyzing instruction, curriculum, parental involvement and assessment, the factors that influence results, will make achievement less likely. Leaders who successfully narrow the achievement gap usually analyzed data, located and identified pockets of excellence, and duplicated them for further excellence (Reeves, 2009).

Reeves (2003) described various types of leadership models. The most effective leaders were those who create collaborative environments with distributive leadership; establish goals that are transparent; and all members of the team support enhancing teaching and learning. The value of vision, reflection, human relationships, systematic interactions, collaboration, analytic and communication skills, and worthy character traits are all essential and important leadership skills that are needed to be an effective leader (Reeves, 2009). In addition, great leaders capitalized on the strengths, talents, and knowledge of all members of the organization and magnified their own strength by creating teams that complement them. That is, an effective leader enlists people who balance one another, creating a strong team (Reeves, 2009). Bernard Montgomery, British Field Marshall, said, “Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character which inspires confidence.”

America’s expert on leadership, John Maxwell stated, “Everything rises and falls on leadership” (p. 16). He believes that successful leaders are able to lead because of their character. Character qualities activate and empower leadership ability (Maxwell,
In his book, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, Maxwell detailed 21 qualities possessed by all great leaders. The qualities that leaders possess that made people want to follow them were character, charisma, commitment, communication, and competence. A courageous, visionary leader who is able to discern, and stay focused, one who exhibits generosity and initiative emerge as the leaders. Being able to lead people involved being a great listener who was passionate with a positive attitude and able to problem solve. Building relationships and being a servant leader separates understanding leadership and actually leading. Finally, effective leaders do not display irresponsibleness, instead they are secure, exude self-discipline, and continue to learn by being teachable (Maxwell, 1999).

Leaders matter. What leaders think, say and do and who they are when they come to work each day, profoundly affects organizational performance. Leaders’ thoughts and actions shape the culture of organizations and set the direction and pace for organizational performance (Sparks, 2005). A leaders’ role is to actualize human potential while setting free individual and organizational energy in order to yield maximum results. High performing (and high poverty) schools exist because of strong, effective leadership (Bulach, Lunenberg, & Potter, 2011). Shifting the focus from teaching to learning is a task principals must perform to be effective instructional leaders of high-performing schools (Bulach et al., 2011). School principals can accomplish this by (a) focusing on learning; (b) encouraging collaboration; (c) analyzing results; (d) providing support; and (e) aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Together, these five dimensions provide a compelling framework for accomplishing sustained success for all children (Bulach et al., 2011).
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section outlined the design, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis process used for this study. The purpose of the research was to determine specific leadership behaviors of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools that lead to closing the achievement gap that exists among minority and White students. The focal point was to identify leadership behaviors that distinguish Title I Distinguished Schools and Title I Non-Distinguished schools that led to improved achievement. Data collected from this research was compared to research based practices from the Review of the Literature to determine the extent to which actual school practices align with recommended behaviors that were identified in the extant literature. Furthermore, the data was used to identify those successful leadership behaviors that school principals employed that may be replicated in other schools to increase the academic performance for all students.

Both Title I Distinguished Elementary Schools and Title I Non-Distinguished Elementary Schools, from a large suburban school district in southeast Georgia, were selected for participation in this research. Title I Distinguished Schools have been recognized for continued academic improvement for all students including minority student groups and economically disadvantaged children as were identified by the Georgia Department of Education (2010). The Georgia Department of Education recognizes and honors K-12 Title I schools that make adequate yearly progress for three or more consecutive years and school districts that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap.
The Title I Distinguished Schools program acknowledged and credited schools that met or exceeded adequate yearly progress (AYP) for three or more consecutive years and had not been on the Unsafe Schools Choice Option (USCO) (Georgia Department of Education, 2010) list within the last two years. Schools that made AYP for three consecutive years received a certificate of recognition. Schools that achieved AYP for four or more consecutive years received a certificate of recognition, a monetary award, and recognition at the Georgia Department of Education annual Schools of Excellence Celebration hosted by the State Superintendent of Schools.

Research Questions

In an effort to provide valuable and pertinent information in closing the achievement gap as it relates to leadership behaviors, the research questions investigated, analyzed, and reported were as follows:

RQ₁: Do teacher perceptions regarding leadership characteristic profiles differ for Title I Distinguished Schools versus Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?

RQ₂: What specific leadership characteristics of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools distinguish them from their counterparts at Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?

RQ₃: Is there a relation between years of teaching experience and teacher ratings of supervisory behaviors?

Research Design

This research focused on Title I Distinguished Schools from a suburban school district in southeast Georgia demonstrating continuous student improvement resulting in closing the achievement gap for minority students. Title I Distinguished Schools were identified using criteria from the Georgia Department of Education for Distinguished
Title I Schools (Georgia Department of Education, 2010). In this methodical study, quantitative measures of analysis were employed to examine the leadership characteristics, actions and attitudes of principals that led to increased student achievement. Through surveys, the researcher investigated the supervisory behaviors principals used to improve student achievement, thus closing the achievement gap of economically disadvantaged students.

A validated and reliable Likert-style survey (Bulach et al., 2006) was distributed to teachers of at least six Title I Distinguished Schools and four non-distinguished school in a southeast Georgia school district. The data collection instrument was developed by Bulach et al. (2006). Each of the non-demographic survey items provided perceptions of principals functioning in the areas of human relations, trust, instructional leadership, conflict, and control. The overall climate score reflected the combination of all five domains.

Sample/Participants

A sample of at least 25 teachers (N = 100) from each participating Title I elementary school in the selected school district was selected by voluntary participation and surveyed to give their perception of leadership behaviors their principals possessed that improved student achievement and removed the achievement disparities. Since the primary research involved examining the extent to which Distinguished Title I schools who progressively closed the achievement gap compared to non-distinguished schools, this researcher surveyed participants from Title I Schools within the a large suburban school district.

Ten total schools were selected based on being identified as a Georgia Title I Schools and Georgia Title I Distinguished Schools. Paper surveys were distributed to
elementary teachers and instructional/academic coaches in the participating schools. The surveys were completed on a voluntary basis and included items that regarded leadership behaviors that promoted effective schools and improved student achievement. A minimum of 25 surveys from each school was used to compile the quantitative data from the surveys.

Surveys included certain demographic information. The quantitative data was evaluated to determine the statistical significance at the .05 level. A statistical analysis was conducted and compared for preliminary findings to determine if differences existed between the leadership behaviors of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools and principals at non-distinguished schools.

Sampling problems could have occurred. The desired number of surveys, 125, from the Title I distinguished schools and Title I non-distinguished schools, may not have been completed which could have required selection of additional schools or school districts to have a representative sample or desired number of respondents. This study may have required some travel to gain permission for teachers that were surveyed. This would have required additional time and financial expenditures.

Instrumentation

Permission was granted from Bulach (2011) to use an existing instrument in this research. The instrument consisted of 49 positive and negative behaviors that measured how principals interacted with staff in the following five leadership domains: human relations, trust/decision making, instructional leadership, control, and conflict.

A correlation coefficient of +.95, as measured by the Cronbach’s alpha, was obtained which indicated that the instrument has excellent reliability. Reliability on each of the five factors ranged from a high of +.86 to a low of +.81. The instrument
maintained adequate construct validity in terms of those behaviors principals practiced that teachers favored or found offensive as reported by 375 teachers. The survey developers also described some results with the first use of the survey in a Louisiana study in which a +.95 correlation was found between scores on the leadership behavior survey and scores on a culture and climate survey. The authors concluded that the survey can be used to measure a principal’s leadership behaviors, as an early indicator of what is happening to a school’s culture and climate and eventually to student achievement. The first four questions of the survey collected demographic information regarding the participant’s gender, the gender of the participant’s principal, the number of years employed at the present school, and the total years of experience. The survey items addressed teachers’ perceptions regarding leadership behaviors of their principals. The mean scores of the survey responses were reviewed utilizing statistical analysis. Participants rated their perception levels on a five point Likert Scale ranging from Never (1) to Always (5). Each item was designed to determine a mean and a standard deviation.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for this research was gathered from surveys and existing local school documents and records. Surveys were delivered to a designee at each participating school to disseminate to teachers and to collect upon completion. The completed surveys were collected from the designee.

Confidentiality and accuracy were ensured by the use of an anonymous survey completed at the respondents’ time and location. This afforded the respondent complete anonymity and confidentiality. The study’s confidentiality allowed the participants to be completely honest in providing responses. Bulach et al. created the survey instrument.
that supported the research questions. Permission for the use of the survey instrument was granted by Bulach et al. (2011).

**Data Analysis**

This was a quantitative study with a quasi-experimental cross sectional research design. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 18.0 with alpha equal to .05. Follow-up analyses were conducted at alpha equal .01 to control for experiment-wise Type I error. In order to address research question one concerning whether teacher perceptions regarding leadership characteristic differed for Title I Distinguished Schools and Title I non-distinguished schools, a mixed model ANOVA, analysis of variance, with school status (distinguished, non-distinguished) as the grouping variable and mean score on each of the leadership behavior sub domains as the repeatedly measured variable. A simple affects analysis of school status for each sub domain from the school status by leadership behavior interaction addressed research question two concerning common leadership characteristics of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools that distinguished them from principals at Title I Non-Distinguished schools.

This research data was collected from Title I schools. Leadership behaviors from Title I Distinguished Schools demonstrating continuous student improvement resulting in closing the achievement gap of low-income and minority students was analyzed using SPSS 18.0. The schools were identified using the criteria from the Georgia Department of Education for Distinguished Title I Schools. This was a quantitative study which used quantitative measures of analysis to examine the extent to which the leadership behaviors created a culture of teaching and learning that yielded increased student achievement. Through a survey, the researcher investigated and analyzed the leadership behaviors that measured how principals in low-income schools interacted with staff in five leadership
domains: human relations, trust/decision-making, instructional leadership, control, and conflict. The researcher used SPSS software to disaggregate the collected data to answer the two research questions.

Descriptive statistics were used for collected demographic data such as highest degree earned, total years of experience, total number of years at the current school, and ethnicity. In addition, Excel (Microsoft Corporation, 2007) was used to outline the results of the data. Statisticians assisted in the disaggregation of the data, which ensured the accuracy and correlation significance of the study. SPSS (IBM, 2010) software was used to disaggregate the data. However, Excel was used to outline the results of the data. Specific questions related to the each research question were analyzed.

Summary

The purpose of the research was to determine what leadership behaviors principals exhibited at Title I Distinguished Schools in comparison to the leadership behaviors exhibited by principals at non-distinguished schools that led to increased and continuous student achievement thus closing the achievement gap that existed among minority and White students. The research design included a triangulation of collected data in which teachers, instructional leaders, and coaches were surveyed to identify the leadership behaviors used to create a culture of learning that pilot the closing of the achievement gap that existed among minority students.

The intent of Chapter III was to provide the methodology used in the collection of data for this research including the data collection instruments used and the process used to analyze the data. Chapter IV presented the actual research findings from the participating schools.
Leadership is essential to schools today. Research clearly articulates that leaders must possess specific characteristics or exhibit behaviors in order improve student achievement. More so, principals who lead Title I schools are faced with more challenges. However, many are overcoming these challenges and continue to meet and/or exceed AYP standards and continue to make steady progress year after year despite the obstacles. That is, each student subgroup continues to improve academically. As a result, schools are honored as Title I Distinguished Schools.

This research assesses what leadership characteristics differentiate Title I Distinguished principals. To address each hypothesis, a Likert style survey was administered to nine schools located in a metro Atlanta school district. A total of 360 surveys, 40 surveys per school, were distributed to teachers at distinguished and non-distinguished schools alike. The total number of surveys returned was 115–87 from distinguished Title I schools and 28 from non-distinguished Title I schools.

T-tests for independent samples was used to assess for leadership differences as a function of Title I Distinguished status with a Bonferroni correction applied for anticipated increases in Type I Error across comparisons. A moderated multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether a composite score on leadership climate was related to experience variables including number of years at the school and total teaching years or the interaction of these variables. The results of these analyses are reported within this chapter.
Participants were asked to respond appropriately to 52 questions including four demographic questions and 48 questions which regarding how often they see their principal exhibit specific behaviors.

RQ₁: Do teacher perceptions regarding leadership characteristic profiles differ for Title I Distinguished Schools versus Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?

RQ₂. What specific leadership characteristics of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools distinguish them from their counterparts at Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?

RQ₃. Is there a relation between years of teaching experience and teacher ratings of supervisory behaviors?

To address research question 1 regarding whether leadership profiles differ for Distinguished Title I schools versus Non-Distinguished Title I schools and which specific leadership characteristic(s) of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools distinguish them from principals at Title I non-distinguished schools, a mixed model ANOVA was conducted with averages on leadership characteristics (human relations, trust, instructional leadership, conflict, control) as the repeatedly measured variable and distinguished status as the grouping variable.

Results indicated a significant leadership characteristic X group interaction (F(4,452) = 2.64, p = .033) with results graphed in Figure 4.1. After using a Bonferroni Correction for the anticipated increase in type I error due to multiple comparisons, a series of independent sample t-tests with alpha set to .01 indicated the only difference between distinguished Title I schools and non-distinguished Title I schools was in human relations t(113) = -3.09, p = .003. Human relations scores were lower on average for
principals of Title I distinguished schools ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .65$) than for non-distinguished schools ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .47$).

In addition to the significant interaction, there was a main effect of leadership characteristics indicating that, across groups, averages for the different leadership characteristics differed. A follow-up pair-wise analysis of leadership characteristics using Tukey’s HSD indicated the Trust ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .73$) and Instructional Leadership ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .62$) means did not differ from one another but did differ from the Human ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .63$), Conflict ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .71$) and Control means ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .74$), which did not differ from one another. The main effect of group was not significant.

**Figure 1.** Mean Comparison Profile Plot.
Table 1

Bonferroni Adjusted T-Test of Independent Samples Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Non-distinguished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human relations</td>
<td>-3.09</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>-1.19</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>p &gt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional leadership</td>
<td>-1.85</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>p &gt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-2.27</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>p &gt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>- .86</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>p &gt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>-2.06</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>p &gt; .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The matrix of simple correlations in Table 4.2 below indicates that all the climate variables are highly interrelated (average r = .79, p < .01). In addition, the number of years a teacher has taught at the particular school was negatively related to all five factors: human relations (r = -.22, p < .01), trust (r = -.12, p < .01), instructional leadership (r = -.21, p < .01), conflict (r = -.16, p < .01) and control (r = -.14, p < .01).

Table 2

Simple Relationships Among Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Instructional leadership</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Years at school</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human relations</td>
<td>4.02(.64)</td>
<td>.83*</td>
<td>.80*</td>
<td>.80*</td>
<td>.78*</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.22(.73)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.82*</td>
<td>.84*</td>
<td>.83*</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
<td>-.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional leadership</td>
<td>4.28(.63)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.75*</td>
<td>.75*</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>4.01(.71)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.74*</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>4.07(.74)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (continued).

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years at school</td>
<td>3.74(1.2)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.53*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years teaching</td>
<td>3.69(0.97)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .05

To address research question 3, regarding the relation between climate and experience variables, a moderated multiple regression analysis was performed with average climate score regressed onto 1) number of years at school; 2) total teaching experience; and 3) Title I school distinction in the first step and the interaction of Title I school distinction with the other two variables entered in the second step. Analysis was performed using SPSS REGRESSION. Regression analysis revealed no interactions of the experience variables with Title I school distinction in predicting overall climate, and no main effects of any of the other predictors $R^2$ for the full model = .06 $R(5,101) = 1.37$, $p > .05$.

In summary, a number of analyses were conducted to answer the research questions. The research unveiled a difference, in favor of non-distinguished school principals, in human relations. That is, teachers at Non-Distinguished Title I schools perceived their principals as having better human relations qualities than principals as perceived by teachers at Distinguished Title I schools.

Of the thirteen factors that encompass human relations, principals who lead distinguished schools were perceived by their faculty as having a less caring attitude and providing less positive reinforcement as their counterpart. In addition, principals at distinguished schools do not interact as much with their staff as did principals at non-distinguished Title I schools nor did they compliment their staff as much.
Distinguished Title I School principals scored higher on some of the negative behaviors in various domains. For example, in trust/decision-making, distinguished Title I school principals tend to display a lack of trust and use coercion as a motivator more so than non-distinguished Title I principals.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how the achievement gap is closing among Black and White, rich and poor students as a result of the leadership behaviors that principals demonstrate in low-income schools in order to meet the diverse needs of all students and increase student achievement. There has been a plethora of research on effective schools as well as on closing the achievement gap. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to identify specific leadership behaviors of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools that improve student achievement leading to closing the achievement gap that exists among groups of students.

Chapter V provides answers to the research questions, implications to the study, and recommendations for future studies. The researcher used data from the literature and surveys to develop the recommendations. It is the belief of the researcher that the study provided critical information for school leaders, as it relates to human relations, trust/decision making, instructional leadership, conflict and control, in an effort to be a more effective leader and yield improved student achievement for all students.

Summary of the Study

The researcher aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do teacher perceptions regarding leadership characteristic profiles differ for Title I Distinguished Schools versus Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?

RQ2. What specific leadership characteristics of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools distinguish them from their counterparts at Title I Non-Distinguished Schools?
RQ₃. Is there a relation between years of teaching experience and teacher ratings of supervisory behaviors?

The survey instrument used in this study was developed by Clete Bulack, Diane Boothe, and Winston Pickett at the University of West Georgia. The survey, created from input from educational leadership graduate students, based upon the mistakes they felt their principals made, measures faculty and staff perceptions of their superior’s leadership style across five dimensions (human relations, instructional leadership, trust/decision-making, control, and conflict) that create a positive or negative supervisory climate.

The survey consisted of four demographic questions and 48 positive and negative behaviors that measure how a principal interacts with staff. The survey instrument has a correlation coefficient of +.95, as measured by the Cronbach’s alpha, indicating the instrument has excellent reliability and has adequate construct validity in terms of those behaviors principals practice that teachers like or find offensive.

Data collect for this research was gathered from surveys. Surveys were delivered to a designee at each participating school to disseminate to teachers and to collect upon completion. The completed surveys were collected from the designee. Confidentiality and accuracy were ensured by the use of an anonymous survey completed at the respondents’ time and location. This afforded the respondent complete anonymity and confidentiality.

This was a quantitative study with a quasi-experimental cross sectional research design. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 18.0 with alpha equal to .05. Follow-up analyses were conducted at alpha equal .01 to control for experiment-wise Type I error rate. In order to address research question one concerning whether teacher
perceptions regarding leadership characteristics differed for Title I Distinguished Schools versus Title I non-distinguished schools, a mixed model ANOVA, Analysis of Variance, with school status (distinguished, non-distinguished) as the grouping variable and mean scores of each of the leadership behavior sub domains as the repeatedly measured variable. A simple affects analysis of school status for each sub domain from the school status by leadership behavior interaction addressed research question two concerning common leadership characteristics of principals at Title I Distinguished Schools that distinguished them from Title I non-Distinguished schools.

Conclusions

Perceptions of subordinates from teachers at Distinguished Title I schools differed from the perceptions of teachers from Non-Distinguished Title I schools based on mean scores. As listed in Figure 2, the mean scores of each domain (human relations, trust/decision-making, instructional leadership, conflict, control and overall climate) show that principals at Non-Distinguished Title I schools were perceived more positively than principals from Distinguished Title I Schools. That is, principals of Title I Distinguished Schools did not have higher mean scores as would have been predicted based on the continuous improvement of student achievement. While there was no significant difference, except for the human relations dimension, lower mean scores for Title I Distinguished principals does not preclude these principals from leading effective change.
Furthermore, analyzing each element of human relations, the domain that resulted in a significant difference, it was found that Non-Distinguished Title I principals had higher mean scores in each of the 13 elements. As seen in Figure 3 below, there are no behaviors in this domain that Distinguished (nor Non-Distinguished) Title I principals always practice. However, there were behaviors that principals often practice as depicted in Table 3. It should be noted that while the top three behaviors exhibited by both groups of principals were they same—calls me by name, uses eye contact, and support with parents—the ranking of these three behaviors were different for each group.

The staff perceives principals at Non-Distinguished Title I schools as having better human relations in the indicated elements (i.e., caring attitude, interaction with staff). The lower the mean score indicates a need for improvement on that element. The three behaviors that Distinguished Title I School principals need to improve upon were being complimentary, remembering what it is like to be a teacher, and involving staff in making decisions.
Table 3

*Top Three Human Relations Behaviors Exhibited*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Non-distinguished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calls by name</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support with parents</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3. Human Relations Mean Scores by Element.*
Trust/decision-making was another leadership characteristic measured in the study. As shown in Figure 4, results for these behaviors revealed that Distinguished Title I school principals make less snap judgments, tend not to implement fads without thorough knowledge and their staff believes that evaluations are not just based on short observations.

![Trust/Decision-Making Mean Scores by Element](image)

**Figure 4.** Trust/Decision-Making Mean Scores by Element.

Instructional leadership, conflict, and control were other traits examined in this study. Figures 5, 6, and 7, respectively, summarize the mean scores for each element assessed in this research study. Principals at Distinguished Title I schools, again, had lower mean scores on average than their colleagues who lead Title I Non-Distinguished Schools. Two elements, frequently disrupts my teaching and has rules but does not enforce them, received lower mean scores for Distinguished Title I principals in comparison to Title I Non-Distinguished principals. This means that Distinguished Title I principals are perceived less often as exhibiting these behaviors. However, they are
perceived as not as knowledgeable regarding curriculum and instruction which are key elements to improving academic performance. Perhaps these principals have strong teacher leadership, for example, instructional or academic coaches, who are very knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction.

![Instructional Leadership Mean Scores by Element](image)

**Figure 5.** Instructional Leadership Mean Scores by Element.
Figure 6. Conflict Mean Scores by Element.

Figure 7. Control Mean Scores by Element.
Points of Interest

- Distinguished schools principals are perceived as tougher or having higher expectations on their faculty than principals who lead non-distinguished schools. This may be the reason that these schools are continuously making progress in student achievement. These principals may hold their teachers more accountable and have higher expectations.

- Teachers did not participate due to fear of repercussions.

- Non-distinguished Title I school principals were perceived as more positive in regards to human relations, instructional leadership, and conflict.

- The limited faculty from non-distinguished Title I schools who participated in the survey, perceived their principals as nicer.

- Faculty at non-distinguished Title I schools perceived that their principals as more knowledgeable about instruction and cause less conflict.

In relation to the literature, John Maxwell (1999), in his book, The 20 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader, delineates the characteristics a leader should possess in order to attract others to follow. His qualities clearly support the behaviors this research study sought to determine if Distinguished Title I school principals exhibit character, problem solving, relationships, listening, and communication.

Neither group of principals was perceived well in involving their staff in decisions. Both groups had mean scores below 3.5 indicating a lack of involvement from faculty and staff. Literature supports a shared decision making model. This is an area of improvement for principals at Distinguished and Non-Distinguished Title I schools. Items in which distinguished school principals scored higher were the reversed scored behaviors: displaying a lack of trust, use of coercion, failing to follow-up, partial to
influential parents, afraid to question superiors, passing the buck, assigns duty during planning periods and using I and my too frequently. This implies that principals at Non-Distinguished Title I schools tend to exhibit these negative behaviors more often.

Implications for Practice

School leaders across this country can benefit from this study in an effort to exhibit and improve their leadership qualities. Students will be the ultimate beneficiary of great leadership because they will have leaders who are competent and capable of improving teaching and learning for students. School leaders will learn how their faculty and staff perceive the leadership behaviors as it concerns their level of competency in human relations, trust/decision making, instructional leadership, conflict, and control. These critical elements to leadership are major to having followers; having people follow your vision and mission. It is the character qualities of the leader that afford them the opportunity to make things happen. Failing to use these behaviors builds a style of leadership that tends to affect negatively the supervisory climate and learning environment creating an atmosphere of low morale and low student achievement and test scores. Exhibiting personal characteristics that sends a clear message of effective leadership is what makes people follow you in accomplishing the mission and vision and the goals and objectives of the organization. Without followers, there is no leader!

Recommendations for Future Research

For future studies regarding leadership behaviors, in the areas of human relations, trust/decision making, instructional leadership, conflict, and control, that impact student achievement, the researcher recommends that principals wishing to obtain feedback on how they are perceived by their faculty and staff use the survey as an instrument for school improvement. The surveys should be distributed and collected by someone who is
not affiliated with the specific school in order to obtain the most honest answers. In addition, it is recommended that participants complete the survey at the time of distribution and the surveys be collected immediately upon completion. These two recommendations would increase the comfort level of participants as well as provide an opportunity for more honest responses. While this study’s focus was limited to a certain set of leadership behaviors, future research studies could expand and expound on other effective leadership characteristics and/or behaviors.

Limitations

This research study was limited in several ways.

1. The total number of Non-distinguished Title I schools was 6 in comparison to 19 distinguished Title I schools.
2. Six Distinguished Title I schools agreed to participate in the study out of 19.
3. Two principals from Non-Distinguished Title I Schools chose not to participate in the study.
4. There were 400 distributed to teachers at participating distinguished and non-distinguished schools with a response rate yielding a sample size of $N = 115$.
5. There were 87 surveys returned from distinguished Title I schools and 28 received from Non-distinguished Title I schools.
6. While this specific survey identified 49 behaviors related to a principal’s leadership style, it is not all encompassing. There are a multitude of behaviors and characteristics that are needed to facilitate change and lead an organization.
7. This study only measured the supervisory climate that exists among the principal and teachers. This is only one aspect of school climate and did not take into effect parental involvement, an orderly environment, or expectations. Another possible limitation to the study was the degree of honesty from teachers, especially from non-distinguished Title I schools. The researcher received an email from a participant at a non-distinguished Title I school regarding their principal and the lack of participation from their school (see Appendix I).

Concluding Remarks

Whether or not students do well in school is vital to their livelihood as well as the success of this country. More so than ever before it is imperative that all children receive a quality education that equips them to compete in our global society, provide for themselves and their families, and enables them to be productive members of society. I recently had the opportunity to listen to Dr. William Dagget speak on the status of American education. His daunting findings support the aforementioned. It is an absolute must that school systems, schools, and educators across this country begin to reconfigure the way education is done. We are producing an increasingly high number of students who are not competent for the business sector and as a result are not productive citizens. Principals who take a proactive approach or make a conscientious effort to improve their leadership abilities will improve academic achievement for all students they serve.
APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO USE THE SURVEY

To whom it may concern,

Date: 9-05-2011

Re: Letter of Permission

This is to certify that the Survey for Supervisory Behavior (SSB) is copyrighted and I hold the copyright. I hereby grant Liss A. Maynard permission to:

- Use the SSB in her study, entitled
  Closing the Achievement Gap: A Study of Leadership Behavior of Principals at Title I Distinguished Schools
- I have also agreed to score the SSB data for Ms. Maynard.

Please contact me with any questions

Sincerely,

Dr. Clete Bulach
APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

November 9, 2011

Ms. Liss A. Maynard
3696 Lower Creek Drive
Douglasville, GA 30135

Dear Ms. Maynard:

Your research project has been approved. Listed below are the schools where approval to conduct the research is complete. Please work with the school administrator to schedule administration of instruments or conduct interviews.

Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the Academic Division prior to implementation. At the conclusion of your research project, you are expected to submit a copy of your results to this office. Results cannot reference the [redacted] or any District schools or departments.

Research files are not considered complete until results are received. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact our office at [redacted].

Sincerely,

Dr. Judith A. Jones
Chief Academic Officer
APPENDIX C
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
138 College Drive #5147 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6828 Fax: 601.266.1177 www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26.111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

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

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11112901
PROJECT TITLE: Closing the Achievement Gap: A Study of Leadership Behaviors of Principals at Title I Distinguished Schools
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
RESEARCHER(S): Liss A. Maynard
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership & School Counseling
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 12/07/2011 to 12/06/2012

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

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: A SURVEY OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS
OF PRINCIPALS AT TITLE I DISTINGUISHED SCHOOLS

A SURVEY OF SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS

Part I—Demographics

Directions: Respond to each item by filling in the blank on the computer scan sheet that most accurately describes you (Please choose only one response per item).

1. What is your gender?
   A. Female
   B. Male

2. What is the gender of your principal?
   A. Female
   B. Male

3. How long have you been at this school?
   A. Less than one year
   B. One year but less than two years
   C. 2-5 years
   D. 6-10 years
   E. 11+ years

4. How many years have you been teaching?
   A. This is my first year
   B. 2-5 years
   C. 6-10 years
   D. 11-20 years
   E. 21+ years

Copyright © 2000
Part II--Survey items

Directions: Use the scale below to respond to each item by filling in the blank on the computer scan sheet for the response that comes closest to describing how often you see your principal exhibit this behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>SELDOM</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALWAYS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. My principal displays a lack of trust.
6. My principal demonstrates a caring attitude.
7. My principal provides positive reinforcement.
8. My principal interacts with faculty and staff.
10. My principal calls me by name.
11. My principal delegates responsibilities.
12. My principal compliments me.
13. My principal uses coercion to motivate me.
14. My principal does not listen.
15. My principal uses eye contact.
16. My principal provides feedback regarding my teaching.
17. My principal corrects me in front of others instead of privately.
18. My principal practices good communication skills.
19. My principal is able to keep a confidence.
20. My principal gossips about other teachers or administrators.
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<tr>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>SELDOM</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALWAYS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. My principal shows favoritism to some teachers.
22. My principal has double standards.
23. My principal has not supported me when parents are involved.
24. My principal demonstrates a lack of vision.
25. My principal is knowledgeable about the curriculum.
26. My principal is knowledgeable about instructional strategies.
27. My principal is partial to influential parents.
28. My principal supports me as a person even if I am wrong.
29. My principal is afraid to question his/her superiors.
30. My principal shrugs off or devalues a problem or concern.
31. My principal “passes the buck” rather than dealing with a situation.
32. My principal remembers what it is like to be a teacher.
33. My principal frequently interrupts my teaching.
34. My principal assigns too much paperwork.
35. My principal tells teachers to make due with what they have.
36. My principal assigns duty during planning periods.
37. My principal “nit picks” on evaluations.
38. My principal expects paperwork to be done “yesterday” with no notice.
40. My principal involves me in decisions.
41. My principal uses the words “I” and “my” too frequently.
42. My principal is rigid and inflexible.
43. My principal applies procedures consistently.
44. My principal holds people accountable.
45. My principal fails to follow up.
46. My principal has rules, but does not always enforce them.
47. My principal makes “snap judgments.”
48. My principal listens to both sides of the story before making a decision.
49. My principal implements the latest fads without thorough knowledge.
50. My principal bases evaluations on a short observation.
51. My principal evaluates situations carefully before taking action.
52. My principal makes decisions as “knee jerk” reactions to an incident.
Dear Dr. Jones,

My name is Liss A. Maynard. I am an educational leadership doctoral candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi. My dissertation involves closing the achievement gap for minority students at Title I Distinguished Schools.

I am requesting your permission to conduct research at three Title I Distinguished Schools. Participation is voluntary and confidential and would not be conducted during instructional time. Participants would include teachers, administrators and/or instructional leaders and coaches at the local school level. Participants would complete a survey regarding instructional practices, programs, and leadership characteristics utilized to improve student achievement.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 678.358.8770 or email me at lissamaynard@bellsouth.net

Again, thank you and I look forward to collecting data from your school district.

Sincerely,

Liss A. Maynard
Dear Educator,

I hope all is well. My name is Liss A. Maynard, a doctoral candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi, and I need your assistance and participation with my research! My dissertation involves leadership behaviors that lead to closing the achievement gap at Title I schools. Participation in this research is voluntary and confidential and in no way related to your employment status. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and destroyed upon completion of the required period. In addition, no specific individuals or schools will be identified in any of the reports. Included with the survey are two Informed Consent forms. Please sign and return one Informed Consent form along with your answer sheet to the appropriate designee at your school one week from date of receipt. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at lissamaynard@bellsouth.net

Again, thank you and I look forward to your input regarding leadership behaviors that lead to improving student achievement!

Sincerely,

Liss A. Maynard
APPENDIX G

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: A STUDY OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF PRINCIPALS AT TITLE I DISTINGUISHED SCHOOLS

University of Southern Mississippi

Informed Consent Form

The purpose of this form is to provide information that may affect your decision about whether or not you want to participate in this research project. Participation in this research will not affect your employment status or your annual evaluation. Please sign the spaces at the end of this form to record your consent to participate in this research study.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH and WHAT IS IT ABOUT

Liss A. Maynard, a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi, under the direction of Dr. Rose McNeese, in the School of Educational Leadership and School Counseling is conducting a research and is inviting you to participate in this study. The title of the study is “Closing the Achievement Gap: A Study of Leadership Behaviors of Principals at Title I Distinguished Schools.” The purpose of the research is to determine specifically what leadership practices, strategies and/or behaviors Title I Distinguished Schools principals exhibit which leads to closing the achievement gap that exists among students.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY INVOLVE?

Participants are asked to complete a Likert survey that will take approximately 15 minutes.

WHY ARE YOU BEING ASKED TO PARTICIPATE?
You have been invited to participate because you are an elementary teacher at a Title I School.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?

We do not anticipate any risks to you if you decide to participate in this study.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATION?

While there are not any immediate benefits to participate in this study, the long-range results of the study could provide beneficial information to all educators.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE RESEARCHER GETS NEW INFORMATION DURING THE STUDY?

The researcher will contact you if she learns new information that could possibly change your decision about participating in this study.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER PROTECT PARTICIPANTS’ CONFIDENTIALITY?

The results of the research study will be published; however, your name or identity will not be revealed. The researcher and their statistician(s) will be the only persons who will have access to the data, and the data will be destroyed after the selected period.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A PARTICIPANT DOESN’T WANT TO CONTINUE IN THE STUDY?

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and participants may choose not to participate and can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY? WILL I GET PAID TO PARTICIPATE?

No
WILL PARTICIPANTS BE COMPENSATED FOR ILLNESS OR INJURY?

We anticipate no illnesses or injuries as a result of participation in this research. As a result, no participant will be compensated.

WILL PARTICIPATION AFFECT EMPLOYMENT OR ANNUAL EVALUATIONS?

Participation in this study will not affect your employment with Cobb County Board of Education nor will it affect your annual evaluation.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE DISSEMINATED/HOW WILL I LEARN ABOUT THE RESULTS?

Results will be published in the dissertation and will be available electronically through Proquest or you may request a copy from the researcher at lissamaynard@bellsouth.net.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you, as a participant, are stating that you have read this form or have had the form read to you and that you understand this form and the research study. Furthermore, you understand that the researcher will keep a signed copy of this consent for her records. The researcher will be happy to answer any questions that you, as the participant, might have about the research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Liss A. Maynard, the researcher, via email at lissamaynard@bellsouth.net

By signing below, you, as the participant, are agreeing to participate in this study. Please keep one copy of this form for your records.

Participant’s Name (please print) ________________________________

Participant’s Signature __________________________ Date _______________
INVESTIGATOR’S STATEMENT

I certify that this form includes all information concerning the study relevant to the protection of the rights of the participants. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human research participants and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this person to participate.

__________________________________________
Signature Date

Liss A. Maynard

Telephone: 678.358.8770

E-mail: lissamaynard@bellsouth.net

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to the University of Southern Mississippi. Your identity, questions, and concerns will be kept confidential.
## APPENDIX H

**SUPERVISORY CLIMATE BEHAVIORS**

**MEAN SCORES OF DISTINGUISHED AND NON-DISTINGUISHED TITLE I SCHOOLS**

**Fall 2011**

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APPENDIX I

LETTER FROM TEACHER

RE: Your dissertation

Saturday, December 24, 2011 1:37 PM

From: XXXXXXX

To: lissamaynard@bellsouth.net

Dear Liss,

Merry Christmas! Just this past week, during the hustle and bustle of getting ready for the Christmas holidays, my principal gave us your questionnaire. Because we live in fear at my campus and I could circle ALWAYS on about 45 of your 52 questions, I am sure that you didn’t receive many participate letters. However, I felt it necessary to speak my mind and give you my thoughts on someone else’s email. I have been teaching over 20 years. Although I would give my district high marks in providing our schools with resources to teach Title 1 students, the pressure is tremendous! My principal, who has never been in the classroom, demands so much from the teachers that we are often still working at 7:00 at night, while he drives out of the parking lot by 3:30 empty handed. He has no connection with the students, but wants everything to be perfect when the area superintendent comes to visit. Because I have been in the classroom for a long time, I would like to make several predictions. The demands and pressure that are being placed on teachers will not drive out the bad/weak teachers; instead, it will be the opposite. From what I have seen over my years in education, many bad teachers know how to “play the game” and who to be friends with...while the hard working teachers, who consistently do their job and make a difference with their students, are the ones who take these demands personal and run even faster on the hamster wheel.
If you truly investigate across our nation, the majority of teachers are doing the best they can. Many of our children come with no school supplies or snacks, and some of them miss a great deal of school. A great deal of parents have little or no involvement, which sends a powerful message to their children that education is not that important. I believe that in the next 10 years we will see a shortage in educators. With furloughs, pay cuts and greater demands, it will drive many good people out. I am not against having higher expectations for our students, and yes, teachers, but I am totally against schools becoming businesses and pushing out the time spent (that is needed) to connect with students on a personal level. We have become data collectors...NOT teachers. I do not believe that the public is even aware. The media sends the message that if teachers would work harder, students would be smarter. I do not know what the answer is, but I wanted to make my little voice heard...even if it doesn’t make a difference at all. I wish you all the best with your dissertation and hope that you received enough responses to get the real picture, Happy Holidays!
REFERENCES


