DISTRICT-LEVEL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL SYSTEMS RECOGNIZED FOR DISTINCTION IN PERFORMANCE AND THOSE NOT THUS RECOGNIZED

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have examined a dissertation entitled:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare school districts that consistently have high student performance to other school districts with similar enrollment, socio-economic status, and community types that do not have consistently high performance and analyze the subtleties of these differences. For the study, school districts in Missouri designated with "Distinction in Performance" were compared with similar districts not receiving "Distinction in Performance" scores. The designation of "Distinction in Performance" is the highest merit a school district can receive in the state's accreditation process and is primarily based on student performance on various state and national assessments. Quantitative analyses were used to analyze the differences.

The first hypothesis tested for significant differences on the 23 scales of the Advanced Questionnaire survey completed by teachers for the state department of education. Analysis of variance test of differences and post-hoc assessments were used to test the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis analyzed significant differences using ANCOVA for the same 23 scales while co-varying on the demographic variables of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. The results of both hypotheses were reported for each of the following clusters of scales: (a) the Learning Experience Cluster, (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster,

(c), the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster. Both hypotheses were rejected.

For the ANOVA tests, 16 of the 23 scales were significantly different. For the ANCOVA analyses, 17 of the 23 scales were statistically different. Four scales were significantly different for the ANCOVA analyses that were not significant for the ANOVA analyses. The scales were Instructional Strategies, Guaranteed Curriculum, Career Preparation, and Professional Development. Teachers across the school districts in this study viewed these scales as important regardless of the demographic characteristics of the districts. The findings from this study provide insight and guidance to the educational leaders seeking to determine factors upon which to focus in their efforts to establish highly successful school districts based upon the criteria established by the Missouri state department of education. The statistical findings for the remaining scales provide additional insight about other areas of focus for a districts' effort to achieve excellence.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Background of the Study

During the last twenty-five years, much research has been completed regarding the necessary components for a good school to be considered successful. Educational research has examined common characteristics of an effective school. With the advent and required implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), educational leaders have been challenged to propel all students to the proficiency range as identified by respective state requirements. While global focus has increased regarding educational reform and learner outcomes, the spotlight on national educational standards also has clearly encouraged research on effective practices in educational organizations. One particular component in educational reform defined as crucial for success is leadership (Lambert, 2003). Leadership includes the capacity for understanding the connection between participation and skillfulness and applying this connection. This study analyzed the essential components necessary for school districts to sustain high performance.

A research project completed by Jim Collins (2001) involved a five year study of eleven "good-to-great" companies. The criteria used to select these companies were rigorous and detailed. After the initial list of potential companies was developed, Collins and his research team identified eleven good-to-great examples of companies fitting the identified criteria. These companies demonstrated the good-to-great pattern independent of their industries and established good-to-great results (2001).

Approaching the research through a mixed method design, the quantitative process Collins (2001) employed to answer a very specific question was transferred effectively to this

research project. Collins described the research approach he and his research team completed as a method that resulted in "an iterative process of looping back and forth, developing ideas and testing them against the data, revising the ideas, building a framework, seeing it break under the weight of evidence, and rebuilding it yet again" (Collins, 2001, p. 11). Collin's work attempted to unravel a complex question, and his findings generated numerous companies to take a close look at the five essential components his team identified as necessary for sustaining greatness. This model inspired the researcher to address the same question in the public education sector on a smaller scale.

The purpose of this study was to compare school districts that consistently have high student performance to other school districts with similar enrollment, socio-economic status, and community types that do not have consistently high performance and analyze the subtleties of these differences. Districts of comparable demographics were statistically controlled on the variables of socio-economic status, enrollment, and community types. There are 524 public school districts in the state of Missouri. To complete the research project, districts designated with "Distinction in Performance" were compared with similar districts not receiving "Distinction in Performance" scores. The designation of "Distinction in Performance" is the highest merit a school district can receive in the state's accreditation process and is primarily based on student performance on various state and national assessments. The researcher chose a quantitative design to provide insight into the common characteristics of these districts. Using this research design, the researcher analyzed these districts and investigated the evidence provided from the results.

Rationale

The study sought to identify common components found into school districts consistently receiving the Distinction in Performance designation. Numerous research studies completed over the last century have detailed common components found in successful school districts. These components include curriculum, instruction, professional development, collaboration, parental involvement, and leadership responsibilities. The knowledge base exists to support theories of the importance of each of these components. If the essential components of successful school districts have been identified, why do all school districts not embed these components in their respective organizations? Why do all school districts not succeed? A variety of contemporary researchers have posited theories on how to identify essential elements of an effective school and what these elements look like in public education. Researchers have created some broad recommendations for superior schools (Kohn, 1999). Kohn emphasized the importance of personnel, resources, and parental support. The factor most crucial in Kohn's research was identifying what students should know. Effective schools should have "the goal to create a learning experience that arouses and sustains children's curiosity, enriching their capacities and responding to their questions in ways that are deeply engaging" (p. 130).

In pursuit of creating exceptional learning experiences that lead to effective schools, educators continually strive to identify what essential components create an extraordinary school. The education world needs to pay attention to the complexity of performance learning and the successes of schools that excel. Ready and Conger (2003) described educational reform as an "urgent matter" which should awaken state departments of education.

As a reaction to national demands regarding accountability in education, the Federal Government directed every state in the nation to develop standards that allow for increased

consistency in educational standards. The Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) was created as a response to the Federal Government's directive to review and accredit the 524 schools district in the state of Missouri. The process of accrediting school districts is mandated and regulated by state law and by the Missouri State Board of Education. Within a five-year rotation, all school district reviews are conducted, with reports generated in the areas of resource, process and performance.

The Missouri State Board of Education adopted a new classification set of standards in 1990 in the effort to establish greater accountability of school improvement. Through the refinement of previous standards and a stronger emphasis on student achievement, the fourth cycle of MSIP moved the state into the next tier of accountability. The MSIP standards were organized into three areas that include resource standards, process standards, and performance standards. Resource standards address the basic requirements that all school districts must meet such as student/teacher ratio, minutes of instruction per day, and course requirements. Data is collected electronically through a statewide database. Process standards include instructional design, differentiated instruction, supplemental programs, and school services provided in each school district. These standards cannot be easily quantified and are assessed through an on-site review of trained observers.

Performance standards include multiple measures of student performance. These standards consist of academic achievement, reading achievement, American College Testing (ACT) achievement, career preparation, and educational persistence. DESE collects and analyzes data for those standards annually as part of the evaluation process. There are fourteen performance standards measured in K-12 school districts, and the results of these standards determine the annual accreditation level of each school district.

The state of Missouri employs a three-tiered model of accreditation. School districts that meet five or fewer performance standards are considered "unaccredited" and must have a full review of standards through an on-site visit. Specific sanctions may be placed upon the district based on the outcome of the review. School districts that meet six through eight performance standards are deemed "provisionally accredited" and must also have a full review of standards through an on-site visit. Corrective actions will be recommended as a result of the outcome of the review. School districts that meet nine through twelve performance standards are considered "accredited" and, based upon which performance standards are not yet met, a review will be completed focusing only on the unmet standards. School districts that meet at least thirteen of the fourteen performance standards, including all six state assessment standards, are awarded the highest accreditation title, "Distinction in Performance". These districts are waived from any MSIP review as long as this accreditation is sustained.

An additional component of the MSIP review includes the administration of the Advanced Questionnaire (AQ). The AQ is administered once every five years, one semester prior to the MSIP review. All school districts are required to administer the AQ regardless of their current accreditation designation. The AQ was designed to provide all stakeholders in Missouri public school districts an opportunity to participate in the review process. The results of the AQ are used by the review team and district personnel for the development of recommendations for school improvement. The AQ consists of six different questionnaires designed for unique audiences. These audiences include elementary, middle, and secondary students, parents, certificated faculty members, support staff, and members of the district Board of Education. The results of the AQ provide comprehensive information to the school district through the perceptions of the specific audiences' responses.

While there have been commonalities found in analyzing each school districts' AQ results, there was ample reason to study individual school districts' practices leading to high accreditation designation. The quantitative research was intended to identify common elements, through the results of the AQ and the accreditation designation of the school districts, which contributed to the success and effectiveness of the school. The study was justified because of the intense examination of crucial elements needed in successful school districts. Much global research has been completed on necessary components in schools. This particular study focused on what school districts in the state of Missouri specifically did to sustain high student performance.

Statement of the Problem

Schools today are under constant scrutiny for accountability of student achievement. Every state in the nation has been directed by the Federal Government through the authorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to determine high-performing public schools and low-performing public schools as described by state-mandated criteria. NCLB was created to impact the structure of America's public schools by attempting to close the achievement gap, expand parental choice in educational decisions, offer more flexibility in instructional strategies, and identify what teaching techniques are most successful in student learning (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Educational research for the past quarter of a century has reflected the quest for understanding the components of school improvement (Murphy, 2006). The attempt to compartmentalize these essential components to more fully comprehend what works in schools has generated research in the areas of quality instruction (Marzano, 2003; Murphy, 2006; Muhammad, 2009), the impact of parental involvement (Epstein, 2009), the connection between

professional development and student achievement (Lambert, 2003), and the necessity of quality leadership (Stephenson, 2009). All of these variables have proven to be vital to student success and have led to additional research in these areas.

The state of Missouri, along with all states, currently distinguishes school districts' performances relative to academic performance. These standards, authorized by Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in 2000, are the state progress report on how each school district is doing in terms of student outcomes. Fourteen academic performance standards have been identified and approved by the criteria set through the authorization of NCLB as the cornerstone of Missouri's accreditation requirements for public schools (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). These fourteen standards reflect the state-required Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) and end-of-course exams, attendance and graduation rates, ACT test scores, and other academic indicators. The data include a longitudinal look at district performance. The state of Missouri has designed a three-tiered accreditation tool. To be fully accredited, a K-12 school district must meet at least nine of the fourteen accreditation standards. School districts that consistently score high on the state accreditation report are awarded the "Distinction in Performance" designation, signifying these districts have met thirteen of the fourteen criteria on the annual report card. Districts that fail to meet at least eight of the performance points are considered "provisionally accredited" and are placed under additional sanctions by DESE.

One component of the accreditation process is the district's responsibility to complete the "Advanced Questionnaire." This survey is disseminated to staff, parents, students and board members in an attempt to collect additional pieces of information to allow a better picture of the school district's performance. After the results from the Advanced Questionnaire (AQ) are

collected and tabulated, specific results are provided to the district leadership, along with specific concerns or strengths of the district. This research project identified the unique educational characteristics consistently found in school districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify those educational characteristics consistently associated with school districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation in the state of Missouri. To identify those characteristics and develop a deeper understanding of their importance, selected characteristics were tested for differences between school districts that meet "Distinction in Performance" and those that do not meet "Distinction in Performance." School districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation for four consecutive years, including 2009, will be labeled as DIP districts. Non-DIP groupings will include all districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation for four consecutive years. To better understand the relationship between the school districts that meet "Distinction in Performance" and those that do not meet "Distinction in Performance" and the twenty-three scales surveyed on the Advanced Questionnaire, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) tests were completed.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The study sought to understand the underlying structures of effective school districts in the state of Missouri. With over two decades of research and experience, the importance of schools and districts becoming learning organizations occurs repeatedly throughout school improvement literature. The concern for accountability, minimum competency testing, and demonstrated performance of programs and priorities cultivated a climate questioning the

efficiency of public education (Brookover, Ferderbar, Gay, Middleton, Posner, & Roebuck, 1980). When asked "What kinds of educational programs and/or processes are most likely to produce the desired behavioral outcomes in the learner" (p. 51), the answer becomes complex (Brookover et al., 1980). The development of Goals by Education created by The Committee on Research and Theory in 1976 attempted to address specific expectations of schools (Brookover et al., 1980). Because the members of this committee came from diverse backgrounds and were well-respected in the field of education, the Goals of Education became the foundation of the restructuring of public education (1980).

This rebuilding of schools has been labeled in multiple ways, including "school reform," "effective schools," or "educational renewal" (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000). Recognizing that each effective school model, although grounded in educational theory, will have unique differences, this study will focus more intently on the similar components of the model. The comprehensive effective school model conceptualized by Comer and Edmonds included quality instructional leadership, high expectations, and a positive climate (Lezotte, 1989). This early comprehensive reform model was based upon the belief that all children can learn and was the catalyst for future reform models that included "accountability" and "restructuring" of schools as learning organizations (1989). Current theories and models developed to achieve educational goals continue to be evaluated, particularly as a response to the needs of "post-industrial" society. The study of similar components of competing models provides a better understanding on how to guide effective change in schools (Louis, 1996).

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers as reported by responses to the Advanced Questionnaire in districts with the "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and how do they compare to districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation over the same four consecutive years?

The first research question was addressed with descriptive data, and the second research question was addressed through hypotheses for tests of differences, using analysis of variance and analysis of covariance. This study identified characteristics present in school districts that consistently received the "Distinction in Performance" designation.

Limitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations:

1. The study was limited to school districts in the state of Missouri. These schools were selected based upon their accreditation levels and specific demographics factors.
2. The study only used data provided by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
3. The study was limited to the validity and reliability of the instruments used.

Definitions of Key Terms

Following are definitions of terms integral to the study:

Accountability. Accountability refers to a state's accountability system that is "comprised of the same core components: statewide curricular standards, statewide annual assessments, and sanctions tied to performance on those tests" as mandated by NCLB (Goodwin, Englert, Cicchinelli, 2003, p. 27).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). NCLB requires all schools, districts, and states to demonstrate students are making AYP. NCLB requires states to establish targets in academic proficiency, attendance/graduation rates, and participation in the state assessment rates (MO DESE, 2010).

Advanced Questionnaire (AQ). All public school districts are required to survey parents, staff, students, and board members regarding particular educational components. The results of this survey are evaluated in the accreditation process.

Annual Performance Report (APR). The state of Missouri's progress report of how each school district is performing, as measured by the 14 academic performance standards defined by the state is titled Annual Performance Report.

Community Type. The determination of whether a school district is located in a rural, urban, or suburban community was one of the demographics controlled for in this study.

Distinction in Performance. School districts in the state of Missouri meeting at least thirteen of the fourteen performance criteria are given this recognition. This recognition is the highest award a school district can receive in the accreditation process.

DIP Districts. Those districts receiving Distinction in Performance four consecutive years, including 2009, are referred to as DIP Districts in this study.

Leadership. Leadership seeks to guide an organization to a central goal by mobilizing goals held by both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978).

Non-DIP Districts. Those districts not receiving Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years are referred to as Non-DIP Districts in this study.

Professional Development. Ongoing learning in order to continue to learn in one's field is defined as professional development in this study.

State Mandated Testing. See accountability.

Student Achievement. See Adequate Yearly Progress.

Overview of the Study

This study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter One introduced the foundation of the study by stating the problem of identifying essential components in sustaining high performance. The intent of the chapter was to help the reader understand how certain practices are found in all school districts. Yet, the implementation of these practices clearly affects the performance of each district.

Chapter Two is a review of literature describing research of effective instructional practices and the impact of these practices on student performance. Chapter Three is a description of the design and methods used to conduct this study. Chapter Four includes the data findings from the study. Chapter Five is a summary of the findings and conclusions, and implications drawn from the findings. Future research recommendations are also presented.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

There is a wealth of literature available for review about quality educational practices present in high performing schools (Brookover et al., 1980; Elmore, 1980; Lezotte, 1989, Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000). One intention of this review of literature identifies specific instructional practices related to student achievement. Effective instructional practices and leadership styles have long been utilized as critical components of educational outcomes (Elmore, 1980). Research has been completed comparing effective educational practices with effective business practices (Bates, 1987). The initial premise of this research problem is loosely coupled with Jim Collins's book titled *Good to Great* (2001). Collins suggests the importance of studying "good" businesses in comparison to "great" businesses and the sustainability of a "great" business. This research problem studied districts designated on state criteria as "distinction by performance" and those not receiving that distinction.

Twenty-three different scales are used on the Advanced Questionnaire as developed by DESE. The development of these scales was supported through specific educational research and has been revised to reflect Marzano's research findings of instructional effectiveness (DESE, 2009). To narrow the literature review, the research was compartmentalized into five categories. The categories are a logical organization of the twenty-three scales. They are the learning experience, professionalism and collaboration, communication and parental involvement, leadership responsibilities, and professional growth. Table One lists the scales for each.

Table 1

Advanced Questionnaire: Compartmentalized Measured Scales

Category	Measured Scale
The Learning Experience	Classroom management
	Student learning goals
	Instructional strategies
	Guaranteed, viable curriculum
	Efficacy expectations
	Differentiated instruction
	Career preparation
	Library media services
	Special education services
Professionalism and Collaboration	Collegiality and professionalism
	Equity issues
	Valuing diversity
	Teacher commitment
Communication and	Communication between school and parents
Parental Involvement	Parental involvement
	Community capital
Leadership Responsibilities	Leadership
	School climate
	Instructional leadership
	Safe and orderly environment

Professional Growth	Professional development
	Effective use of data
	Teacher responsibility

This literature review clarifies what research documents as essential components for sustaining high performance.

The Learning Experience

Early researchers of effective schools identified seven organizational characteristics necessary for successful schools. These characteristics included (a) safe and orderly environment, (b) clean and focused school mission, (c) instructional leadership, (d) high expectations, (e) opportunity to learn and student time on task, (f) frequent monitoring of student progress, and (g) home-school relations (Lezotte, 1989). Lezotte (1989) identified how Ron Edmonds and James Comer applied these characteristics to the School Effectiveness Program conceptualized in 1978. This program defined an effective school as "one in which there is not significant difference in the proportion of youth demonstrating minimum academic mastery as a function of socioeconomic class" (p. ix).

Research completed by Marzano (2003) collapsed school improvement into three segmented steps by defining specific factors necessary for school improvement. These factors include school-level factors, teacher-level factors, and student-level factors. Much like Lambert's (2003) research, which defined lasting factors necessary for school success, Marzano (2003) followed the lead of numerous studies to outline the necessary factors of school success.

Teacher-level factors include instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design. Marzano (2003) described the importance of the individual teacher on student achievement. Teacher-level factors cannot be isolated when applied to classroom instruction. The impact of the individual classroom teacher on student achievement has been established through research (Marzano, 2003; Elmore, 1980). Elmore's (1980) research recommends removing conflicting instructional requirements from teachers' responsibilities to foster the focus on developing reading and math instructions, identifying students with the greatest needs, and improving the communication between home and school.

School-level factors, as described by Marzano (2003), include (a) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, (b) challenging goals and effective feedback, (c) parent and community involvement, (d) safe and orderly environment, and (e) collegiality and professionalism. These factors, which reflect impact on student achievement, are all crucial for a school to be successful. As Marzano stated,

> " . . . [this research study] presented the principles from cognitive psychology to explain some misconceptions and misrepresentations of constructivism and brain-based education. These principles were then translated into five recommended action steps that addressed teachers' needs to identify and articulate the specifics of content, to ensure that students have multiple exposures to content, to identify procedures to be mastered, to structure content and tasks using the principle of sameness, and to engage students in complex tasks that require them to address content in unique ways. (p. 120)

Student-level factors include the home environment, learned intelligence and background knowledge, and student motivation (Marzano, 2003). Marzano's research indicated school-level factors represent the majority of variance in student achievement. While these factors have a

huge impact on student achievement, the unconstructive effects of these factors can be overcome. The distinction between home environment and socioeconomic status depicts a clear set of factors. Home environment can include specific, alterable behaviors that have a solid relationship with student achievement in comparison to household income, occupation, and education. Marzano (2003) described three components of home environment: communication about school, supervision, and parental expectations and parenting style.

One tier of leadership capacity Lambert (2003) described is district leadership. This type of leadership encapsulates the research by Marzano (2003) and Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999). Identifying what works in schools for successful learning outcomes and then implementing these strategies must occur in district leadership. Schools are complex systems that have a shared sense of mission. Effective school research has identified how the strong sense of mission evidenced across faculty and staff must begin with the organization leader. All school personnel must share the mission and be united as they strive to reach the collective goals (Lezotte, 1999; Senge et al., 2000).

A school reform model challenging leaders to rethink instructional strategies has been researched by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). As Covey (1989) stated, "To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction" (p. 98). Wiggins and McTighe (2005) used this philosophy in the research presented around the design of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. A concerted focus is placed on developing and deepening understanding of pivotal thoughts.

An approach to curriculum and instruction designed to engage students in inquiry-based learning by providing transfer of learning, developing a conceptual framework for moving

students from general to discrete facts and skills, and comprehending the major components of core content was proposed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). Empowering students can lead to students becoming some of the most effective instigators for organizational learning (Senge et al., 2000). Appropriate assessment is crucial in understanding students' needs. The diagnosis and interpretation of data leads to the plan development of instructional changes (Lezotte, 1999). Analyzing the underlying mistakes students make in student work also reveals the structure of curricula, assessments, and instruction.

This philosophy to curriculum and instruction may be challenging to educational leaders (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). They ask the readers to "explore key ideas and to rethink many time-honored habits about curriculum, assessment, and instruction (p. 11). This information was provided in order to document the authors' beliefs of how to achieve student understanding by design.

Continual debates in the development of curriculum reflect four distinct philosophies about what should be the foundation in kindergarten through twelfth grade education (Good & Brophy, 2008). The first philosophy identifies knowledge as lasting and fundamental to human experience. The second philosophy links knowledge to the natural development of a child, while the third philosophy is driven by society's needs. The fourth philosophy is dictated by the need to conquer social injustice and increase social change (2008).

Education leaders must be critical thinkers when presenting instruction and assessment ideas to their organizations (Elmore, 1980; Lezotte, 1999). Due to the results from specific reform movements, educators are being held accountable for both national and global student achievement comparisons (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinback, 1999; Senge et al., 2000). The first study to begin the tide of accountability is considered to be *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for*

Educational Reform. The report criticized the current educational foundations by declaring our society as mediocre and the U.S. educational system as one in disrepair (Marzano, 2003).

The next report that created additional concern over the state of public education was the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), conducted in 1995. The purpose of this study was to reveal findings of mathematics and science achievement student scores from 42 countries across three grade levels (4, 8, and 12). TIMSS was the largest, most rigorous assessment comparing the global academic achievement ever undertaken (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The results of this study had a profound effect on U.S. education, due to the interpretation of the findings. Technical reports and commentaries of the TIMSS revealed the crucial need for public education reform (Marzano, 2003). The outcomes of the TIMSS are well-known and documented: U.S. students were outperformed by students in most other industrialized countries (2003). What school districts did with these results to impact curriculum, instruction, and assessment is still being researched today (Marzano, 2003; Senge et al., 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Narrowing his field of research, Marzano (2003) developed three basic assertions. These assertions include (1) even those studies that have been interpreted as evidence that schools do not significantly affect student achievement do, in fact, support the potential impact of schools when interpreted properly, (2) the research on the effectiveness of schools considered *as a whole* paints a very positive image of their impact on student achievement, (3) the schools that are highly effective produce results that almost entirely overcome the effects of student background (p. 6 and 7, 2003). The role of the leader is to use these basic assertions as guidance to the respective organization's path to success. Ron Brandt (1998) included 10 criteria necessary for

"powerful learning." These criteria included understanding how students learn, what they learn and where they learn.

Professionalism and Collaboration

A different type of leadership from the more traditional, autocratic leadership of the past was defined by DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008). These authors introduced the term "collaborative administrator" (2008). This term applies to the concept of encouraging and empowering leaders to become open to working as a team rather than the traditional hierarchy of authority (Buffum et al., 2008). These authors summarized collaborative leadership as "leaders who share authority, empower others, and assess their effectiveness as leaders on the extent to which they create the conditions that result in higher levels of learning- both for students and adults" (p. 2, 2008). Kruse and Louis (2009) acknowledge the reality that many leaders already exist in any school. Integrating these leaders into a more cohesive unit is necessary for the changing cultural environment found in today's educational organizations.

The importance of analyzing a school's culture is essential in developing a positive climate and reciprocal trust (Bennis, 2003; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Burns, 1978; Donaldson, 2008; DuFour et al., 2008; Kruse & Louis, 2009; Lambert, 2003). Essential key questions in identifying trust levels include:

1. How are decisions made at your site?
2. Are decisions made after building shared knowledge?
3. How do you know that you are implementing research-based best practices?
4. What topics and issues are you currently learning about? (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 24)

Asking these questions leads to the next step. Schools must then be called to action to achieve significant results (2008).

The traditional roles of administrators and staff have slowly evolved over the years (Louis, 1996). With research detailing the necessity of building trust on collaborative teams, school reform often includes the components of building and maintaining trust in a school setting (DuFour et al., 2008; Lezotte, 1989; Louis, 1996). Sharing a personal vision must be the foundation before an organizational shared vision is developed. Senge et al. (2000) describe this shared vision process as including three purposes. These purposes are (a) addressing concerns and problems, (b) expressing hope for the future, (c) developing an action plan.

Maintaining trust is often considered the most critical component of the relationships that exists between a school's principal and its teachers (Bennis, 2003; Kruse & Louis, 2009). Leaders, in the quest for building trust, must demonstrate honesty, integrity, and a strong steadfastness to completing commitments. Bennis (2003) also recommended the "open-door" policy, a caring attitude, and the ability to empower others as necessary components for reaching collaboration between staff and administration.

School leaders are expected to have a clear focus and vision (Brookover et al., 1980; Elmore, 1980; Lezotte, 1999). Attaining this vision should encompass both the leader and the followers. The vision must include building trusting climates and positive relationships with all constituents involved in the process. Stephenson (2009) believed that professional growth could only occur when a team became a high-functioning unit. One crucial part of this team is mutual trust. Stephenson completed an action research project that detailed a continuum of building trust. The stages of trust-building include personal trust, interpersonal/staff trust, organizational trust, and trust beyond the school. Stephenson believed the greatest impact on student learning occurred within the school and focused on the research findings on trust beyond the school walls (2009).

Trust and mistrust are on opposite ends of the continuum (Covey, 1989). Trust, as defined by Covey, is confidence in the integrity and abilities of your colleagues. Distrust is the suspicion of integrity and capabilities of your colleagues (p. 5). Stephenson (2009) aligned the depth of trust in an organization with the development of building relationships. Covey (1989) used the analogy of assets and liabilities to describe the dividends that trust can pay on the success of a school.

As schools move away from individuals working in isolation and develop cultures of collaboration, new expectations are set (Kruse & Louis, 2009; Louis, 1996). The roles of school staff members are shifting to include curriculum expectations, best practices, knowledge about literacy and numeracy, data analysis, and parental involvement (Stephenson, 2009). School leaders often overlook the fact that trust must be developed in order to move to effective collaboration and improved student performance.

The benefits of teacher collaboration can be supported through specific research findings (Senge et al., 2000). These benefits include increased satisfaction in teaching, enhanced teaching efficacy, strengthened moral support, decreased stress levels, embracing of change for the betterment of the organization, and improved student achievement. Teacher collaboration leads to strengthened relationships at all levels (Stephenson, 2009).

The concept of coaching in the instructional realm originated years ago. Recent research and literature has defined coaching in more detail (DuFour et al., 2008; Knight, 2007; Muhammad, 2009). Instructional coaching design includes tools for working with educators. This process enhances teachers' professional learning, describes useful communication and relationship-building theories, and leads to self-directed learning. Knight (2007) stated, "In coaching relationships, both parties work in partnership to identify what intervention will be

implemented, they plan instruction, they observe each other, and they share ideas back and forth in collaboration" (p. 15).

Instructional coaching's primary goal is to enable teachers to implement scientifically proven instructional practices with the help of specifically trained coaches. Instructional coaches lead with a focused philosophy and set of actions. Knight (2007) compartmentalized four outcomes for effective coaching. These outcomes include behavior, content knowledge, direct instruction, and formative assessment. On-site training articulated by district personnel exemplifies the best in both new teachers and veteran teachers, and ultimately deepens the trust within personnel of a building (Muhammad, 2009).

School organizations deal with many different tiers of trust, beginning with the first layer of mistrust (Senge et al., 2000). Leaders must recognize the barriers to trust in schools. These include fear, betrayal, inconsistent leadership, ineffective staff development, and adversarial relationships between unions and school leadership (Stephenson, 2009). Stephenson (2009) describes a case study involving the rapid succession of principals in one school district. The rapid breakdown of trust among the staff when the leadership changed so quickly affected all aspects of the educational process in the building. Building trust that leads to strong collaboration requires dependable leadership. School improvement and reform must include strong, consistent leadership (Louis, 1996; Stephenson, 2009).

One of the challenges school leaders must face is the numerous job responsibilities placed upon educators. As Collins (2001) outlined, identifying the right people for the job is crucial. This is the first step in developing a strong school. Building relationships among these people is the next step (Kruse & Louis, 2009). As Stephenson (2009) summarized, "Staff members will begin to sense there is more of an overall purpose, revolving around doing what is

best for students. This is the beginning of building trust with staff members and valuing their beliefs" (p. 39).

The importance of building quality relationships between administrators and staff members leads to shared leadership and a deeper level of trust (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Lambert, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The connections developed strengthen teacher rapport, student outcomes, and system reform. Additionally, strong relationships between staff and administrators permit both groups to better communicate with each other. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) stated "Recognizing this power, responsibility and perspective differences can help teachers avoid taking an oppositional stance to administrators in many situations." (p. 137) Breaking down obstacles that hinder democratic collaboration boosts positive relationships and sustains shared problem resolution. In addition, strong relationships amongst staff supports staff retention, particularly in high poverty urban schools (2010).

School buildings often develop mini-societies within the boundaries of the building's walls (Farina & Kotch, 2008). Barriers are a result of these self-imposed groups and hinder the opportunity to share and collaborate (Lezotte, 1999). Farina and Kotch (2008) suggested the separation between these groups affects the culture and climate of the building. Building leaders must recognize the tendency for staff to naturally align themselves into smaller groups (Morgan, 2006). While these relationships may not necessarily be detrimental to the success of the school, they should not be so self-inclusive that additional conversations and relationships are hindered. Farina and Kotch (2008) believe ". . . creative supervision and reflective evaluation require being committed to becoming learners ourselves, and much of the learning comes from talking, engaging in inquiry, and exchanging ideas with the people with whom we work." (p. 78) The

authors stressed the importance of establishing a healthy, trusting culture in an organization to support staff members who feel empowered to take risks, engage in healthy dialogue, and enjoy reflection on teaching and learning. As school leaders continue to examine school culture, more focus on changing culture, creating new cultures, or preserving culture is encouraged (Leithwood et al., 1999; Louis, 1996; Schein, 1992).

Culture can be defined as "how people feel about the organization, the authority system, and the degree of employee involvement and commitment" (Schien, 1992, p. 24). Schein suggested the importance of leaders recognizing how culture impacts the structure and strategies of the organization. By understanding how cultural assumptions drive the development of the structure and strategies from within, leaders will be more prepared to comprehend how these assumptions improve and inhibit the change process within the school organization (1992). Bates (1987) linked the internal cultures of school to the subgroups of class, race, gender and age. By understanding the culture of this clientele, production and effectiveness of the school increases. Likewise, schools that do not recognize and accept these differences develop a fragmented approach to educational opportunities (Farina & Kotch, 2008; Lezotte, 1989; Stephenson, 2009) By distinguishing the importance of cultural assumptions, schools will thrive, as the culture and aspirations of the community are honored (Bates, 1987). Schein (1992) affirmed how the culture of a school is closely aligned with the community from which it draws its pupils. As a school leader, it is imperative to value the cultural beliefs of the students' homes and communities. By analyzing the history and experiences of the community, a better understanding of traditions and values are gained. Schein summarized the importance of analyzing school and community culture by stating ". . . good administration depends very much upon *judgment* about particular courses of action" (p. 111).

Educational leaders must differentiate between the climate and culture of their school to embed specific interventions impacting student performance (Lezotte, 1989; Lezotte, 1999; Senge et al., 2000). Schein (1992) clarified the difference between climate and culture by defining climate as the physical look of the environment, the emotion portrayed by the employees, the experiences of visitors upon entry, and other sensory driven characteristics. Schein characterizes climate as ". . . a cultural artifact resulting from espoused values and shared tacit assumptions" (p. 24). Becoming an observer of both climate and culture allows insight into two critical pieces of an organization (Shein, 1992; Morgan, 2006). Educational leadership engages multiple people with multiples perspectives in order to accurately reflect the climate and culture of the entire school community (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Recognizing how complex relationships lead to school effectiveness influences the capacity and implementation of the leadership team (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007).

Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) studied the relationship present throughout four urban and suburban schools to determine what really impacts student outcome. Their results clearly document the importance of relationships, particularly teacher-students relationships. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) expand on this finding in their study titled *Voices From the Inside,* in which the authors support the connection of relationships to student performance. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) believe "an effective way to reform schools is to foster facilitative, principled, and instructionally flexible relationships, especially between teachers and students, but also between all players in education." (p. xxiii)

Communication and Parental Involvement

Describing the importance of parental involvement for a student to be successful, Kozol (2005) stated how ". . . our goal as teachers is to serve our children in the best ways that we can,

and it helps us in this effort to learn something of their parents and the lives they lead at home" (p. 30). Research showed how parents are instrumental in providing the first tier of teaching to their child (Senge et al., 2000). A recent survey concluded that school age children spend approximately seventy percent of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school (Clark, 1990). The importance of parents understanding and supporting their children's educational career has been researched and supported through decades of research. This research showed that when parents are involved students have:

1. Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
2. Better school attendance
3. Increased motivation, better self-esteem
4. Lower rates of suspension
5. Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
6. Fewer instances of violent behavior (1990)

Research also showed that parents should get involved as early as possible in a child's educational process in order to have the greatest impact on a child's progress (Elmore, 1980; Lezotte, 1989). Parent participation in school should include a sustained contribution at every level, including advocacy, decision-making roles, fund-raisers and boosters, and as volunteers (Kruse & Louis, 2009; Williams & Chavkin, 1989). Farina and Kotch (2008) support the importance of home-school connections. They believe the biggest challenge is communication between the two constituencies. By developing predictable procedures for communicating with parents and ensuring ample opportunities for communication, parents feel more comfortable and respected.

School administrators, particularly new administrators, need to take time to learn their school's traditions, culture, and rituals (Louis, 1996). Building trusting relationships with parents allows for increased parental involvement (Good & Brophy, 2008). Understanding what parents believe is a essential component of a quality school is the first step in building trustworthiness (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). Frequent formal and informal interactions between parents and the school are the foundation for maintaining a shared, cooperative focus on the learner (2010). Outcomes of strong parental involvement include better communication between home and school and more attainable conflict resolution when disagreements do arise (Stephenson, 2009).

The National Parent Teacher Association developed program standards of excellence to support the importance of parent involvement. These standards include the following:

Standard 1: Communication between home and school in a regular, reciprocal manner.

Standard 2: Parenting skills should be promoted and supported.

Standard 3: Student learning should be an integral role that parents play in assisting student learning.

Standard 4: Volunteering by parents is encouraged, and their support and assistance is sought.

Standard 5: School decision making and advocacy are roles parents play in their respective schools.

Standard 6: Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010).

To support the communication between the parents and school, Joyce Epstein of John Hopkins University has designed a framework for characterizing six different types of parental

involvement (Epstein, 2009). Her goal was to present a framework that would assist educators in developing school and family partnership programs. Her framework includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community. These standards were the foundation for the six National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement.

Research by Brandt (1998) described how learning organizations must specify characteristics in order to be most effective. Several of these crucial characteristics involve the relationship between home and school. Brandt believed "learning is influenced by the total environment" (p. 10). Brandt concludes educators must attend to all aspects of setting and create an environment where students and parents feel safe and trust the staff of the school organization. Encouraging a reciprocal communication relationship between school and parents takes time and careful thought (Baskwill, 1989). Baskwill summarized how to reach parents into three steps. These steps include changing attitudes, inviting participation, and sharing observations (1989). Baskwill encouraged schools to "look at parents through different eyes if they want parents to see them differently" (1989, p. 71).

Leadership Responsibilities

Public education in the 21st century intertwines different layers of people, structures, and cultures to better serve the children of our nation. In studying several different leadership theories, Burns (1978) suggests that transformational leadership theory requires a vision necessary for the success of any organization. Transformational leadership theory focuses attention as a school leader on several key concepts, as described by specific researchers. These concepts include the importance of obtaining a vision for an organization through the mobilization of the group (Burns, 1978), the necessity of a reciprocal relationship between

leaders and followers (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996), and the understanding of how the culture of an organization directly impacts the attainment of organizational objectives (Yukl, 2006).

Transformational leadership, as described by Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (2000), requires an understanding of, and belief in, the higher purposes that are supported by the leaders and followers of the organization. Leadership seeks to produce organizational change through the development of a vision, effectively sharing the vision to appropriate members of the organization, and inspiring the members to attain the vision (Yukl, 2006). Transformational leadership practices foster organization learning in many different areas, including vision building, individual support, intellectual stimulation, modeling, culture building, and holding high performance expectations (Leithwood et al., 2000). As transformational leaders enhance these specific areas in the organization, the collective capacity of the organization members to better accomplish the purpose of the schools is increased (Leithwood, et.al, 2000, p. 37).

Transformational leadership seeks to build a coalition between leaders and followers. Numerous researchers state how transformational leadership is essential in a school setting. Effective leadership requires adapting and conforming to change (Yukl, 2006). Research studies identify how organizations in the 1980s, both private and public, were forced to change in order to survive in a more competitive, global society (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996; Begley, 1999; Schein, 1992; Yukl, 2006). The restructuring of schools has generated many different ideas on how best to utilize organizational members' skills to promote the entire organization (Leithwood et al., 1999). One growing trend is the development of teams (Yukl, 2006). A transformational leader develops the ability to structure teams to clarify the purpose of the task and complement members' talents. The use of teams also promotes a more lateral organization and empowers followers to become leaders (Burns, 1978; Leithwood et al., 1999). By allowing team members

to concretely understand the purpose of the team, final outcomes presented by team members and internal dynamics are improved (Lezotte, 1999; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson & Meyers, 2007).

Leadership, as defined by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001), requires the objectivity of identifying, acquiring, allocating, and coordinating the appropriate use of resources for the purpose of teaching and learning (p. 24). One challenge transformational leaders continually face is the task of inspiring followers to leave "situationist ethics" (Burns, 1978, p. 429) behind and join into the higher purposes of the organization. Transformational leaders recognize the importance of this critical process and develop strategies for convincing the followers in the organization of the principles and vision of the entire organization. As schools continue to restructure due to changes in expectations from outside forces, transformational leaders maintain the conditions necessary to help an organization achieve current goals (Cuban, 1988, as cited in Spillane et al., 2001).

In addition to inspiring followers to unite for the higher purpose of the organization, transformational leadership supports the efforts of education in the quest for united and clearly defined end values (Burns, 1978; Leithwood et al., 1999). While transactional leadership deals with basic needs (food, water, shelter), transformational leadership attempts to address moral values. These values, as described by Burns (1978), include liberty, justice, and equality (p. 426). As the boundaries between home and school become more fluid, instructional and academic concepts are not the only objectives expected to be addressed in the school environment (Goldring and Sullivan, 1996). Transformational leadership allows roles and boundaries to fluctuate while maintaining "organization viability" (p. 197).

Transformational leadership promotes the reciprocal nature between leaders and followers necessary for the academic success of all students (Schein, 1992). Educational leaders

are involved in many facets of both the school and community environment (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Schein (1992) described how transformational leaders must synthesize and partake in "moral dialogue" (p. 110). Moral dialogue allows conversation, based upon moral and ethical values, to shape the vision of the organization. The dialogue, while facilitated by the leader, is not dictated solely by the leader. Input gathered by many, relationships built among all team members, and trust enhanced through continuous conversations allows the dialogue between the leader and the followers to enhance and support the organization's goals. Bottery (1988) insists leaders must show respect and trust of their staff, as evidenced through moral dialogue. The staff should be treated as professionals in order for mutual respect to develop. With this "democratic participation" (p. 350) comes the staff's responsibility in the success or failure of the school. Transformational leaders are required to delegate responsibility after followers have been empowered not only to accept, but to anticipate, additional expectations of the school (1988).

In comparing transformational leadership to transactional leadership, the evaluation of the final outcome reveals the difference between the two. Transactional leadership occurs when a leader initiates the exchange of important items in order for productivity to occur or to be maintained in the organization (Leithwood et al., 2000). Examples of such items include economical, political or psychological motives for advancement of the individual (p. 28). The transactional leader tends to the basic needs of the followers. The individual interests of the followers drive the purpose of the organization (Burns, 1978). In contrast, the transformational leader unites the followers in the pursuit of a higher purpose. Leaders often have to discern what type of leadership is necessary for the task at hand. There may be times when transactional leadership is an appropriate form of leadership, such as providing a safe environment in which to work. Conversely, transformational leadership would support the pursuit of higher ambitions,

such as social, cultural, and academic quests, as the next stage in the organization's development (1978).

Leading change has been described as "one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities" (Yukl, 2006, p. 284) in an organization. Collins (2001) also listed the ability to change as one of the crucial steps in sustaining greatness. Change in most organizations is met with resistance for a number of reasons. Yukl identifies the following reasons why people are resistant to change in an organization: (a) lack of trust, (b) belief that change is unnecessary, (c) belief that the change is not feasible, (d) economic threats, (e) relative high cost, (f) fear of personal failure, (g) loss of status and power, (h) threat to values and ideals, and (i) resentment of interference (p. 285-286).

School leaders must become more aware of community values and recognize the importance of embedding these values into the purpose of the school (Begley, 1999). This type of external influence on internal decisions also drives change within the organization. The role of a school leader is becoming more complex and dynamic as our society becomes more pluralistic (p. 52). As school leaders are required to maneuver through ever-evolving expectations, the followers in the organization must also react to these changes (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996). Change driven by outside variables is often met with deeper resistance than internally driven change. Begley (1999) reported how school change extends beyond the traditional boundaries of school staff to include parents, students, and community members. He summarized how these changes force collaboration among internal and external participants of the school environment, how assessing accountability of learner outcomes is expanding, and how the role of the school administrator is rapidly growing. Burns (1978) added to this statement by identifying the need

for real change to "create new conditions that will generate their own changes in motivation, new goals, and continuing change" (p. 441).

Leaders are forced to respond to change in any organization. School leaders are facing a shift in the structure of traditional schools and expanding expectations of the purpose of their organization (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996; Begley, 1999). Successful navigation through these changes requires a transformational leader to be skillful and visionary in how to effectively lead the members of the school through these expectations in order to fulfill the higher purposes of the educational community (Burns, 1978; Leithwood et al., 1999).

Research based on transformational leadership revealed implications affecting all organizational members, including school staff, students, parents, and community members (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996). Transformational leadership requires the ability to inspire others, mobilize the members of the organization to focus on "higher purposes", and to continually strive to attain the vision and goals of the organization (Leithwood et al., 2000). School leaders should recognize the development of the shared vision takes time and requires trust among all participants of the school, including students, staff, parents, and community.

In a school organization, leadership requires the ability to lead and empower others with the purpose of attaining a change in the organization (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Creating a shared vision for a school district is an expectation for a school leader. Mobilizing an entire group of people to achieve a shared vision requires a gifted leader. Increasingly, school leaders are required to also include internal and external stakeholders in the development of the organizational vision and in the strategies identified as necessary to accomplish the mission of the school (2001). Goldring and Sullivan (1996) suggested a school leader's job description must now also include "negotiator" (p. 198) as the complexity in organizational goals continues to

increase. In contrast of an authoritative leader, where one would direct goals of the organization rather than gather support from the followers (Yukl, 2006), a transformational leader gathers input and commitment from everyone in the organization. This process establishes allegiance to the school mission, yet often requires a deeper time commitment to the end result (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996).

The role of a leader should include the ability to "foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students" (Brown, 2004, p. 80). Capturing the expectations of a school leader is difficult. A school leader must prioritize time and monetary commitments, deal with personnel issues, represent the district throughout the entire community, and provide the foundation for quality student learning. Each of these expectations should be driven by the overarching goals of the organization. Leaders must juggle the managerial side of a school organization while initiating and inspiring quality educational opportunities (Burns, 1978). These opportunities must include teaching and learning which will build successful students, support quality learning, and engage superior relationships among parents, communities, and schools while maintaining the vision of the organization (p. 199).

Leadership requires the analysis and understanding of complex interactions among many different people, events, and situations (Morgan, 2006). Reeves (2009) believed the culture of a school is not often truly revealed through vision statements, missions, or other required documents. Rather, he suggested one should analyze the behavior, attitudes, and beliefs of the individuals and groups from within the organization (2009). Recognizing the cultural importance of an organization is another critical component of a transformational leader's ability to guide the school. The culture of any organization is formed through years of social interactions, traditions, rituals, and beliefs. Successful leaders must be aware of the culture of an organization while

successfully restructuring the school in order to create an environment that supports the changing expectations of society and includes shared values and beliefs of the entire group (Yukl, 2006).

School leadership is a pivotal part of every component of school reform (Louis, 1996). Leadership has been thoroughly researched, beginning with the early stages of school reform (Lambert, 2003; Marzano, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Educational research of leadership continues to be a fundamental component of educational success (Muhammad, 2009; Murphy, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Leaders are continually challenged to understand specific nuances of the organization while "providing brilliant flashes of success" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. xvi).

Differences of leadership characteristics affect organizational dynamics (Goleman, 2004). The personal style of leaders can range from the quiet introvert to the charismatic extrovert (Collins, 2001). Goleman (2004) defined the most crucial component of effective leaders to be emotional intelligence. The components of emotional intelligence include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. The following definitions of these respective components can be defined as follows:

1. Self-Awareness – the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effects on others.
2. Self-Regulation – the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods and the propensity to suspend judgment – to think before acting.
3. Motivation – a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status and a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence.
4. Empathy – the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people and the skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions.

5. Social Skill – proficiency in managing relationships and building networks and an ability to find common ground and build rapport (p. 6).

Leadership, according to Goleman (2004), can be learned. Leaders must hone all traits and be committed to improvement. Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) contend the district leadership has a direct impact on student achievement. As leaders improve their skills, the ability to transfer knowledge to others in their respective schools also increases. The constant shifting of knowledge cultivates others to grow exponentially into future leadership roles (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, (2010).

One unique aspect of leadership found in schools deals with the role school board members play in sustaining great student performance. Collins (2001) believed boards, whether in the private or public sector, are responsible for selecting outstanding leaders for the organization. Collins called for boards to "familiarize themselves with the characteristics of Level 5 leadership and install such leaders into positions of responsibility" (p. 216). Level 5 leadership, as defined by Collins, refers to leaders who are modest, willful, humble, fearless and able to channel their ambition first and foremost for the organization (2001). The role of a school board member, much like the role of a school administrator, is evolving to include a more comprehensive understanding of the school arena.

Professional Growth

Continual professional growth, also termed professional development in this research project, is necessary for school reform (Murphy, 2006). As cited by *A Nation At Risk,* the TIMMS study (1998), and the reauthorization of NCLB, national educational expectations are driving the transformation of how school leaders and staff think and act. Murphy (2006) cited three central alterations in the emerging views of tomorrow's schools:

1. At the institutional level, a rebalancing of the equation that adds more weight to market and citizen control while subtracting influence from government and professional actors

2. At the managerial level, a change from a bureaucratic operational system to more communal views of schooling

3. At the technical level, a change from behavioral to social –constructivist views of learning and teaching (p. 18)

Many argue that the traditional way of training educators must change (Brookover et al., 1980; Guskey, 2000). There is a growing belief that models for school leadership should include a different philosophy regarding the training of school personnel and those who aspire to lead these schools. Murphy (2006) believed "new views of learning and teaching call for quite different understandings of school leadership and redesigned models of developing school leaders" (p. 29)

Different tiers of leadership are necessary for continual growth (Lambert, 2003). The first tier of leadership Lambert included revolved around the professional development of leaders. Lambert (2003) defined connection between professional development and leadership by stating:

> Teachers and other staff members must perform as leaders in their communities, understand that the leadership of adults and the leadership of students are parallel concepts, and design professional development around the skillfulness to achieve leadership in and out of the classroom (p. 21).

Leadership is not solely defined as the building level administrator. Team leaders, department heads, instructional coaches, or content experts are often educational terms applied to specific job descriptions in the educational arena (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Leaders are challenged to navigate through numerous obstacles, including building relationships, insuring quality learner

outcomes, demanding fiscal accountability, and supervising personnel. These skills are crucial to solid school leadership (Knight, 2007).

The second tier of professional development Lambert (2003) revealed was the changing role of the educational leader. Donaldson (2008) compartmentalized theses roles into three clusters: acting as consultants to interpret pedagogical knowledge and apply it to practice, mediating conflict while reaching consensus, and valuing relationships. These roles continue to expand as additional accountability is placed on schools. Lambert (2003) defined "Acts of Superintendent Leadership" to include:

1. Developing a shared vision of excellence about teaching, learning, and leading with students, adults, and the community – and resisting the temptation to make a unilateral decision that may be inconsistent with the vision
2. Maintaining focus on the shared vision
3. Establishing an infrastructure of democratic practices and structures that involve school community members in broad-based, skillful participation in the work of district leadership
4. Articulating a range of best practices about human learning, avoiding "right" answers and one-size-fits-all solutions
5. Cocreating accountability systems based on inquiry at all levels
6. Translating policies, mandates, and requirements in ways that maintain the congruence between vision and practice
7. Ensuring collaboration among multiple partners (e.g., community agencies and alliances, universities, and other regional and state organizations)
8. Developing transparent, multilayered communication systems

9. Apprising community members of with whom to speak and how to get actions initiated
10. Modeling actions that build system and individual leadership capacity
11. Educating and engaging board members in understanding board roles, vision, learning, resource management, and policy development
12. Seeking and developing education committed to the district vision, shared leadership, and active engagement in their own learning
13. Securing essential resources, including finance, time, talent, and ideas

The professional development of leaders must also include the professional selection of leaders and learners. Whether these leaders are parents, staff affiliates, administrators or community members, it is imperative to ensure the candidates embrace the following qualities:

1. A willingness to participate in decision making
2. A constructivist philosophy of learning
3. A sense of responsibility for all the students in the school
4. A readiness to work together to accomplish the school's goals
5. An understanding of how to improve one's craft (Lambert, 2003, p. 88)

One avenue to understanding a principals' motivation and behavior is the sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The principal is seen as a key agent at the school level in initiating and leading change. A principal's sense of efficacy, described as a judgment of capabilities to structure organizational change, affects the execution of the defined change (2004).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) stated how self-efficacy beliefs are accurate predictors of individual behaviors. By developing a strong sense of self-efficacy, a principal's

professional growth reflects a persistence in pursuing the goals of a school's flexibility and adaptation strategies, and high confidence in carrying our their roles (2004).

Summary

Effective school research outlines the complexity of the challenges encountered by public school districts. Enduring educational qualities of successful school districts have surfaced in both social and organizational contexts (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). Leithwood et al. state how "the different directions of change can seem conflicting and are often contested" (p. x, 1999). This literature review exhibits effective school findings by describing consistent principles revealed through various researchers (Elmore, 1980; Lezotte, 1999). The educational community continues to face mounting scrutiny and accountability. Exemplary instructional performance leading to strong student outcomes focuses on pedagogical improvement (Louis, 1996). This study will present essential components of educational success supported through data and research findings.

The framework of the study includes specific scales identified through the research findings. Each of the scales reviewed was crucial for examination so that the study could (a) identify essential elements needed for a school to sustain greatness in the state of Missouri, (b) recognize how these essential elements impact schools, (c) understand the depth of these essential elements, and (d) understand how these elements complement each other for school success. When analyzing these components through literature, specific components necessary for school effectiveness were revealed.

Numerous research studies have been completed in an attempt to successfully identify what factors are critical for school effectiveness. Public education is frequently described as a pendulum slowly swinging from one extreme to the next, with various reforms often being

repeated (DuFour et al., 2008). Research attempts to redefine educational paradigms because of the belief that public education is currently operating with outdated models of instruction (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). By integrating new research into past understandings and assumptions, clarity into effective practice is revealed (Good & Brophy, 2008).

School leaders are responsible for the continual endeavor of developing curriculum, supporting quality instruction, advancing professionalism, enhancing collaboration, increasing parental involvement, and providing professional growth for all staff members. School leaders must work to ensure the organization does not fail. Success is measured by both state and federal criteria. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) encouraged educators to understand the importance of local reform, stating " . . . the state could not possibly assess everything of value in an authentic way, even if we all wanted it, because of excessive costs and the desire to limit the intrusion of external testing" (p. 305). Dorn (1998) summarized accountability practices by emphasizing the significance of identifying the common interests of all children, not segmenting the interest through prestige and resources.

Research has shown specific programs, initiatives, and best practices worthy of attention because of the impact on student performance. Key to school success is school leadership focused on viable curriculum and instruction, the quest for professionalism and collaboration, excellent communication and parental involvement, strong leadership, and the support for professional growth for all staff members. The study of what propels good schools to great schools leads to the understanding of how these essential components are embedded into the structure of a school organization that leads to sustained school success.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Rationale

This chapter provides the rationale for the design and methodology selected for this quantitative case study. In this research study, the researcher surveyed and documented analysis of identified school districts through a quantitative research design. Creswell (2003) supported the use of quantitative research design when "the problem is identifying factors that influence an outcome, the utility of an intervention, or understanding the best predictors of outcomes" (p. 22). Merriam (1998) described the quantitative research approach as "one in which the investigator primarily uses postpositivist claims for developing knowledge. . . employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data" (p. 18). This method of inquiry will help to ensure validity in the study.

Because of the researcher's personal interest in the topic and desire to fully understand the research findings, the choice of a quantitative research design was finalized (Creswell, 2003). The topic was examined in detail to determine the availability of resources for study. Because public school administrators are continually seeking evidence of the impact of particular programs on student outcomes, this study provided relevant and critical insights to practicing school leaders. Due to the broad nature of this study, a more focused view of the problem was developed through the critical review of the literature. This resulted in the cluster of educational topics presented in Table 1 and became the framework for the literature review and the structure of the hypotheses of this study.

Twenty-three scales are identified through the data collection process of the Advanced Questionnaire. Nine of these scales include classroom management, student learning goals, instructional strategies, guaranteed curriculum, efficacy expectations, differentiated instruction,

career preparation, library media services, and special education services are clustered under the first category of the Learning Experience due to the connection each scale has to student learning.

The second cluster is titled Professionalism and Collaboration and includes the scales of collegiality and professionalism, equity issues, valuing diversity, and teacher commitment.

Communication between School and Parents and Parental Involvement is the title for the third cluster and includes communication, parental involvement, and community capital.

The fourth cluster captures the Leadership Responsibilities by using the scales titled leadership, school climate, instructional leadership, and safe and orderly environment.

The fifth cluster titled Professional Growth is aligned with three scales which include professional development, effective use of data, and teacher responsibility.

Components in quantitative research, as described by Creswell (2003), include (a) cause and effect thinking, (b) reduction to specific variables, hypotheses, and questions, (c) use of measurement and observation, and (d) the test of theories. In addition to these components, quantitative research also requires the collection of data on instruments generating statistical data.

Surveys are often the preferred type of data collection for quantitative research. Fink (2006) defined surveys as "information collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences, and behavior" (p. 1). Surveys vary in purpose, content, and structure, yet are developed to provide information to the researcher at a rapid return rate with accurate data findings.

Accurate information was crucial in developing a valid survey (Fink, 2006, p. 7). To begin research on the primary question and assure accuracy of the data, information from the

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) was utilized to identify the districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation. After categorizing these school districts' accreditation scores and analyzing the longitudinal data findings, differences and regressions were tested. This study was a quantitative research design that utilized the results of data from the identified school districts.

Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2003) discussed the value of the ability to work through differing opinions, weighing different data from different sources, and arriving at a reasonable conclusion on an important problem. The researcher recognized how many variables were revealed when 524 school districts were critiqued for accreditation purposes. Booth et al. (2003) suggested how difficult evaluating each source can be and how easily distorted these sources can become (p. 73). The quality of the survey developed and released was imperative to gathering accurate data. The theoretical framework of the study was viewed through the lens of an educator, and the study drew upon the knowledge, feelings, values, and behavior used by educators in the state of Missouri (Fink, 2006).

Completing a research project after a five-year study of eleven "good-to-great" companies, Collins's work represents a mixed methods approach to research (2001). The quantitative methods he employed to answer a very specific question was the impetus of the development of this research project. Additional research questions will call for the expansion of knowledge of these programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify those educational characteristics consistently associated with school districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designations in the state of Missouri. To identify those characteristics and develop a deeper understanding of their

importance, selected characteristics were tested for differences between school districts that meet Distinction in Performance and those that do not meet Distinction in Performance. To better understand the relationship between the school districts that meet "Distinction in Performance" and those that do not meet "Distinction in Performance" and the twenty-three scales surveyed on the Advanced Questionnaire, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) tests were completed.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of districts with "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and how do they compare to districts not receiving "Distinction in Performance" designation over the same four consecutive years?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers as reported by responses to the Advanced Questionnaire in districts with the "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and how do they compare to districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation over the same four consecutive years?

The first research question was addressed with descriptive data, and the second research question was addressed through hypotheses for tests of differences, using analysis of variance and analysis of covariance.

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant difference between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results of the Advanced Questionnaire. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters: (a) the Learning Experience Cluster (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster.

$H_{02:}$ There is no significant difference between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results of the Advanced Questionnaire while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters: (a) the Learning Experience Cluster (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster.

Population and Sample

This study examined the relationship between schools that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and schools that did not consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation. This study also tested for selected characteristics consistently associated with high performing schools and analyzed the relationships between those characteristics and the Missouri performance review ratings. Schools in this study were

the 524 public school districts in the state of Missouri. School district's accreditation designations were identified through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2009). The survey data were collected in the Spring of 2010 and analyzed at the district level. The accreditation designation data were gathered in the Fall of 2009 as they were reported by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2009).

Instrumentation

The Advanced Questionnaire (AQ) was used to measure teachers' perceptions about specific areas of district performance (Appendix A). The AQ produces survey data obtained from students, parents, and school staff to help evaluate educational processes within a district (DESE, 2009). The AQ is administered once every five years, one semester prior to the MSIP review. All school districts are required to administer the AQ, regardless of their current accreditation designation. The AQ was designed to provide all stakeholders in Missouri public school district an opportunity to participate in the review process. The results of the AQ are used by the review team and district personnel for the development of recommendations for school improvement. The AQ consists of five different questionnaires designed for unique audiences. These audiences include elementary, middle, and secondary students, parents, certificated faculty, support staff, and members of the district Board of Education. The results of the AQ provide comprehensive information to the school district through the perceptions of the specific audiences' responses.

The state of Missouri uses survey data to help evaluate education processes in a district. Specific directions for administering the AQ are provided to the superintendent of the district prior to the opening of the AQ window. Districts are expected to review the administration guidelines carefully to ensure the quality facilitation of the administration testing process and to provide as much confidentiality as possible. Districts have the option of adding up to ten

additional questions to all surveys with the exception of the elementary survey. All parents and staff members are provided the opportunity to respond to the survey. In this research project, the results from the faculty's perceptions were analyzed.

The results of the district's AQ are returned to the district in an electronic format in various disaggregated reports, including overall district results and specific building results. The results also include faculty, student, parent and community responses. The report also provides observations from the specific audiences of perceptions of strengths and concerns of the district's educational processes.

While there have been commonalities found in analyzing school districts' AQ results, there was ample reason to study individual school districts' practices leading to high accreditation designation. The quantitative research was intended to identify common elements, through the results of the AQ and the accreditation designation of the school districts, which contribute to the success and effectiveness of the school.

Data Analysis

To accomplish the purpose of the study, the following quantitative procedures were followed. For all statistical tests, the level of significance was set at a probability level of a = .05.

1. Using ANOVA, differences on the twenty-three Advanced Questionnaire scale scores for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed.
2. Using ANOVA, differences on the results of the nine scale scores in the Learning Experience cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation

four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed.

3. Using ANOVA, differences on the results of the four scale scores in the Professionalism and Collaborations cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed.

4. Using ANOVA, differences on the results of the three scale scores in the Communication and Parental Involvement cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed.

5. Using ANOVA, differences on the results of the four scale scores in the Leadership Responsibility cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed.

6. Using ANOVA, differences on the results of the three scale scores in the Professional Growth cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed.

7. Using ANCOVA, differences on the twenty-three Advanced Questionnaire scale scores for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed, while controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type.

8. Using ANCOVA, differences on the results of the nine scale scores in the Learning Experience cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed, while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type.

9. Using ANCOVA, differences on the results of the four scale scores in the Professionalism and Collaborations cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed, while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type.

10. Using ANCOVA, differences on the results of the three scale scores in the Communication and Parental Involvement cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed, while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type.

11. Using ANCOVA, differences on the results of the four scale scores in the Leadership Responsibility cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation were analyzed, while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type.

12. Using ANCOVA, differences on the results of the three scale scores in the Professional Growth cluster for districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation four consecutive years and districts not receiving the "Distinction in

Performance" designation were analyzed, while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type.

Procedures

Advanced Questionnaire data were collected in the Fall of 2009 from Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education through the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSEDA). Of the 524 school districts in the state of Missouri, 336 have completed the fourth cycle of the Missouri School Improvement Program. Data were provided by OSEDA in an Excel spreadsheet that captured the scale and mean scores of the 336 districts. The Advanced Questionnaire survey results from these districts provided data obtained from students, parents, school staff, and board members to help evaluate educational processes in a district. For this study, the faculty survey results were used for the ANCOVA analyses.

Data for this study were quantitative. The AQ data used in this study for participating schools were provided by the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSEDA). The data were imported into the PSAW 18 software program. ANOVA were run on the 23 scales found on the Advanced Questionnaire. ANCOVA were completed between the DIP and Non-DIP districts, while controlling for student enrollment, free and reduced lunch count, and community type. The level of significance for all statistical tests were set at $a = .05$.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Educational organizations strive to identify the necessary components for successful schools. Educational leaders are challenged to sustain excellence by implementing these crucial components leading to high student learning outcomes (Reeves, 2009). The development of educational theories and the accompanying reform efforts have continued through the years (Brookover et al., 1980). Due in large part to the increased scrutiny of public education, many would argue accountability of student achievement has developed into a massive and ever-evolving effort (Marzano, 2003).

The profound impact of the perceptions of public education has created a frenzy in both political and educational arenas (Elmore, 1980). The state of Missouri, along with the other 49 states, has created an accountability system that has been approved by the federal government and has allowed the state autonomy in deciding which school districts are or are not successful (DESE, 2009). The accreditation of the school districts involves the stringent review of both performance scores on state mandated tests and the evaluation of the Advanced Questionnaire disseminated among specific audiences in both the school community and the community at large.

Study Design

The purposes of this study were to identify those educational characteristics consistently associated with school districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designations in the state

of Missouri for at least four consecutive years, including 2009, and compare these characteristics with districts that did not meet Distinction in Performance at all or with the same frequency. Those districts receiving Distinction in Performance four consecutive years, including 2009, will be referred to as DIP Districts and those not receiving Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years, including 2009, will be referred to as Non-DIP Districts. To identify those characteristics and develop a deeper understanding of their importance, selected characteristics were tested for differences between school districts that meet Distinction in Performance and those that do not meet Distinction in Performance. Districts designated with "Distinction in Performance" were compared with districts not receiving "Distinction in Performance" scores while controlling for free and reduced lunch count, student enrollment, and community type. The characteristics studied in this quantitative research were the perceptions of teachers throughout the districts on factors commonly associated with school district quality.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of districts with "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and how do they compare to districts not receiving "Distinction in Performance" designation over the same four consecutive years?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers as reported by responses to the Advanced Questionnaire in districts with "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and how do they compare to districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation over the same four consecutive years?

The first research question was addressed with descriptive data, and the second research question was addressed through hypotheses for tests of differences, using analysis of variance and analysis of covariance.

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant difference between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results for each of the twenty-three scales on the Advanced Questionnaire. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster, (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster.

$H_{02:}$ There is no significant difference between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results for each of the twenty-three scales on the Advanced Questionnaire while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster, (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster.

Descriptive Findings

Demographic Data

In the 2009-2010 school year 336 school districts had completed the fourth cycle of MSIP. Three small school districts had fewer than five responses in the faculty questionnaire. These three school districts were removed from the data set. The remaining 333 school districts provided usable data for inclusion in this study. An analysis of the state accreditation designation for the past four years identified 114 school districts that had received the Distinction in Performance award for four consecutive years, including the 2008-2009 school year. The remaining 219 school districts had not received the Distinction in Performance award for at least four consecutive years, including the 2008-2009 year.

Advanced questionnaire data in the area of faculty perceptions were obtained for all the Missouri school districts. This information, provided through the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSEDA), was disaggregated into scales scores and reflected twenty-three commonly accepted critical educational components, as determined by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). As each district completes the state accreditation process, all faculty members of the respective school district have the opportunity to respond to a survey of 104 questions (Appendix A). This information is submitted to Missouri's DESE, compiled into specific tiers of information, and returned to the districts for further review.

In Table 2, descriptive data for the 23 study scales are provided. The information is sorted by schools receiving the Distinction in Performance designation for four consecutive years, including 2008-2009 (abbreviated as DIP schools), and schools not receiving the

Distinction in Performance designation for four consecutive years, including the 2008-2009 school year (abbreviated as Non-DIP schools).

Table 2

Distinction in Performance (DIP) Schools and Non-DIP Schools' Demographic Data

Scale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Classroom Management				
DIP	114	4.3960	.17284	.01619
Non-DIP	219	4.3184	.18209	.01230
Total	333	4.3449	.18248	.01000
Student Learning Goals				
DIP	114	3.8918	.19598	.01836
Non-DIP	219	3.8943	.19694	.01331
Total	333	3.8935	.19632	.01076
Instructional Strategies				
DIP	114	3.9198	.15794	.0141
Non-DIP	219	3.9127	.15125	.01022
Total	333	3.9151	.15337	.00840
Guaranteed, Viable Curriculum				
DIP	114	4.0762	.23535	.02204
Non-DIP	219	4.0285	.23315	.01575
Total	333	4.0448	.23465	.01286
Efficacy Expectations				
DIP	114	4.4024	.19441	.01821

Non-DIP	219	4.3160	.18200	.01230
Total	333	4.3456	.19053	.01044
Differentiated Instruction				
DIP	114	4.1789	.18786	.01760
Non-DIP	219	4.1900	.17211	.01163
Total	333	4.1862	.17745	.00972
Career Preparation				
DIP	114	4.0910	.18713	.01753
Non-DIP	219	4.0597	.18919	.01278
Total	333	4.0704	.18879	.01035
Library Media Services				
DIP	114	4.1304	.29853	.02796
Non-DIP	219	4.0487	.30811	.02082
Total	333	4.0767	.30688	.01682
Special Education Services				
DIP	114	4.0482	.29703	.02782
Non-DIP	219	3.9680	.27946	.01888
Total	333	3.9955	.28768	.01576
Collegiality & Professionalism				
DIP	114	4.1413	.22165	.02076
Non-DIP	219	4.0386	.24481	.01654
Total	333	4.0738	.24178	.01325

Equity Issues				
DIP	114	4.2335	.24393	.02285
Non-DIP	219	4.1101	.28906	.01953
Total	333	4.1523	.28028	.01536
Valuing Diversity				
DIP	114	4.0815	.23212	.02174
Non-DIP	219	4.0286	.22415	.01515
Total	333	4.0467	.22795	.01249
Teacher Commitment				
DIP	114	4.3889	.17520	.01642
Non-DIP	219	4.3437	.18455	.01247
Total	333	4.3592	.18244	.01000
Communication Between School and Parents				
DIP	114	4.3746	.18433	.01726
Non-DIP	219	4.2712	.20343	.01375
Total	333	4.3066	.20285	.01112
Parental Involvement				
DIP	114	4.2530	.23431	.02195
Non-DIP	219	4.1549	.22187	.01499
Total	333	4.1885	.23061	.01264
Community Capital				
DIP	114	4.2282	.23519	.02203
Non-DIP	219	3.9902	.29074	.01965

Total	333	4.0717	.29515	.01617
Leadership				
DIP	114	4.2632	.22653	.02122
Non-DIP	219	4.1740	.24609	.01663
Total	333	4.2045	.24296	.01331
School Climate				
DIP	114	4.3388	.20113	.01884
Non-DIP	219	4.2449	.21486	.01452
Total	333	4.2771	.21464	.01176
Instructional Leadership				
DIP	114	4.2988	.25618	.02399
Non-DIP	219	4.1700	.25977	.01755
Total	333	4.2141	.26532	.01454
Safe & Orderly Environment				
DIP	114	4.1614	.26682	.02499
Non-DIP	219	4.0496	.27502	.01858
Total	333	4.0879	.27698	.01518
Professional Development				
DIP	114	4.1400	.25400	.02400
Non-DIP	219	4.1000	.23000	.01600
Total	333	4.1100	.23900	.01300
Effective Use of Data				
DIP	114	4.0863	.20944	.01962

Non-DIP	219	4.0861	.19060	.01288
Total	333	4.0862	.19693	.01079
Teacher Responsibility				
DIP	114	4.3244	.26257	.02459
Non-DIP	219	4.1973	.25016	.01690
Total	333	4.2408	.26117	.01431

The means for school districts with Distinction in Performance were higher for 21 of 23 scales. The most noticeable difference across the means were for scales of Collegiality and Professionalism, Equity Issues, Communication Between School and Parents, Community Capital, Instructional Leadership, Safe and Orderly Environment, and Teacher Responsibility. The two scales where the means were higher for the Non-Distinction in Performance schools were the scales of Student Learning Goals and Differentiated Instruction.

Hypotheses Testing

The first hypothesis tested for significant differences between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results for each of the twenty-three scales on the Advanced Questionnaire. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster, (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership

Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster. For the 23 scales, 16 were significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. Therefore, Hypothesis One was rejected. The following describe the tests for each of the clusters.

$H_{01.a}$: There is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the nine in the Learning Experience Cluster. Sub-hypothesis 1.a was rejected. Four of the nine scales comparing the cluster of the Learning Experience were significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scales were Classroom Management, Efficacy Expectation, Library Media Services, and Special Education Services. Test results are provided in Table 3.

Table 3

ANOVA for Learning Experience Cluster

Scale	Sum of Square	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Classroom Management					
Between Groups	.452	1	.452	14.096	.000
Within Groups	10.604	331	.032		
Total	11.056	332			
Student Learning Goals					
Between Groups	.000	1	.000	.012	.913
Within Groups	12.795	331	.039		
Total	12.796	332			

Instructional Strategies					
Between Groups	.004	1	.004	.162	.688
Within Groups	7.806	331	.024		
Total	7.810	332			
Guaranteed, Viable Curriculum					
Between Groups	.171	1	.171	3.123	.078
Within Groups	18.109	331	.055		
Total	18.280	332			
Efficacy Expectations					
Between Groups	.559	1	.559	16.115	.000
Within Groups	11.492	331	.035		
Total	12.052	332			
Differentiated Instruction					
Between Groups	.009	1	.009	.288	.592
Within Groups	10.446	331	.032		
Total	10.455	332			
Career Preparation					
Between Groups	.073	1	.073	2.065	.152
Within Groups	11.760	331	.036		
Total	11.833	332			
Library Media Services					
Between Groups	.501	1	.501	5.386	.021
Within Groups	30.766	331	.093		

Total	31.266	332			
Special Education Services					
Between Groups	.482	1	.482	5.914	.016
Within Groups	26.995	331	.082		
Total	27.477	332			

$H_{01.b}$: There is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the four scales in the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster. Sub-hypothesis 1.b was rejected.

Each of the four scales comparing the cluster of Professionalism and Collaboration was significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scales were Collegiality and Professionalism, Equity Issues, Valuing Diversity, and Teacher Commitment. Analyses are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

ANOVA for Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster

Scale	Sum of Square	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Collegiality and Professionalism					
Between Groups	.791	1	.800	20.601	.000
Within Groups	18.617	331	.039		
Total	19.408	332			
Equity Issues					
Between Groups	1.142	1	1.142	15.157	.000

Within Groups	24.938	331	.075		
Total	26.080	332			
Valuing Diversity					
Between Groups	.210	1	.210	4.076	.000
Within Groups	17.042	331	.051		
Total	17.252	332			
Teacher Commitment					
Between Groups	.153	1	.153	4.653	.032
Within Groups	10.897	331	.033		
Total	11.050	332			

$H_{01.c}$: There is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the three scales in the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster. Sub-hypothesis 1.c was rejected.

Each of the three scales comparing the cluster of Communication and Parental Involvement was significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scales were Communication between School and Parents, Parental Involvement, and Community Capital. Analyses are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

ANOVA for Communication and Parental Involvement

Scale	Sum of Square	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.

Communication Between School and Parents					
Between Groups	.800	1	.800	20.601	.000
Within Groups	12.861	331	.039		
Total	13.661	332			
Parental Involvement					
Between Groups	.721	1	.721	14.101	.000
Within Groups	26.935	331	.051		
Total	17.657	332			
Community Capital					
Between Groups	4.244	1	4.244	56.928	.000
Within Groups	24.678	331	.075		
Total	28.922	332			

Note. .000 significance levels are actually <.001.

$H_{01.d}$: There is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the four scales in the Leadership Responsibility Cluster. Sub-hypothesis 1.d was rejected.

Each of the four scales comparing the cluster of Leadership Responsibilities was significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scales were Leadership, School Climate, Instructional Leadership, and Safe and Orderly Environment. Analyses are provided in Table 6.

Table 6

ANOVA for Leadership Responsibilities

Scale	Sum of Square	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Leadership					
Between Groups	.596	1	.596	10.388	.000
Within Groups	19.001	331	.057		
Total	19.597	332			
School Climate					
Between Groups	.660	1	.660	4.653	.032
Within Groups	14.635	331	.044		
Total	15.295	332			
Instructional Leadership					
Between Groups	1.243	1	1.243	18.597	.000
Within Groups	22.127	331	.067		
Total	23.370	332			
Safe and Orderly Environment					
Between Groups	.937	1	.937	12.636	.000
Within Groups	24.534	331	.074		
Total	25.470	332			

$H_{01.e}$: There is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance"

designation when analyzing the three scales in the Professional Growth Cluster. Sub-hypothesis 1.e was rejected.

Teacher Responsibility was the only scale in the cluster of Professional Growth that was significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. Results are provided in Table 7.

Table 7

ANOVA for Professional Growth Cluster

Scale	Sum of Square	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Professional Development					
Between Groups	.118	1	.118	2.074	.151
Within Groups	18.859	331	.057		
Total	18.977	332			
Effective Use of Data					
Between Groups	.000	1	.000	.000	.993
Within Groups	12.876	331	.039		
Total	12.876	332			
Teacher Responsibility					
Between Groups	1.212	1	1.212	18.712	.000
Within Groups	21.433	331	.065		
Total	22.645	332			

In an attempt to better understand the differences in Distinction in Performance across the schools in this study, the schools were sorted by Distinction in Performance for four consecutive

years, including 2009, Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, and no Distinction in Performance pattern. The Means for the groups are presented in Table 8. An interesting pattern of similarities among districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation for four consecutive years, including 2009, and the districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation two-three years, including 2009, emerged. The means for school districts with DIP for 4 consecutive years, including 2009, were higher for 16 of the 23 scales. The districts with no DIP pattern were lowest for 20 of the 23 scales. To better understand the statistical differences, ANOVA with post-hoc analyses were completed.

Table 8

Scale Means Organized by Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years, including 2009; Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009; Distinction in Performance, 2009 only; and no Distinction in Performance pattern.

Scale	DIP 4 yrs. Including 2009	DIP 2 – 3 yrs.	DIP 2009 only	No DIP Pattern
Learning Experience				
Classroom Management	4.3960	4.3700	4.3394	4.3449
Student Learning Goals	3.8918	3.9141	3.8670	3.8923
Instructional Strategies	3.9198	3.9244	3.9179	3.9059
Guaranteed Curriculum	4.3960	4.3700	4.3394	4.2889
Efficacy Expectations	4.4024	4.3724	4.3397	4.2836
Differentiated Instruction	4.1789	4.1873	4.2218	4.1829
Career Preparation	4.0910	4.1286	4.0667	4.0258
Library Media Services	4.1304	4.1485	4.0730	3.9961

Special Education Services	4.0482	4.0042	4.0315	3.9347
Professionalism & Collaboration				
Collegiality & Professionalism	4.1413	4.1103	4.0473	4.0030
Equity Issues	4.2335	4.1792	4.1424	4.0696
Valuing Diversity	4.0815	4.0805	4.0673	3.9944
Teacher Commitment	4.3889	4.3839	4.3597	4.3209
Communication & Parental Involvement				
Communication With Parents	4.3746	4.3290	4.3255	4.2303
Parental Involvement	4.2530	4.2103	4.2112	4.1145
Community Capital	4.2282	4.1061	4.0818	3.9126
Leadership Responsibilities				
Leadership	4.2632	4.2517	4.1609	4.1413
School Climate	4.3388	4.3063	4.2942	4.2036
Instructional Leadership	4.2988	4.2480	4.1864	4.1295
Safe and Orderly Environment	4.1614	4.1271	4.0939	4.0879
Professional Growth				
Professional Development	4.1400	4.1400	4.1400	4.0700
Effective Use of Data	4.0863	4.1092	4.1218	4.0661
Teacher Responsibility	4.3244	4.2763	4.2255	4.1532

ANOVA tests were computed across the 23 scales. The levels of significance for the tests of differences across the four groups and the post-hoc findings for the scales that were significant are reported in Tables 9 through 13. The analyses are grouped by the five clusters previously described.

Table 9

ANOVA Test of Differences for the Learning Experience Cluster

Scale	*F*	*F sig.*	Tukey HSD		Sig.
Classroom Management	7.796	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.020
Efficacy Expectations	8.837	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.013
Library	5.369	.001	1	4	.003
			2	4	.008
Special Education	3.431	.017	1	4	.012

Note. 1=Districts with Distinction in Performance four consecutive years, including 2009, 2=Districts with Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, 3=Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, 4=No Distinction in Performance pattern.

For the Learning Experience Cluster, groups one and two were consistently significantly higher than group four. Group three was not significantly different from the other groups on any scales. Groups one and two were also not different from each other and, in fact, quite similar with their pattern of significant difference from group four. The only exception found in this pattern was in the Special Education scale.

Table 10

ANOVA Test of Differences for the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster

Scale	*F*	*F sig.*	Tukey HSD		Sig.
Collegiality and Professionalism	7.604	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.021
Equity Issues	7.484	.000	1	4	.000

Valuing Diversity	3.724	.012	1	4	.015
Teacher Commitment	3.299	.021	1	4	.020

Note. 1=Districts with Distinction in Performance four consecutive years, including 2009, 2=Districts with Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, 3=Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, 4=No Distinction in Performance pattern.

The post-hoc tests for the Professionalism and Collegiality Cluster are presented in Table 10. Group one was consistently significantly higher than group four. Groups two and three were not significantly different from the other groups on any scales, with the exception of the Collegiality and Professionalism scale for group two being different from group four. Groups one and two were also not different from each other.

Table 11

ANOVA Test of Differences for the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster

Scale Items	*F*	*F sig.*	Tukey HSD		Sig.
Communication Between School and Parents	11.601	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.007
Parental Involvement	8.103	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.034
Community Capital	2.026	.000	1	2	.021
			1	3	.027
			1	4	.000
			2	4	.000
			3	4	.006

Note. 1=Districts with Distinction in Performance four consecutive years, including 2009, 2=Districts with Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, 3=Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, 4=No Distinction in Performance pattern.

The post-hoc tests for the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster are presented in Table 11. Groups one and two were consistently significantly higher than group four in the scales of Communication Between School and Parents and Parental Involvement. Group three was not significantly different from the other groups on those two respective scales. Groups one, two, and three showed significant differences from group four in the Community Capital scale. This was an exception to the traditional pattern found in the previous two clusters.

Table 12

ANOVA Test of Differences for the Leadership Responsibilities Cluster

Scale	*F*	*F sig.*	Tukey HSD		Sig.
Leadership	6.486	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.018
School Climate	9.161	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.010
Instructional Leadership	9.255	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.019
Safe Environment	7.558	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.018

Note. 1=Districts with Distinction in Performance four consecutive years, including 2009, 2=Districts with Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, 3=Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, 4=No Distinction in Performance pattern.

For the Leadership Responsibility cluster, groups one and two were consistently significantly higher than group four. Group three was not significantly different from the other groups on any scales. Groups one and two were also not different from each other and, in fact, quite similar with their pattern of significant difference from group four.

Table 13

ANOVA Test of Differences for the Professional Growth Cluster

Scale	*F*	*F sig.*	Tukey HSD		Sig.
Teacher Responsibility	9.770	.000	1	4	.000
			2	4	.011

Note. 1=Districts with Distinction in Performance four consecutive years, including 2009, 2=Districts with Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, 3=Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, 4=No Distinction in Performance pattern.

For the Professional Growth Cluster, only the scale of Teacher Responsibility was significantly different. Groups one and two were significantly higher than group four. Group three was not significantly different from the other groups on any scales. Groups one and two were also not different from each other.

Sixteen of the twenty-three scales were significantly different. For each of those 16 scales, the teachers' perceptions in districts with DIP four consecutive years, including 2009, were significantly different than the perception of teachers in districts that did not receive DIP on a consistent basis (Tables 9 through 13). Significant differences were also found for groups two

and four in 12 of the 16 scales. Teachers' perceptions in schools with DIP for 2 -3 years were significantly higher than perceptions of teachers with no DIP pattern.

Of the 16 scales, 15 were not significantly different for groups one and two. The exception was Community Capital. In fact, Community Capital was unique in multiple ways, with group one also different from group three and group three also different from group four.

Clearly, group four (districts without a consistent pattern of DIP) differ from those districts with DIP for four years, including 2009, and differ from those districts with 2-3 years of DIP. Also, groups one and two were consistently not significantly different. In essence, group one and two were consistently different from group four.

Hypothesis Two

To better understand the relationship between the DIP and Non-DIP districts and the twenty-three scales, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) tests were completed. The results of these tests are reported in Tables 14 through 18. Of the 23 clusters, 17 were significantly different when controlling for free and reduced lunch, district student enrollment, and community type. The percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch and the districts' student enrollment were entered into the equation as continuous data. Four groups of community type were identified: (1) urban, (2) suburban, (3) small city and (4) small town/rural. These discrete characteristics were also entered into the equation as covariates. The results of these analyses were generally similar but not identical to the ANOVA test. Of the 23 clusters, 14 were significantly different in the ANOVA tests and 17 were significantly different for the ANCOVA tests. The results of the ANCOVA tests are reported in Tables 14 through 18.

The second hypothesis tested for significant differences between the results of the scale scores of the Advanced Questionnaire and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster, (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster. An interesting pattern of similarities among the districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation for four consecutive years, including 2009, and the districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation two-three years, including 2009, emerged. Tables 14 through 18 describe the tests for each of the clusters.

$H_{02.a}$: There is no significant difference between the results of the nine scales' scores of the Learning Experience Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. Sub-hypothesis 2.b was rejected. Five of the nine scales in the Learning Experience Cluster were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA tests. Three of the remaining four scales were significantly different at the .10 level.

Table 14

ANCOVA Test of Differences for (1) Districts with Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years, including 2009, (2) Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, (3) Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, and (4) No Distinction in Performance pattern for the Learning Experience Cluster

Scale	Mean Square	*F*	*F Sig.*
Classroom Management	.005	1.711	.057
Student Learning Goals	.062	1.638	.074

Instructional Strategies	.052	2.335	.006
Guaranteed Curriculum	.135	2.611	.002
Efficacy Expectations	.094	2.763	.001
Differentiated Instruction	.048	1.569	.092
Career Preparation	.061	1.774	.046
Library Media Services	.141	1.524	.107
Special Education Services	.229	2.981	.000

$H_{02.b}$: There is no significant difference between the results of the four scales' scores of the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. Sub-hypothesis 2.c was rejected. All four of the scales comparing the cluster of Professionalism and Collaboration were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Table 15

ANCOVA Test of Differences for (1) Districts with Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years, including 2009, (2) Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, (3) Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, and (4) No Distinction in Performance pattern for the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster

Scale	Mean Square	*F*	*F Sig.*
Collegiality and Professionalism	.104	1.845	.036
Equity Issues	.136	1.782	.045
Valuing Diversity	.114	2.303	.006
Teacher Commitment	.104	3.410	.000

$H_{02.c}$: There is no significant difference between the results of the three

scales' scores of the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. Sub-hypothesis 2.d was rejected. All three of the scales comparing the cluster of Communication and Parental Involvement were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Table 16

ANCOVA Test of Differences for (1) Districts with Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years, including 2009, (2) Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, (3) Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, and (4) No Distinction in Performance pattern for the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster

Scale	Mean Square	*F*	*F Sig.*
Communication Between School and Parents	.124	3.296	.000
Parental Involvement	.111	2.188	.010
Community Capital	.488	6.900	.000

$H_{02.d}$: There is no significant difference between the results of the four scales' scores of the Leadership Responsibility Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. Sub-hypothesis 2.e was rejected. Three of the four scales comparing the cluster of Leadership Responsibilities were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Table 17

ANCOVA Test of Differences for (1) Districts with Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years, including 2009, (2) Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, (3) Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, and (4) No Distinction in Performance pattern for the Leadership Responsibilities Cluster

Scale	Mean Square	*F*	*F Sig.*

Leadership	.082	1.407	.154
School Climate	.140	3.314	.000
Instructional Leadership	.156	2.336	.006
Safe and Orderly Environment	.238	3.391	.000

$H_{02.e}$: There is no significant difference between the results of the three scales' scores of the Professional Growth Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. This hypothesis was rejected. Two of the three of the scales comparing the cluster of Professional Growth were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Table 18

ANCOVA Test of Differences for Districts with (1) Distinction in Performance for four consecutive years, including 2009, (2) Distinction in Performance two-three years, including 2009, (3) Distinction in Performance, 2009 only, and (4) No Distinction in Performance pattern for the Professional Growth Cluster

Scale	Mean Square	*F*	*F Sig.*
Professional Development	.199	3.871	.000
Effective Use of Data	.054	1.428	.145
Teacher Responsibility	.151	2.335	.006

$H_{02.e}$: There is no significant difference between the results of the three scales' scores of the Professional Growth Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. This hypothesis was rejected. Two of the three of the scales comparing the cluster of Professional Growth were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Summary

School districts in the state of Missouri must fulfill particular state and federal mandates aligned with district accreditation. Districts, through this accreditation process, are primarily responsible for student achievement scores. The accreditation process is structured to include a three-tiered designation configuration. These tiers of accreditation are titled "unaccredited", "provisionally accredited", and "accredited".

One component of the accreditation process is the district's responsibility to complete the "Advanced Questionnaire." The survey is disseminated to staff, parents, students and board members in an attempt to collect additional pieces of information to allow a better picture of the school district's performance. After the results from the Advanced Questionnaire (AQ) are collected and tabulated, specific results are provided to the district leadership, along with specific concerns or strengths of the district. While there have been commonalities found in analyzing each school district's AQ results, there was ample reason to study individual school district's practices leading to high accreditation designation. Twenty-three different scales are used on the Advanced Questionnaire as developed by DESE. The development of these scales is supported through specific educational research and has been revised to reflect Marzano's (2003) research findings of instructional effectiveness (DESE, 2010). To narrow the literature review, the research was compartmentalized into five categories. The categories are a logical organization of the twenty-three scales. They are the Learning Experience, Professionalism and Collaboration, Communication and Parental involvement, Leadership Responsibilities, and Professional Growth.

This quantitative research was intended to identify common elements, through the results of the AQ and the accreditation designation of the school districts, which contributed to the success

and effectiveness of the school. This research project identified the unique educational characteristics consistently found in school districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation. The means for school districts with "Distinction in Performance" are significantly different.

The purpose of this study was to compare school districts that consistently have high student performance to other school districts with similar enrollment, socio-economic status, and community types that do not have consistently high performance and analyze the subtleties of these differences.

The first hypothesis tested for significant differences between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results for each of the twenty-three scales on the Advanced Questionnaire. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster, (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster.

For the 23 scales, 16 were significantly different in the ANOVA test. For each of the 16 scales, the teachers' perceptions in districts with DIP four consecutive years, including 2009, were significantly different than the perception of teachers in districts that did not receive DIP on a consistent basis. Significant differences were also found for groups two and four in 12 of the 16 scales. Teachers' perceptions in schools with DIP for 2 -3 years were significantly higher than perceptions of teachers with no DIP pattern. Of the 16 scales, 15 were not significantly different for groups one and two.

Clearly, group four (districts without a consistent pattern of DIP) differs from those districts with DIP for four years, including 2009, and with districts with 2-3 years of DIP. Also, groups one and two were consistently not significantly different. In essence, groups one and two were consistently different from group four.

ANCOVA tests were completed to better understand the relationships between DIP and Non-DIP districts when controlling for free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type on the twenty-three scales identified on the Advanced Questionnaire. Seventeen of the twenty-three scale tests were significant. The four tests that were significant for the ANCOVA analyses, but not significant for the ANOVA analyses were Instructional Strategies, Guaranteed Curriculum, Career Preparation and Professional Development. These differences between the ANOVA and ANCOVA findings bring focus to the importance of instructional strategies, guaranteed curriculum, career preparation, and professional development. Teachers across the school districts in this study viewed these scales as important regardless of the demographic characteristics of the district.

The themes, findings, and conclusions from this study are detailed in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 also includes limitations of the study and further research on the unique educational characteristics found in school districts consistently achieving success, as defined by the accreditation process.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Educational leaders continually strive to improve the organizations which they lead. Decades of research have revealed numerous components, initiatives, programs, and theories impacting instructional improvement (Donaldson, 2008; Marzano, 2003). In addition to this research, political forces influence the role of public education. This study analyzed selected essential components commonly associated with school districts that sustain high performance.

The state of Missouri, along with all states, currently distinguishes school districts' performances relative to academic performance. The study sought to identify common components found in school districts in the state of Missouri consistently receiving the Distinction in Performance award. A study of what separates the highest quality school districts from other districts enhances the understanding of how essential components are embedded into the structure of a school organization leading to sustained school success.

Study Design

This study identified educational characteristics consistently associated with school districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designations in the state of Missouri. Twenty-three different scales are used on the Advanced Questionnaire as developed by DESE. To narrow the literature review, the research was compartmentalized into five categories. The categories are a logical organization of the twenty-three scales. They are the Learning Experience, Professionalism and Collaboration, Communication and Parental Involvement, Leadership Responsibilities, and Professional Growth. The school districts completing the fourth cycle of the

accreditation process were selected for this research project. To identify the characteristics significantly impacting schools achieving the Distinction in Performance designation and develop a deeper understanding of their importance in academic success, selected characteristics were tested for differences between school districts that meet Distinction in Performance (DIP) and those that do not meet Distinction in Performance (Non-DIP).

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of districts with "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and districts not receiving "Distinction in Performance" designation over the same four consecutive years?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers as reported by responses to the Advanced Questionnaire in districts with "Distinction in Performance" designation over four consecutive years and how do they compare to districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation over the same four consecutive years?

The first research question was addressed with descriptive data, and the second research question was addressed through hypotheses for tests of differences, using analysis of variance and analysis of covariance. This study identified characteristics present in school districts that consistently received the "Distinction in Performance" designation.

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant difference between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results of the Advanced Questionnaire. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster.

$H_{02:}$ There is no significant difference between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results of the Advanced Questionnaire while controlling for demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster.

Summary of Descriptive Findings

The descriptive results and hypothesis testing are presented in this section. A discussion of the findings follows. In the 2008-2009 school year, 336 school districts had completed the fourth cycle of MSIP. Three small school districts had fewer than five responses in the faculty questionnaire. These three school districts were removed from the data set. The remaining 333 school districts provided usable date for inclusion in this study. An analysis of the

state accreditation designation for the past four years identified 104 school districts that had received the Distinction in Performance award for four consecutive years, including the 2008-2009 school year. The remaining 219 school districts had not received the Distinction in Performance award for at least four consecutive years, including the 2008-2009 year.

Advanced questionnaire data in the area of faculty perceptions were obtained for all the Missouri school districts. This information, provided through the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSEDA), was disaggregated into scales scores and reflected twenty-three commonly accepted critical educational components, as determined by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). As each district completes the state accreditation process, all faculty members of the respective school district have the opportunity to respond to a survey of 104 questions (Appendix A). This information is submitted to Missouri's DESE, compiled into specific tiers of information, and returned to the districts for further review. Descriptive data for the twenty-three scale scores are sorted by districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation for four consecutive years, including 2008-2009, and districts not receiving the Distinction in Performance designation for four consecutive years, including the 2008-2009 school year. ANOVA tests for the twenty-three scales were organized in the five clusters of the Learning Experience, Professionalism and Collaboration, Communication and Parent Involvement, Leadership Responsibilities, and Professional Growth. Each of the twenty-three scales, along with individual each cluster, were tested for differences. A description of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) hypotheses are presented in Table 21.

Table 21

ANOVA/ANCOVA Analyses

	ANOVA Hypothesis Rejected:	*ANCOVA* Hypothesis
Rejected:		
Cluster: Learning Experience	Yes	Yes
Scales:		
Classroom Management	Yes	No
Student Learning Goals	No	No
Instructional Strategies	No	Yes
Guaranteed Curriculum	No	Yes
Efficacy Expectations	Yes	Yes
Differentiated Instruction	No	No
Career Preparation	No	Yes
Library Media Services	Yes	No
Special Education Services	Yes	Yes
Cluster: Professionalism & Collaboration	Yes	Yes
Scales:		
Collegiality & Professionalism	Yes	Yes
Equity Issues	Yes	Yes
Valuing Diversity	Yes	Yes
Teacher Commitment	Yes	Yes
Cluster: Communication/Parental Involvement	Yes	Yes
Scales:		
Communication With Parents	Yes	Yes
Parental Involvement	Yes	Yes
Community Capital	Yes	Yes
Cluster: Leadership Responsibilities	Yes	Yes
Scales:		
Leadership	Yes	No
School Climate	Yes	Yes
Instructional Leadership	Yes	Yes
Safe and Orderly Environment	Yes	Yes
Cluster: Professional Growth	Yes	Yes
Scales:		

Professional Development	No	Yes
Effective Use of Data	No	No
Teacher Responsibility	Yes	Yes
Total Differences	16	17

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis one, there is no significant difference between districts that consistently receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts that do not receive the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the results of the Advanced Questionnaire. This hypothesis was rejected. The means for school districts with Distinction in Performance are higher for 21 of 23 scales. The most noticeable difference across the means were for scales of Collegiality and Professionalism, Equity Issues, Communication With Parents, Community Capital, Instructional Leadership, Safe and Orderly Environment, and Teacher Responsibility. The two scales where the means were high for the Non-Distinction in Performance schools were the scales of Student Learning Goals, and Differentiated Instruction.

Sub-hypothesis 1.a, there is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the nine scales in the Learning Experience Cluster. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. Four of the nine scales comparing the cluster of the Learning Experience were significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scales were Classroom Management, Efficacy Expectation, Library Media Services, and Special Education Services.

Sub-hypothesis 1.b, there is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the four scales in the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. All four of the scales comparing the cluster of Professionalism and Collaboration were significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scales were Collegiality and Professionalism, Equity Issues, Valuing Diversity, and Teacher Commitment.

Sub-hypothesis 1.c, there is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the three scales in the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. All three of the scales comparing the cluster of Communication and Parental Involvement were significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scales were Communication with Parents, Parental Involvement, and Community Capital.

Sub-hypothesis 1.d, there is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the four scales in the Leadership Responsibility Cluster. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. All four of the scales comparing the cluster of Leadership Responsibilities were significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The

significantly different scales were Leadership, School Climate, Instructional Leadership, and Safe and Orderly Environment.

Sub-hypothesis 1.e, there is no significant difference between districts receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation and districts not receiving the "Distinction in Performance" designation when analyzing the three scales in the Professional Growth Cluster. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. One of the scales comparing the cluster of Professional Growth was significantly different in the ANOVA test prior to controlling for the variables of free and reduced lunch, student enrollment, and community type. The significantly different scale was Teacher Responsibility.

Hypothesis two, there is no significant difference between the results of the scale scores of the Advanced Questionnaire and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. This hypothesis was rejected. An interesting pattern of similarities among the districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation for four consecutive years, including 2009, and the districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation two-three years, including 2009, emerged. The second hypothesis tested for significant differences between the results of the scale scores of the Advanced Questionnaire and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. The results of these tests are reported by each of the following clusters (a) the Learning Experience Cluster, (b) the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, (c) the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, (d) the Leadership Responsibility Cluster, and (e) the Professional Growth Cluster. An interesting pattern of similarities among the districts receiving the Distinction in

Performance designation for four consecutive years, including 2009, and the districts receiving the Distinction in Performance designation two-three years, including 2009, emerged.

Sub-hypothesis 2.a, there is no significant difference between the results of the nine scales' scores of the Learning Experience Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. Five of the nine scales comparing the cluster of the Learning Experience were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test. Three of the remaining four scales were significantly different at the .10 level.

Sub-hypothesis 2.b, there is no significant difference between the results of the four scales' scores of the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. All four of the scales comparing the cluster of Professionalism and Collaboration were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Sub-hypothesis 2.c, there is no significant difference between the results of the three scales' scores of the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. All three of the scales comparing the cluster of Communication and Parental Involvement were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Sub-hypothesis 2.d, there is no significant difference between the results of the four scales' scores of the Leadership Responsibilities Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and

community type. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. Three of the four scales comparing the cluster of Leadership Responsibilities were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

Sub-hypothesis 2.e, there is no significant difference between the results of the three scales' scores of the Professional Growth Cluster and the district performance rating, when controlling for the demographics of student enrollment, socio-economic status, and community type. This sub-hypothesis was rejected. Two of the three scales comparing the cluster of Professional Growth were significantly different at the .05 level in the ANCOVA test.

The hypotheses tested throughout this study necessitated numerous statistical analyses. The reader is reminded that due to the numerous analyses, the potential of a Type I error is present. That error is, however, only a potential issue and given the collective and consistent nature of the findings in this study, the researcher does not believe the potential provides an undue concern about the validity of the findings.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reflect quantitative analyses. The statistical treatments were ANOVA and ANCOVA. Both treatments revealed interesting outcomes and patterns relating to the twenty-three scales used in the Advanced Questionnaire and the districts consistently receiving the Distinction in Performance designation.

Learning Experience

Quantitative analyses of DIP and Non-DIP Schools' demographic data disclosed higher means in the DIP schools in 21 of the 23 scales. In the Learning Experience cluster, these scales included Classroom Management, Efficacy Expectations, Library Media Services, and Special

Education Services. Teachers' perceptions in DIP districts clearly identify these four areas as impacting student achievement. The positive relationship between solid classroom management and academic scores is well established in the literature (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). An affirmative learning environment impacts both teachers' and students' feelings of efficacy (2010). Understanding the pressures NCLB has placed on schools to produce increased academic achievement across all sub-groups supports the teachers' perceptions of quality special education programs.

Furthermore, three of the four tests that were significant for the ANCOVA analyses, but not significant for the ANOVA analyses, were found in the Learning Experience Cluster. These tests include Instructional Strategies, Guaranteed Curriculum, and Career Preparation. This ANCOVA finding brings focus to the importance of instructional strategies, guaranteed curriculum, and career preparation. Teachers across the school districts in this study view these scales as important, regardless of the demographic characteristics of the district.

Educators recognize the importance of effective instructional strategies and guaranteed curriculum. The two components should align with clearly written standards. Common problems when implementing instructional strategies and guaranteed curriculum, as identified by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), can be summarized into three reoccurring issues. The overwhelming number of objectives most classroom teachers are asked to present often cannot be effectively mastered by the students in the amount of time provided. Secondly, objectives are often too broad and vaguely worded for consistent interpretation. Likewise, other objectives are so specific that educators are accused of teaching to the test, rather than developing the application of learning to real life. Finally, some objectives are so nebulous that the teaching and the assessment of the objectives will be varied based upon the teachers' understanding of the

expectation. Clear, consistent, and coherent educational goals will be impossible to achieve (Brandt, 1998; Marzano, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Teachers' perceptions of the importance of instructional strategies and guaranteed curriculum provide insight into the findings of this study. Regardless of the district's characteristics, teachers clearly recognize the influence instructional strategies and guaranteed curriculum have on student achievement. This study supports existing research linking the relationship of instructional strategies and guaranteed curriculum to academic achievement.

Career Preparation has been described as a core variable upon which all curriculum should be built (Murphy, 2006). With the global economy intensifying the accountability pressure, career preparation is central and vital topic among educators (Reeves, 2009). The interdependency of career preparation on solid curriculum is evidenced in the findings of this study. Teachers recognize the connection of the mastery of complex tasks valid only if this mastery applies outside the classroom walls. There is a need for differentiated teaching in order to present a broader application model to students, allowing for a successful transition into the job market (Good & Brophy, 2008). In addition to student preparation, educators must also discuss extending the learning environment to include an increased use of technology, a blending of differing strategies for student learning, and a varying scope of content and academic goals. Good and Brophy's (2008) research is valuable in interpreting the teachers' perceptions of the importance of career preparation.

Professionalism and Collaboration

In the Professionalism and Collaboration Cluster, all four scales indicated teachers' perceptions of importance in DIP districts. Research supports the increase in teacher learning by opportunities to improve collegiality and deepen teacher commitment (DuFour, DuFour, &

Eaker, 2008). Once again, NCLB has raised the awareness of diversity and equity issues. Epstein (2009) espoused the importance of the individual child, paving the way for a closer look at particular needs of each student. Kruse and Louis (2009) identified the value of building strong school cultures. A sense of belonging, reflected by adults and students alike, was a significant factor in the research findings of strong academic achievement (2009). Espousing the need for educational foundations to be securely in place before any tangible academic gains can be made, Kruse and Louis (2009) encourage educational leaders to recognize the worth of significant relationship-building initiatives in all school districts.

Well-intentioned leaders often fail to see results in the classroom. Reeves (2009) concludes that many teachers have become "disconnected to our instructional leaders" (p.106). Reeves (2009) stresses the importance of a group of educators working toward a unified goal. Educators, through collaborative teams and the effective use of data, develop a focus enhanced by learning communities (DuFour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2008; Farina & Kotch, 2008; Knight, 2007). Increased focus on the role collaboration plays in the education arena challenges educators to allow more time to build trust among staff members, encourages deeper conversations, and ultimately promotes a culture of support throughout the educational organization (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Meyers, 2007).

Communication and Parental Involvement

In the Communication and Parental Involvement Cluster, all three scales pointed to teachers' perceptions of the crucial role of Communication with Parents. Epstien (2009) identified the critical relationship that must develop between school and family. Schools, families and communities have experienced a shift in boundaries, with the line often becoming more fluid (Goldring & Sullivan, 1996). Research has more recently shown how different types

of parental involvement relate to specific student outcomes (Epstien, 2009). Educators must thoughtfully develop plans for which types of involvement is needed to increase student outcomes and achieve specific school goals.

Good communication with parents must begin with effective communication within the learning organization. Muhammad (2009) suggests three common traits necessary for improved communication. These included sharing a common vocabulary, engaging in problem-solving conversation, and believing in the school mission and purpose. Focusing on purposeful communication within the organization impacts the school culture. Defining school purpose and promoting it with staff, parent, and community is vital to shared vision (Lezotte, 1999).

Leadership Responsibilities

Teachers' perceptions of the importance of Leadership, School Climate, Instructional Leadership, and a Safe and Orderly Environment also support the DIP districts. The research by Murphy (2006) details the impact of quality leadership training on academic success. The findings of Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) closely relate to Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach's (1999) research on the changing needs of schools. These needs must be addressed by the instructional leaders of the school district. A focus on learning, marked celebrations on significant milestones, and quality new teacher development begin transforming school culture into a strong learning environment (Muhammad, 2009). The educational leaders have the responsibility to mirror instructional knowledge and inspire the pursuit of advanced learning opportunities.

Effective leadership connects the leader's understanding of her- or himself to student outcomes (Donaldson, 2008). Successfully leading an organization is a fluid process that ensures learning for both students and staff. Leadership has moved from the quick-fix, managerial style

to a more collaborative approach. Recent educational initiatives include professional learning communities, instructional coaches, and collaborative learning teams as catalysts for improving upon relationship building (Buffum et al., 2008; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Knight, 2007; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Meyers, 2007). The role of the leaders includes developing an overarching framework that results in the goals, visions, and school mission becoming collective. The leadership framework is a strategic process that must be blended with district, state, and federal accountability (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

Professional Growth

In the Professional Growth Cluster, two of the three scales identified teachers' perceptions of the importance of professional development and the effective use of data. Good & Brophy (2008) describe the type of instruction needed in a successful classroom. Accurately using data to adjust instruction is what Kohn (1999) challenges all educators to insist upon as our society moves from traditional education to a more comprehensive set of standards. Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner (2000) recognize how school organizations exist to ensure all students learn. Continual professional development is equally important for educators to grow as classroom practices improve.

The fourth test that was significant for the ANCOVA analyses, but not significant for the ANOVA analyses, was the Professional Development scale. This study documented the teachers' perceptions of the importance of professional development, specifically related to student achievement. Recognizing the fact that education is a dynamic professional field with a continuous, expanding knowledge base, Guskey (2000) believes educators new to the system often struggle to learn basic strategies that veteran teachers have developed through years of teaching. Muhammad (2009) describes a professional development experience that includes an

intentional system of development. This structure would allow professional development to be provided incrementally throughout the year, rather than before the school year begins. Suggestions for the professional development topics have evolved through the years to address the needs of both our new teachers and the students. These topics, according to Muhammad, should include not only curriculum and standards but also how to communicate with parents and the importance of taking time for personal interests and development (2009).

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Quantitative analyses revealed significant differences in the means of the scale scores of school districts consistently receiving the Distinction in Performance designation and those school districts that do not receive the Distinction in Performance designation. The results of the Advanced Questionnaire scale scores provided clear evidence that particular components on the questionnaire are believed to have impact on academic learning. Further, school districts consistently receiving the Distinction in Performance designation showed significant difference when controlling for student enrollment, free and reduced lunch, and community type.

The results of the Advanced Questionnaire provided a rich body of data from which the clusters of the Learning Experience, Professionalism and Collaboration, Communication and Parental Involvement, Leadership Responsibility, and Professional Growth emerged. These clusters provided significant commonalities across the themes. School districts consistently receiving the Distinction in Performance designation produced Advanced Questionnaire results articulating specific crucial educational components.

Clearly, teachers' perceptions in DIP schools were distinguished by their approach to Classroom Management, Instructional Strategies, Curriculum, Efficacy Expectations, Career Preparation, Library Media Services, Special Education Services, Collegiality and

Professionalism, Equity Issues, Valuing Diversity, Teacher Commitment, Communication between School and Parents, Parental Involvement, Community Capital, Leadership, School Climate, Instructional Leadership, Safe and Orderly Environment, Professional Development, Effective Use of Data, and Teacher Responsibility.

The study of quality schools has captured the attention of researchers and practitioners around the world. In the pursuit of meeting both state and federal expectations, school districts are challenged with continually improving student achievement. School leaders are asked to create an environment that fosters learning, ensures safety, supports differentiation, and provides for a platform for lifelong learning (Lambert, 2003). Essential components, as organized in the clusters found in the previous chapters, provide guidance to what school districts should embed into the learning environment.

The differences across districts receiving Distinction in Performance and districts not receiving Distinction in Performance were particularly pronounced for the scales of Instructional Strategies, Guaranteed Curriculum, Career Preparation, and Professional Development. This study has documented the components districts consistently receiving "Distinction in Performance", through the teachers' responses, necessary for academic success.

In looking at these findings within the complex picture of school improvement, it is evident that policy makers at both the federal and state level should support these components through consistent recognition of the importance of Instructional Strategies, Guaranteed Curriculum, Career Preparation, and Professional Development. While it appears these four components complement one another, many districts implement these components in isolation. With accountability continuing to be a global expectation, a useful approach to measuring success of these components would include a time frame recognizing the length of the

implementation. Educators are often accused of jumping from one initiative to the next, without allowing any time for full implementation or accurate measure of success. Federal and state mandates demand results on an annual basis. An understanding of the time required for successful and accurate results of an education initiative should be recognized at the state and national level. In addition, funding at state and federal level must be continued for these areas of educational components. Critics who would encourage schools to implement practices contrary to the findings in this study must consider data that provide evidence of the positive relationship of instruction practices, curriculum, career preparation, and professional development with strong, effective school organizations.

According to this study, Instructional Strategies, Guaranteed Curriculum, Career Preparation, and Professional Development are crucial for academic achievement, according to the teachers' perceptions. Policy makers must support the development of an effective evaluation tool to include criteria for the effectiveness of these critical components. These variables require a consistent mechanism of evaluation, with a reasonable timeline for implementation, to allow for valid evaluation.

Evaluating instructional strategies and guaranteed curriculum supports the continual improvement of these to variables (Marzano, 2003). Professional development is more difficult to assess. Often times, professional development is provided in one setting, with no accountability measures in place. Sustained conversations, which include evidence of student achievement growth, is necessary for effective professional development (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). Schools need a clear evaluation process aligned with effective professional development research supported by federal and state accreditation procedures.

The findings of this study are consistent with findings of other research studies, including those by Marzano (2003), DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008), and Kohn (1999). District leaders are challenged to combine elements from research and implement these elements into the school district which they serve. This study supports the necessary components and expands the teachers' perceptions of these key elements by identifying the relationship of the components to the Distinction in Performance designation. Effective leaders listen to their colleagues and constituents and develop effective questioning skills to make appropriate decisions regarding educational initiatives (Donaldson, 2008). Leadership must include gathering support from within the organization before these essential components are initiated (2008). Positive relationships built within the organization are critical for the success of the school district (Lambert, 2003).

This study provided an understanding of the importance of Instructional Strategies, Guaranteed Curriculum, Career Preparation and Professional Development in high achieving school districts. Teacher preparation programs, both in colleges and universities and in mentoring programs found in school districts, need to reflect these two areas of importance. Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner (2000) documented the direct relationship between quality teacher preparation programs and instructional leadership at the classroom level. Providing preparatory activities to departments of educational leadership as a critical element for course study would increase the level of relevance for teachers entering the field of education. According to Murphy (2006), there is an additional need for both teacher and administrator preparation research and application to the instructional programs for these two critical tiers of education.

Furthermore, personnel practices should be examined in the light of the findings of this study. While all school districts in the state of Missouri are required to provide a mentoring program to new teachers, the parameters for those programs are broad. Understanding the essential elements for success in the classroom should be the foundation for the cohorts of new teachers entering public schools on an annual basis (Muhammad, 2009; Murphy, 2006; Reeves, 2009). Continual analysis of the needs of new teachers as the landscape of education shifts is vital in meeting the needs of new teachers (Clark, 1990).

Collins's research revealed the importance of keeping the focus on the integrity and vision of a business to sustain "greatness" (2001). The findings of this study illustrate the significance, as evidenced by the responses of teachers in the state of Missouri, of defining and maintaining the focus of a district. "Good-to-great" transformations of corporation often look like revolutionary events. In essence, the success of the corporation is due to the steady, hard work of the people on the inside (2001). School districts have similar characteristics. The exemplary student outcomes of the school districts studied in this research project are not the result of dramatic initiatives, according to the results of the Advanced Questionnaire. The teachers in these districts believe the success of their district is linked to strong instructional strategies, supported through the curriculum, and enhanced through professional development.

Additional research based upon the findings and procedures of this study is recommended. A comparable study should include a larger population and include school districts outside the state of Missouri. Continued analysis of this form of research might provide a broader perspective about the importance of these and similar factors of difference between districts with longitudinal distinction and districts lacking long-term distinction. School administrators and policy makers should consider the relevance of the findings and researchers

should study changes in policy and the focus of school districts to further determine the value of these scales beyond the analyses of the perspectives of teachers. How do these scales correlate with other known variables of school quality? What are the relationships between these scales and measures of organizational learning and school culture? Are the competencies of the school's leaders linked to the success of the scales? Is the urgency for change linked across a district to the teacher's perception of the 23 scales?

Closing Comments

With decades of research, it is evident educators are on a continual quest for identifying successful educational components (Murphy, 2006). Schools are constantly refining and revising their vision, mission, and purpose (Elmore, 1980). This study attempted to draw upon the teachers' perceptions of what components are perceived as most essential in the challenge for district-level educational excellence.

From early writings by Elmore (1980) to more recent manuscripts by Marzano (2003) and DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008), espoused changes have been numerous. Not all recommendations have proven successful, nor have all been grounded in well-researched theory. In today's context, many changes are driven by federal and state expectations, with school districts required to respond to these mandates in order to receive educational funding.

As professional educators, one of the most difficult tasks is to develop an effective school improvement plan grounded in quality instruction, curriculum, and assessment practice (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) where students can achieve academically, grow socially, and be prepared for future success. District leaders must discern from past and present research what initiatives are best for their students, parents, and constituents. The educational leaders must then have the fortitude and persistence to implement the initiatives through professional development,

curriculum, personnel selection, and careful reflection. Educational leaders must be committed to excellence when many other uncontrollable variables inevitably arise (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000; Lezotte, 1999).

This study analyzed the differences across districts receiving Distinction in Performance and districts not receiving Distinction in Performance. The findings provide insight about what school districts should consider as important areas of focus if they wish to positively impact student academic success. The necessary components of strong instructional strategies, guaranteed and viable curriculum, effective career preparation, and appropriate professional development discussed in this study were not new or revolutionary educational initiatives. Through the eyes of teachers, however, these can be inferred as critical components necessary for successful schools given the criteria for distinction in one Midwestern state. One of the most serious issues public education faces is the blurring of requirements and expectations for individual school organizations (Brown, 2004). Educational leaders, burdened by the continual onslaught of programs, initiatives, and activities touted as best practices, must define the purpose and mission for their organization. As public education faces continual scrutiny, the research from this study distinguishes the factors of instructional strategies, guaranteed curriculum, effective career preparation, and strong professional development as highly important. Such factors must be supported, implemented with rigor and integrity, maintained over time, and protected. Such is part of the recipe to achieve the status of Distinction In Performance for districts across the state of Missouri.

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APPENDIX A: ADVANCED QUESTIONNAIRE

Certificated Faculty Questionnaire

1. Record the type of assignment which best reflects your primary assignment (you may choose more than one):

School Guidance Counselor Classroom Teacher Library Media Specialist

Administrator Special Education Teacher Other

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you, leave it blank.

2. My school collaborates with community agencies to meet the needs of students.

3. There are effective supports in place to assist students who are in jeopardy of academic failure.

4. I emphasize the importance of effort with students.

5. In our school, there is adequate support for classroom teachers to address special education students' IEP goals.

6. There is adequate collaboration between special education staff and classroom teachers in our school.

7. There is adequate professional development for teachers working with special education students in our school.

8. Instructional time available to teachers is protected from all types of interruptions.

9. Our principal used classroom management as part of our evaluation.

10. Clear rules that promote good behavior are enforced in our school.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you leave it blank.

11. Clear rules regarding behavior have been established in my classroom

12. Educators in our school use effective practices to promote positive behavior.

13. Teachers in our school use effective practices to keep all students actively engaged in learning.

14. Educators in our school respond to inappropriate behaviors quickly and effectively.

15. Norms for conduct that foster collegiality and professionalism among professional staff and administrators are clear and routinely followed.

16. Teachers in my school are routinely involved in formulating schoolwide decisions and policies.

17. Teachers are routinely engaged in collaborative problem solving around instructional issues.

18. Effective vehicles are in place for parents and community to communicate with the school.

19. In our school we communicate effectively to parents and the community.

20. Parents are encouraged to discuss their child's educational needs with the school.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you, leave it blank.

21. I routinely analyze disaggregated student data and use it to plan my instruction.

22. An assessment system is used that provides timely feedback on specific knowledge and skills for individual students.

23. My school administers assessments throughout the school year that are used to guide instruction.

24. My school uses assessment data to evaluate and align the curriculum.

25. Emphasis is placed on valuing and respecting differences among students and their families in our school.

26. Student opinions are valued by teachers and administrators.

27. Faculty and staff solicit input from diverse student groups regarding the improvement of our school.

28. I feel comfortable having discussions regarding racial/ethnic issues with my colleagues.

29. Individual student differences are appreciated at our school.

30. Students are provided with opportunities to construct and work on long-term projects.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you, leave it blank.

31. In our school teachers are encouraged to be instructional leaders.

32. My school's principal fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation.

33. My school's principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning.

34. Our principal identifies issues in the school that could potentially become problems.

35. My school's principal systematically engages faculty and staff in discussions about current research on teaching and learning.

36. Our school teaches and reinforces student self-discipline and responsibility.

37. Students who are prone to violence are systematically identified.

38. Our school promotes an environment of mutual respect among students.

39. The content considered essential for all students to learn versus that considered supplemental has been identified and communicated to teachers.

40. My school systematically ensures that teachers address essential content.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you, leave it blank.

41. The amount of essential content that has been identified can be addressed in the instructional time available to teachers.

42. The essential content is organized and sequenced in a way that students have ample opportunities to learn it.

43. Our principal promotes innovation.

44. I have the skills necessary to meet the needs of all learners in my classroom.

45. I believe that I can positively impact student performance.

46. I have received violence prevention training.

47. Our professional development improves student achievement.

48. I have received adequate training in using computers and other technology to support my work with students.

49. The professional development activities I attend are related to my district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

50. I have received professional development on differentiating instruction for learners.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you leave it blank.

51. My school adequately prepares all students for post-secondary education, and/or successful entry into the workforce.

52. Students are held accountable for doing quality work.

53. The mission of this school is clearly defined.

54. All-staff in our school hold high expectations for student learning.

55. There are open channels of communication among student, staff, and administrators.

56. There are avenues for recognizing and rewarding the accomplishments of all students.

57. There are sufficient library media materials to support my program.

58. Career-Technical education is an essential part of the district's program of studies.

59. I feel safe at this school.

60. The library media center materials are current and in good condition.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you, leave it blank.

61. In our community, people tend to trust each other.

62. My professional development has improved the way I teach.

63. My school provides suggestions to parents on ways to assist at home with their child's learning.

64. My school views parents as partners in the educational process.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you leave it blank.

65. My school has created specific strategies to better involve parents in the education of their child.

66. The board has high expectations for student achievement.

67. Students are treated fairly in this school.

68. The community is proud of this school.

69. This school makes students feel they belong.

70. If students in this school have a problem, teachers will listen and help.

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by clicking one of the circles. If you have no experience on which to base a response or the item is not applicable to you, leave it blank.

71. I usually look forward to each working day as a teacher.

72. Discipline is handled fairly in this school.

73. Collaboration with classroom teachers to integrate library and media resources and skills into classroom instruction is adequate.

74. The librarian/media specialist requests my input into the selection of resources.

75. There is adequate instruction in the use of library and media resources for classes and individual students.

76. There is systematic collaboration across subject areas in our building.

77. Individual counseling services are available to students.

78. The board establishes policies and permits administrators to implement these policies on a day to day basis.

79. The community provides enough money to adequately provide quality educational programs to children.

80. Overall, my school building is in good condition.

81. If I had a chance to choose all over again, I would still choose teaching as a career.

82. There is systematic collaboration between the academic and career education programs in our district.

83. How much homework time do you assign your students each day:
    Do not assign 2 hours
    1/2 hour or less
    More than 2 hours
    1 hour

Please click on the circle below that best describes how often you do the following:

84. Students are taught effective note-taking skills.

85. I assess the level of prior knowledge of all students before initiating instruction.

86. Organize students into flexible groups based on their understanding of the content and skill level.

87. Begin instructional units by presenting students with clear learning goals.

88. Begin instructional units by having students identify personal learning goals that fit within the learning goals presented by the teacher.

89. Provide students with specific feedback on the extent to which they are accomplishing the learning goals.

90. Have students keep track of their own performance on the learning goals.

91. Have students assess themselves relative to their personal learning goals after completing a unit.

92. Make use of cooperative learning groups.

93. Have students construct verbal or written summaries of new content.

Please click on the circle below that best describes how often you do the following:

94. Have students represent new content in nonlinguistic ways (e.g., mental image, picture, pictograph, graphic organizer, physical model, enactment).

95. Provide students with opportunities to practice important skills and procedures prior to assessment.

96. I alter instructional strategies when students are having difficulty learning the material.

97. Model or demonstrate important skills or procedures.

98. Incorporate contextual/real life learning in the classroom.

99. Incorporate problem solving instructional activities in the classroom.

100. Have students revise and correct errors in their work as a way of reviewing and revising content.

101. Have students compare and classify content.

102. Have students construct metaphors and analogies.

103. Provide specific feedback on the homework assigned to students.

104. Incorporate information about careers in my instruction.

Submit Survey

APPENDIX B: Descriptive Data for Free/Reduced Lunch Count, Enrollment, and Community Type

Group	Community Type		Free/Reduced Lunch Count	Enrollment
Not 4 yrs+2009	1	N	2	2
		Mean	74.150	25026.50
		Std. Error of Mean	5.4500	2547.500
		Std. Deviation	7.7075	3602.709
		Minimum	68.7	22479
		Maximum	79.6	27574
	2	N	18	18
		Mean	60.589	4812.17
		Std. Error of Mean	4.3429	1070.495
		Std. Deviation	18.4254	4541.724
		Minimum	31.2	326
		Maximum	91.6	17552
	3	N	33	33
		Mean	51.412	2413.64
		Std. Error of Mean	2.0372	374.928
		Std. Deviation	11.7030	2153.797
		Minimum	21.6	174
		Maximum	71.6	11532

	4	N	166	166
		Mean	56.055	468.29
		Std. Error of Mean	.9684	28.691
		Std. Deviation	12.4768	369.657
		Minimum	25.3	27
		Maximum	83.5	2383
	Total	N	219	219
		Mean	55.894	1342.73
		Std. Error of Mean	.8878	206.606
		Std. Deviation	13.1383	3057.490
		Minimum	21.6	27
		Maximum	91.6	27574
4 yrs+2009	2	N	18	18
		Mean	23.900	7784.44
		Std. Error of Mean	2.4482	1223.794
		Std. Deviation	10.3867	5192.119
		Minimum	13.4	792
		Maximum	55.2	17824
	3	N	25	25
		Mean	36.584	3501.68
		Std. Error of Mean	2.3621	404.686
		Std. Deviation	11.8105	2023.431

		Minimum	11.5	1037
		Maximum	54.5	9557
	4	N	71	71
		Mean	44.838	427.42
		Std. Error of Mean	1.9332	43.811
		Std. Deviation	16.2893	369.161
		Minimum	10.2	28
		Maximum	76.7	2000
	Total	N	114	114
		Mean	39.722	2263.24
		Std. Error of Mean	1.5353	328.772
		Std. Deviation	16.3929	3510.321
		Minimum	10.2	28
		Maximum	76.7	17824
Total	1	N	2	2
		Mean	74.150	25026.50
		Std. Error of Mean	5.4500	2547.500
		Std. Deviation	7.7075	3602.709
		Minimum	68.7	22479
		Maximum	79.6	27574
	2	N	36	36
		Mean	42.244	6298.31

	Std. Error of Mean	3.9561	839.719
	Std. Deviation	23.7367	5038.313
	Minimum	13.4	326
	Maximum	91.6	17824
3	N	58	58
	Mean	45.021	2882.62
	Std. Error of Mean	1.8123	282.342
	Std. Deviation	13.8018	2150.253
	Minimum	11.5	174
	Maximum	71.6	11532
4	N	237	237
	Mean	52.695	456.05
	Std. Error of Mean	.9504	23.982
	Std. Deviation	14.6306	369.203
	Minimum	10.2	27
	Maximum	83.5	2383
Total	N	333	333
	Mean	50.357	1657.86
	Std. Error of Mean	.8902	177.772
	Std. Deviation	16.2439	3244.026
	Minimum	10.2	27
	Maximum	91.6	27574

VITA

Gretchen Cole Guitard began her teaching career in Tucumcari, New Mexico, after graduating with her Bachelor of Science in Education degree from Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, New Mexico. She earned her Master of Arts in the spring of 1992 from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico. In the spring of 2003, she completed her Specialist in Education-Educational Administration from Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. In the fall of 2010, she completed her Doctorate of Education from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Dr. Guitard served as teacher, assistant principal, principal, and curriculum director for the East Newton School District. She served as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for the Neosho R-V School District. She currently serves as the Director of Curriculum and Staff Development for the Jefferson City Public Schools. Dr. Guitard lives in Jefferson City with her husband and three children.