

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

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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 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.