

A STUDY OF TWO TURNAROUND SCHOOLS:  
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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A Dissertation  
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the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Educational Doctorate

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by  
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The undersigned, appointed by the Statewide Cooperative Ed.D. Program,  
have examined the dissertation entitled

A STUDY OF TWO TURNAROUND SCHOOLS:  
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Presented by Jeri Kay Hardy  
a candidate for the degree of doctor of education,  
and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance

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## Dedication

My journey on the road to achieving a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis began with the support of my husband, Rick Hardy. He has sacrificed for our family. He has been both Mom and Dad to our two children, Candice and Cole, while I was attending classes and working. I am also thankful he had the support of my parents to help us with this process. Through the journey we have laughed, cried, and overcome struggles.

The day I went for my interview I will never forget sitting at Cracker Barrel with Rick and he began drilling me on possible interview questions. The last question he asked was, “Why MIZZOU?” In all stubbornness I replied, “They are never going to ask that.” He continued to demand the answer to, “Why MIZZOU?” Prior to the interview we prayed that God would give us a sign if this was the direction we were to take in our lives. I remember being nervous as I exited the car. During the interview process with Dr. Maher and Dr. Watkins every question my husband and I rehearsed had been asked with the exception of one. The interview had concluded and as I reached the door to exit the office Dr. Maher said, “Just one more question, Why MIZZOU?” I had the response ready and was dismissed from my interview. I immediately knew God had provided the answer I was looking for.

I am thankful I have two parents who have been together for 41 years. Their continuous love and support have made me into the person I am today. Finally, to the three most important people in my life because without you none of this would be complete. Thank you again, Rick, Candice, and Cole for being my life and my loves. I love you to the moon and back.

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I am thankful for my advisors and instructors Dr. David Stader, Dr. Paul Watkins and Dr. Ruth Ann Roberts. Their guidance and instruction was critical throughout this process. Without their support and guidance I would still be lost in the world of dissertation writing. From their perseverance during summer session to the long nights of Wednesday evening classes on Southeast Campus they provided support and an ear from tired doctoral candidates.

The members of the Southeast Cohort will always be very dear to me. I know at any time I can call on any of these members along with the members of my MIZZOU Summer Cohort Group.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

From 2002-2015 School improvement was a problem facing many school districts in Missouri. With the focus on school accountability, and student performance; schools were required to develop programs proven to enhance the academic performance of students. The need for school improvement was recognized by the Reagan Administration with *A Nation at Risk*, (The National Commission on the Excellence of Education, 1983). The document alerted the public to the perceived failing education systems in the United States and the neglect of high expectations and discipline of students (The National Commission on the Excellence of Education, 1983). Then later, Goals 2000: Educate America focused on reform with accountability as student mastery levels would be assessed in grades four, eight, and 12 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Enacted in 2002, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) the most recent legislation revised in 2015 and renamed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires even more teacher accountability and the challenge to schools to show 100% proficiency for all students in the area of reading by 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

A 2007 report by U.S. Secretary for the Department of Education, Arne Duncan announced the release of more than \$71 million to seven states to assist in improving low performing schools based on the districts Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). This funding known as School Improvement Grants (SIG), administered by state education departments targeted Title I schools which are performing at the lowest level on the state based standardized reading and math tests. These grants provide schools identified as needing improvement with money to



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implement the necessary changes needed to make improvements in the district. The resources provided by the grant could be used to enhance the school facilities, curriculum, and professional development aspects of the districts that received the School Improvement Grants.

With the 2014 deadline for all students to be advanced or proficient approaching quickly, The University of Virginia and The Darden School of Business began a campaign to assist in turning around low performing schools in the United States. They named this initiative the Turnaround Project. The first class of the University of Virginia and the Darden School of Business began in 2004 with the lowest performing districts in Virginia in attendance for the first cohort class. In 2006 the Turnaround Project was expanded to 17 additional states across the country (Darden School of Business, 2014). Turning around low performing schools was the goal set forth to provide a rigorous prescriptive approach to assist the schools in achieving AYP.

The intense two year program set forth by the University provides support to districts and administrators in the targeted school districts. Schools must commit to the program and agree to participate in the decision making process for school improvement to enhance school and student performance. The schools selected were awarded School Improvement Grants (SIG) to assist in this endeavor. Two main focuses of the program include building district capacity to initiate and support change, along with training high-impact school leaders. This is done by using researched based strategies, using a Shepard to lead the turnaround process, builds a capacity of instructing key leaders of the requirements of successful turnaround schools , and building school leadership teams to identify key turnaround strategies unique to each individual district's needs (Darden

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School of Business, 2014). The Shepard can be filled by many different employees depending on the district.

The University of Virginia's Turnaround Schools Project incorporates several recommended changes for a school to be able to turnaround students' academic progress. Changes suggested include: leadership changes, school policy changes, program changes, changes in processes and procedures, changes in personnel, quality classroom practices, parental and community involvement, and changes in school facilities (Darden, 2005).

For change to be implementable those responsible for change must define the necessity of change and the vision needs to be defined (Fullan, 2007). Transformational Leadership may be defined by changes made among districts which participated in The University of Virginia Turnaround School Project. Educational change is effected by what school personnel do and think. Implementing change and the effectiveness of change begins with meeting teachers where they currently are (2007). Educational change is a very complex and fluid experience. What happens at one point in time may not be duplicated at later time. Change in education and reform is inescapable and the field of education is caught up in change (Morrison, 1988).

The Turnaround Project takes a transformational approach using change theory as the leadership in the school requires a commitment of change from administrators and support from faculty to lead the transformation from a low performing school to a school that makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). One aspect of the Turnaround Project involves providing data collection through an instructional coach who serves as a change facilitator (Denton, Swansen, & Mathes, 2007).

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The Shepard helps provide assistance to principals and faculty members in implementing best practices for student learning outcomes. Instructional decisions are made based on the data analyzed by the Shepard and the principal. Data driven instruction is a basis for hiring an instructional coach. An instructional coach is usually employed to provide assistance to employees and faculty members. Responsibilities of the coach include collecting data, analyzing data, observing teachers, and conferencing with teachers and administrators (Peterson, Taylor, Burnam, & Schock, 2009).

There are approximately 5,000 schools nationwide that are labeled as in need of school improvement (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010). Missouri in 2006 had a total of 65 schools designated as schools in need of improvement. Of these 65 five of these schools are located in an area of Southeast Missouri known as the bootheel.

In 2008, the Turnaround program through the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia comes with a \$75,000.00 price tag (Damast, 2012). Schools use SIG (School Improvement Grant) money to participate in the Turnaround Program. Schools participating in the program are required to attend seminars at The University of Virginia's Darden School of Business which is ranked as #1 and #2 consistently as the top business school in the world (by Forbes) (Darden, 2011).

Schools attending this cohort were selected by the state of Missouri as being in School Improvement. Missouri identifies these schools by the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report. Schools which failed to meet AYP for three consecutive years are considered schools in need of improvement. Adequate Yearly Progress is determined by the percentage of students scoring in the proficient or advanced range on Reading and Math standardized test scores. These groups are sorted into the following categories:

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Communication Arts, Mathematics, Attendance Rate, and Graduation Rate. The scores are broken into the following sub-groups: School Total, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, White, Multi-Racial, Free/Reduced Lunch, Individualized Educational Plan, and Limited English Proficiency. Schools may meet these goals based on Confidence Interval, and Growth Calculation in addition to meeting the state rate of proficient and advanced students (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011). These schools are identified as the lowest 5% of schools in Missouri.

In 2008, 15 Missouri schools were chosen to participate in the University of Virginia School Turnaround Project. Of these 15 schools, 11 schools took advantage of the opportunity presented to them by the state (Doyle & Boast, 2010). Missouri schools selected were from diverse backgrounds. Schools came from urban, suburban, and rural areas. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds to the districts to allow them to participate in the University of Virginia Turnaround Program.

Five rural districts, in an area of Missouri referred to as the Bootheel were selected by the state department. The five schools located in Southeast Missouri were from Dunklin, Pemiscot, Mississippi, and New Madrid County (The United States Census Bureau, 2010). Dunklin County has a population totaling 31,712. The population for Mississippi County is 14,282. Pemiscot County has a population of 17,823. All three counties have a significant number of people living below the poverty level as compared to state total. The number of people living below the poverty level statewide in 2010 was 15.5%. Dunklin County had 25.6% of the population living below the poverty level. The census showed Mississippi County with 26.9% of people living below the poverty level.

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Pemiscot County had the highest number of people living below the poverty level with 29.3% of the population falling into this category. Three schools are located along an interstate, while the two schools furthest south are more isolated. According to the census report the average per capita money income for the state is \$25,649 for the state of Missouri. Those numbers are significantly less for the three counties in this study. The average per capita income for Dunklin County is \$17,990, Mississippi County is \$15,558, and the per capita income for Pemiscot County is \$16,881 (2010). One of the middle schools named as a school in need of improvement is located in a town fifteen miles away from the elementary, high school and superintendent's office for the district. The schools have a large rate of free and reduced lunch, minority students, and limited exposure to experiences outside of the Bootheel of Missouri.

All five schools located in the Bootheel chose to participate in the University of Virginia Turnaround Project and were enrolled in Cohort 6 beginning July 2008 and concluded in May, 2010. These schools were performing significantly below the state average on the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Report issued by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Therefore, these schools were identified as schools in need of improvement. The state Federal Programs Representative for the Southeast Region in Missouri upon a recommendation by DESE suggested participation in the Turnaround Program and provided the funding for the schools to participate through the use of SIG funds. For a school to meet state standards in 2008, students across the state of Missouri must achieve a score of 51% advanced or proficient in Communication Arts and a 45 % in Mathematics. In 2009 the Annual Proficiency Target increased to 59.2% in Reading and 54.1% in Mathematics. By the end of the two year

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Turnaround participation, for a school to meet the AYP requirements the following goals must have been met: 75.5% in Communication Arts and 72.5% in Mathematics (DESE, 2014).

This study will focus on two of the five schools located in the Bootheel of Missouri. This was justified by the demonstration of the high AYP scores which demonstrated the districts made significant growth during and after participation in the Turnaround Project. These two schools have retained many of the participants who were on the University of Virginia Turnaround Team during the initial process. The schools continued to have similar growth during, and after the Turnaround Program. Data was collected through 2013 as the MAP test changed during the 2014 school year and comparisons of MAP data from 2013 and prior were no longer compatible with the new data from 2014 to the present.

A snapshot of these participating districts is as follows: Every Student Can Learn Elementary scored 44.4% in Communication Arts and 52.8% in Mathematics for the 2008 school year. In 2009 the Communication Arts scores were 42.1% and Mathematics fell to 48.5%. The first year of the Turnaround in 2010 resulted in an increase to 58.9 % in Communication Arts and 70.4% in Mathematics. At the end of the Turnaround in 2011 scores continued to rise to 68.2% in Communication Arts and 77.3% in Mathematics.

At the end of the 2013 school year Every Student Can Learn Elementary had an increase in Communication Arts to 68.8% and in Mathematics to 79.1%.

Table A

### Every Student Can Learn Elementary

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Indian</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Free/Reduced</u>
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	Enrollment					Lunch	
2013	455	0.70	29.5	7.50	0.40	61.50	74.3
2004	512	0.60	29.3	3.10	0.00	67.00	65.9

These numbers are a reflection on the poor economic community where Every Student Can Learn Elementary is located. The town is located in rural Missouri industry consist of agriculture related business, two factories, Wal-Mart, and several small local businesses. Upon further examination of school district trends, in 2004 the number of teachers with a Master Degree or higher was 44.5%. In 2013 there were only 26.1% of teachers at Every Student Can Learn Elementary with a Master Degree or higher.

Table B

May Welcome All Middle School

Year	Total	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	White	Free/Reduced
	Enrollment					Lunch	
2013	246	0.00	0.00	35.40	0.40	64.20	66.7
2004	269	1.50	3.30	18.60	0.00	76.60	66.9

May Welcome All Middle School began with a score of 39.3% in Communication Arts and 28% in Mathematics. The scores in 2009 were 45.8% Advanced or Proficient in Communication Arts and 30.1% in Mathematics. After completion of year one in 2010 Communication Arts fell to 43.9% and Mathematics increased to 30.1%. At the end of 2011 May Welcome All Middle School student's scores increased to 49.8% in Communication Arts and 43.5% in Mathematics (DESE, 2014). May Welcome All Middle School had a decline in percentage points for Communication Arts to 41.7% and a decline in Mathematics to 38% of students scoring proficient and advanced on the state Missouri Assessment Program test (DESE, 2014). Upon review of the data it is

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imperative to determine why the schools met the criteria, how the district performed during the process and where are they now?

The demographic population at May Welcome All Middle School has been affected by an increase in the number of Hispanic families moving to the district from 2004 through 2013 (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014). These numbers are a reflection on the rural community where May Welcome All Middle School is located. The district May Welcome All Middle School is located covers 208.65 sq. miles (USA.com, 2014). The administrative office, elementary, and high school are located in one town and the middle school is housed 15 miles away in a different town. A challenge presented by the vast area covered by the district is student's bus rides are lengthy and siblings may be in schools that are located in the two different towns.

The district has a vast farming industry, 3 cotton gins, a gas station in each town, one Dollar General Store, and no grocery stores or restaurants. In 2004 the number of teachers with a Master Degree or higher was 11.5%. In 2013 there was an increase of teachers with a Master Degree reaching 26.1% at May Welcome All Middle School (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014).

Although these schools are located in the same region they have very distinct characteristics. The demographic population in Every Student Can Learn Elementary has remained stable from 2004 through 2013 (DESE, 2014). The most significant change is the number of students receiving free or reduced lunch.

To assist in the success of Southeast Missouri schools it is necessary to examine the leadership strategies and changes which need to occur in order to improve area schools. Changing learning through individual, team, whole organization, and community



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learning as suggested by Gill (2010), serves as a framework for a successful Turnaround School Project. Change in leadership behaviors, a change in the structure of the organization of the school, the role of power and politics are all issues involved in the Turnaround Schools Project (Darden, 2014).

### Problem Statement

Leading a school turnaround can be seen as a “wicked” problem (Leithwood, Harris, Strauss, 2010). During this process a wicked problem can be described as a problem which is difficult to solve and resolve (2010). Hence, a low performing school which makes a Turnaround.

Several Southeast Missouri Schools are schools in need of school improvement. It is necessary to make intensive instructional changes in the day to day operations in public schools to improve the academic achievement of students. Some of the changes implemented by these schools are the Turnaround Schools Project through the University of Virginia. To assist in the success of Southeast Missouri Schools it is necessary to examine the leadership strategies and changes which need to occur in order to improve Southeast Missouri schools participating in the Turnaround Project. This will be done through a multi-site case study where interviews are conducted with the superintendents, principals, and staff members of these schools.

Researching the leadership and change styles of the administrators, school shepherds, and lead teachers will be a priority for this research project to determine the most effective leadership and instructional styles that were used for improving student performance. Information will be gathered to determine if there were shifts in the culture of the school and if changes in the styles of teaching took place and are continuing since

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the program has completed. Interviews will be coded to identify what type of changes in leadership behaviors were exhibited by the different members involved in the Turnaround Program.

Another important aspect in the Turnaround Project is the organizational structure in each of the Southeast Missouri Schools Participating in the Turnaround Project and the role of power and politics in the participating Southeast Missouri school districts. Participants will be asked for their recollection of events which took place during the program. Was feedback and support given by community members or outside stakeholders? Also, what was the perception of this program by the staff members directly involved in the Turnaround Program?

Information gathered will be obtained for two of the Southeast Missouri schools involved in the Turnaround program using data obtained before and during, and up to the year 2014. Some schools were successful while others faced multiple struggles. New concepts were introduced and changes were implemented and documented throughout this process. This research focuses on districts 3 years after the Turnaround Program was implemented. The researcher is focusing on what changes worked well, which aspects are continuing to be used, what was learned during this process, and what did not work for each district.

Upon examination of the introductory data there is a gap in research and literature regarding the impact of the Turnaround Project in high poverty rural populations. It seems one of the schools has progressed while, a neighboring school has witnessed some regression in student performance. The changes after exiting from the University of Virginia Turnaround Program will be examined to determine why some schools did

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better, what was most useful, what structural changes remain after three years, and what kind of leadership did the schools have. Also, an examination of implementation problems district's faced will be discussed.

Therefore, this research will examine what has worked for these schools and what did not based on the dynamics of each of the two districts. Are the schools progressing or is there regression: if so, why do the districts see a regression. This research will focus on challenges and victories, ideas and solutions, and implementation and follow through implemented with the Turnaround Program. The main goal of this research is to take a look back to see where these schools are now that the program implementation is over. The research will examine what changes were made and are continuously being used and those which were discarded once the program came to an end.

### Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine two Southeast Missouri Schools who followed the Turnaround project to assist them in getting out of School Improvement status and provide a view as to where they are now. Now that the program is over, the researcher will interview administrators, shepherds and other people to determine positive and negative outcomes of the schools which have been chosen to determine effective use of strategies and the role of leadership to enhance instruction in low performing schools, and what changes implemented during the Turnaround Program have been sustained three years after the conclusion of the Turnaround Program through the University of Virginia. A multi-site case study of two schools three years after their participation will be conducted to determine what works, what does not, and what obstacles the schools faced and obstacles that remain.

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Interviews will be audio recorded, transcribed, and coded to determine leadership changes, instructional changes, and instructional styles that were used for improving student performance. The perspectives of administrators, shepherds, and teachers will be examined to determine if there were shifts in the culture of the school and if changes in the styles of teaching have been sustained. Interviews will be coded to identify what type of changes occur in leadership behaviors exhibited by the different members involved in the Turnaround Program.

The next purpose of the research was to focus on the organizational structure and the role of power and politics in the participating Southeast Missouri school districts. If there was a change in the organizational structure what were these? Did power and politics affect the changes in a positive or negative way? Participants will be asked to recall any specific events that influenced specific changes. Also, is evidence remaining that the organizational structure has changed or was politics a determining factor in deciding what changes would occur.

The study examines the positive and negative outcome of the schools which participated to determine effective use of strategies and the role leadership has in the enhancement of instruction in low performing schools and to determine if the improvements gained from the process have sustained longevity.

Both of the schools researched concluded their participation in the spring of 2011. Interviews will be conducted to determine which schools strategies and leadership behaviors were most effective at ensuring student success through research based methods. What practices were successful, what is the same, what has changed after the three year period?

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### Research Questions

To ensure low performing schools have the opportunity to learn and provide support to students to enhance their academic performance it becomes necessary to review factors which have an impact on the performance of the schools. In this study the research questions will focus on the role of leaders, structure of the schools, the power and politics in the Turnaround Schools and the effect these components have had and continue to have on the Turnaround Schools.

1. What type of leadership behaviors were exhibited prior, during, and after the Turnaround Program?
2. What structural changes remain?
3. Were there any political influences that had and continue to have an impact before, during and presently in the district?
4. What was the most useful aspect of the Turnaround Program?

### Theoretical Framework

Case Study Research is a method of qualitative data analysis. A case study provides a rich description and review of a bounded system. A bounded case study approach is used when boundaries have been placed surrounding a specific case (Merriam, 2009). Case study research as defined by Creswell compliments Merriam's definition. Creswell states "case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). For research to qualify as a case study according to Merriam it should have three components. The case must be particularistic (examine a specific event or program), descriptive (must

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provide a rich picture of the situation or event being studied), and heuristic (the ability to bring unknown information regarding the situation or event to the reader) (2009).

A bounded system multiple site case study is conducted when one concern is studied while multiple cases are used to support the research (Creswell, 2007). To use a multiple site case study the two cases should have a common phenomenon or boundary (Merriam, 2009). Using multiple sites assist the researcher in strengthening the validity of the study (2009).

Data collection for a bounded system multiple site case study provides a rich description of a particular event or situation among multiple sites. Data gathered comes from multiple sources. The sources may include observations, interviews, documents, and archival records (2007).

The organizational structure in the Turnaround Project takes a lateral coordination approach. With this approach the hierarchical structure which was previously in place was replaced by a learning organization (2007). At times during the Turnaround Program it was necessary to restructure faculty and staff members within the district. Some of the restructuring was due to placing the most effective person in the correct position. During this process change is expected to occur.

Fullan discusses change theory in depth. When examining change it is necessary to work diligently daily, monitor student progress, and make corrections (2006). Change is not an overnight process and sustainability can take many years to achieve. The University of Virginia Turnaround Program asks school districts to commit to a two year program and apply changes in leadership, and organizational structure to assist students in achieving high academic performance. Change is not always welcomed during the

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Turnaround Process. Fullan suggests making a change in the three basics first. The three basics are literacy, numeracy, and the well-being of students (2006).

### Research Approach

A multisite bounded case study will be conducted in two of the five Turnaround schools. According to Merriam a bounded case study is determined by a phenomenon that will fence in the research (2009). The Turnaround Project is the boundary used in the study of two schools located in the Bootheel of Missouri.

The research from descriptive interviews with administrators, shepherds, and teachers will be gathered to determine where the schools are three years after participation in the Turnaround project. Interviews to determine the leadership behaviors of the principals, instructional strategies used, what was useful in the process, what has changed, and the role of the power of politics on each district will be gathered to gain research to the success or shortcomings of the Turnaround program for the Southeast Missouri Districts. These questions are particularistic to the discovery of what worked and is continuing to be implemented since the Turnaround Project has concluded (2009).

The researcher limited the research to two of the five rural districts located in the Bootheel of Missouri. This was justified by the demonstration of the high AYP scores which demonstrated the districts made significant growth during and after participation in the Turnaround Project. This study will focus on two of the five schools located in the Bootheel of Missouri. These two schools have retained many of the participants who were on the University of Virginia Turnaround Team during the initial process. The schools continued to have similar growth during, and after the Turnaround Program.

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Interviews will be conducted by the researcher to determine the various behaviors of the administrators at the Turnaround Schools before, during, and since the Turnaround Program has concluded. What structural changes took place and which changes remain today? If there were political and outside influence that impacted the Turnaround Program and do those influences remain? What was some of the most useful information gained and is continuously being implemented since the conclusion of the program three years ago. A look at the strategies that worked, the strategies still in use, and those which are no longer being implemented will be examined.

The interviews will be recorded using a voice recorder and field notes will be taken during the interviews by the researcher. The interviews will be coded and transcribed. These materials will be stored in a locked cabinet to ensure the confidentiality of all participants (Cresswell, 2007).

The rationale for interviewing principals, shepherds, and lead teachers was to gain insight into effective leadership in low performing schools. This will also pinpoint which research based strategies are effective and those which are not very useful. The interview questions which were chosen has a myriad of questions which will enable the researcher to determine the ideas used from the Turnaround Program which enabled schools to improve and gain knowledge during and after the conclusion of the program. Which aspects have been sustained and what specific practices have been deleted. To determine which change in leadership behaviors each principal exhibits, what strategies in the Turnaround program were useful, which strategies did not work, and how politics has impacted where the schools are now will be examined during the interview process. The interviews the researcher will conduct will examine the everyday activities of the



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principals, shepherds, and lead teachers during the Turnaround Project and the ideologies regarding their leadership behaviors, the role of power and politics, and the effectiveness of structural changes that may have been discovered during the Turnaround Program.

### Significance of the Study

The study of Turnaround Schools in Southeast Missouri is significant in contributing to the research involving best practices for low performing schools. Determining where the schools are three years post Turnaround are the key focuses of this study. How has the leadership behaviors of the administration changed, were there structural changes influenced by the Turnaround Program that continue to exist, did community perception or politics change and influence the outcome and current situation of the school districts, what was most beneficial and still being implemented since the conclusion in the participation in the Turnaround program? An examination of leadership behaviors, changes in the structure of the organization, and the power and politics contributing to the Turnaround Project to inform practice in successful Turnaround Schools and identify deterrents in student performance will be discussed to determine what impact the changes implemented from the program had on the reality of where the schools are now, what leadership behaviors are most effective and the structural changes that were most important to the districts.

### Assumptions and Limitations

District administrators want to get out of school improvement was one assumption of the research project. Administrators want their students to perform well as student performance is a reflection on the performance of the community, staff, and faculty. Another assumption of the study was students want to perform to the best of their

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ability on state mandated assessments. These are only two assumptions foreseen in the research study.

The study was not without limitations. Only two schools in Southeast Missouri were examined due to the increase of assessment scores during the Turnaround Program. The researcher has bias towards schools which have instructional coaches as leaders, as the researcher served as an instructional coach. All schools are from low socio-economic communities. The schools involved in the study are made up of rural districts in the southern most area of Southeast Missouri. Therefore, the effects of the study will not be compared to other rural or urban schools in the state of Missouri. However, the researcher was aware of these limitations and consciously avoided any misconstrued biases.

### Definition of Key Terms

Key terms will be defined to identify the context of the terms used in this study:

1. *DESE* is the term given to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
2. *APR* is the Annual Performance Report given to schools to gage how their district performed as compared to other districts in the state.
3. *AYP* is a term used in a data analysis report issued by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education meaning Adequate Yearly Progress.
4. *MAP* is a state assessment all Missouri students in grades 3-8 are administered and the definition of the assessment is the Missouri Assessment Program.
5. *Structural Changes* are changes in teaching, ideologies, and practices based upon new information learned.

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6. *Turnaround Program* is a two year intensive program by the University of Virginia to provide support and training for school administrators of some of the lowest performing schools in the Nation. This intensive program is aimed at the lowest performing schools which fall into the lowest 5% of achievement in the Nation based on the Adequate Yearly Progress Report (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010).
7. *Map Index Scores* are scores which indicate different levels of learning. These levels are Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced (DESE, 2011).
8. *Shepard* is the term given to the leader selected to guide the administrative team during the Turnaround project (Darden, 2011)
9. *Confidence Interval* is used to determine if a district meets Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) allowing for a margin of error for the specific target. Missouri uses a 99% confidence interval rate to ensure a high level of confidence the standard is met (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010).
10. *Growth Indicator* determines if an individual student is “on track” to becoming proficient or advanced as determined by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). Scores are compared from the current year to the previous year to determine if enough growth occurred to assist the student in becoming proficient or advanced (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010).

### Summary

This study provides insight into the importance of leadership in schools involved in the University of Virginia’s Turnaround Project. The project was designed to

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determine where the Southeast Missouri Turnaround Schools are three years after participation in the Turnaround program. What strategies were successful and are still in use, along with the changes in leadership behaviors of administrators and how different changes contributed to the success of the school district. Finally, what impact did politics and power has or still have on the participating school districts. Schools involved in the Turnaround Program face four different scenarios: school closures, restarts, turnaround, or transformations. However, some of the turnaround requirements are quite severe and have the most resistance, especially when the replacement of ineffective staff becomes a reality (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010).

The research area chosen for this study was a rural area in Southeast Missouri. The researcher hopes to assist in the enhancement in education of students within rural school districts. The problem was introduced through a brief problem statement, followed by the purpose of the research. Conceptual Frameworks were introduced which support the concepts related to leadership, organizational structure, and power as they relate to the Turnaround Project.

In chapter 2 a literature review will be completed to introduce the research available to provide insight for improving performance in low performing schools. Ideas such as structural frameworks, education reform, Turnaround Schools, accountability, leadership behaviors, organizational structures, power and politics, and data analysis are examined.

The significance of the research was presented as a tool to assist other low performing schools with the best practices necessary for a successful Turnaround.

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Changes were identified which were significant in the success of the Program. Also, identification of changes which were not beneficial in the success was also noted.

Chapter 3 examines a multisite case study approach to the research and design of the study to assist in determining what Turnaround components are still in place three years after participation and what strategies are successful as gauged by the administrators.

Chapter 4 will be an in depth review of the findings and case studies which will be completed during the research portion of this study.

Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions and recommendations for low performing schools in need of improvement. Also in this chapter the researcher will use data provided by DESE to determine how many of these schools continued to use the research they were given during the Turnaround Program or if they discontinued the use when the accountability to report was complete.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The decision making process for the Review of Literature centers on the key elements necessary to effectively focus research in the Turnaround School Program. Key elements include background knowledge of structural frameworks, education reform, accountability, leadership behaviors, organizational structures, power and politics, and data analysis.

#### Structural Frameworks

The literature review examining transformational leadership and the structural frameworks for Turnaround Schools will focus on two frames introduced by Bolman and Deal (2008). The success or failure of a turnaround school could depend on the structural and political frames. High performing teams have a common purpose with measureable goals, are manageable in size, have the right measure of expertise, and develop working relationships based on commitment to the common purpose (2008).

Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) and Bolman and Deal (2008) emphasize the importance of the structure of an organization based on different models of organizations. The models are introduced and compared to determine their effectiveness in organizations. The structure of a school district was important to determine the best way to implement policy and program changes within a Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade district.

Bush (2003) examined transformational, participative, and interpersonal leadership. All leadership behaviors have benefits and challenges. Based on my readings I believe the benefits for transformational leadership offer exemplary leadership

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characteristics in education. Transformational leadership examines the process by which leaders influence school outcomes versus the nature of the outcomes (2003). Yukl (2010) addressed transformational leadership as a leader whom is motivated to do more than they expected. This can be achieved through making co-workers more aware of the task outcomes, inducing them to leave their own personal interest behind for the outcome of the organization, and activating higher-order needs.

Participative leadership allows for joint decisions to be made by all participants. Participative leadership is democratic in nature and any participant can become a leader (Bush, 2003). However, giving access to all participants to be involved in the democratic process of participative leadership found teachers wanted to be involved in some of the process but were not willing to participate in the economic processes (2003).

Interpersonal leadership stresses collaboration and interpersonal relationships. The interpersonal form of leadership requires a high level of personal skills and a need for collaboration with all stakeholders (2003).

According to Yukl (2010) transformational leadership involves the feelings of trust, loyalty, admiration and respect of the leader by those who work in collaboration with the leader. Transformational leadership focuses on the commitment and the capabilities of the organizational members (Bush, 2003). Transformational leadership in schools occurs when school leaders focus on building vision, model best practices, demonstrate high performance expectations, and lead restructuring initiatives that focus on student outcomes. Transformational leadership can become despised based upon the assumption of power of the leader based upon teacher perception (2003). *Toward an Authentic Distribution of Leadership* examined school reform measures which have

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effective and ineffective leadership. The leadership reforms focus on the effectiveness of transformational educational teams. A transformational leader creates an environment where expertise is shared and group norms are established (Anderson, 2009).

Transformational leadership involves increasing the perception of followers and relates the ideas of the leader as being authentic to the followers, and depends on having trust in the leader (Yukl, 2010). Behaviors of transformational leaders depend on inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, increase in self-efficacy, and collective collaboration of teams (2010).

The structure of the organization is based on the realities of the individual in the organization and is imperative when examining the transformational model. Bolman and Deal (2008) discuss basic structural tensions related to the division of labor and creating roles and responsibilities in the organization. Another, aspect when examining the structure of the organization is to decide if a vertical approach or a lateral approach should be used to benefit the organization. Maslow discussed the theory of human motivation and the basic needs, the need for safety, love, and esteem which play a part in providing for the structure of an organization (Shaffritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005). Anderson (2009) argued the goals of the organization reflect the individual goals of the leader. The support of the organization takes on the interpretations of the principals, and heads of the organization (Bush, 2003).

### Education Reform

With the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk* the education systems in America were given the reality schools in the United States were not performing up to the same academic standards as other nations (The National Commission on Excellence in



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Education, 1983). The concern regarding the educational foundation was only mediocre was backed by the data American Students were performing lower than other industrialized nations. This policy released a call for a reform of American educational systems (1983). One focus of A Nation at Risk was the need for effective leadership in education, and an understanding of teaching and learning. A Nation at Risk was one of the first documents calling for education reform. Recommendations stemming from A Nation at Risk included increasing the credits needed for students to graduate which included more courses in English, mathematics, and science. Standardized achievement tests were also recommended. The recommendation regarding time focused on the more effective use of the school day. In regard to leadership the role of the principal and superintendent were to be necessary in achieving the education reforms. (1983).

Two additional documents critical to educational reform was Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Goals 2000 was introduced in 1994 under the Clinton Administration the focus on this particular education reform included the ideas of all students start school ready to learn, an increased graduation rate, mastery of content by all students in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, United States students would rank first in the world in mathematics, and science. Also, introduced under this act was adult literacy, safe and drug free schools, a focus on teacher professional development, and parental involvement (US Congress, 1994). NCLB enacted by the George W. Bush Administration was enacted in 2002. This educational reform act focused on increased accountability, school choice, flexibility in funding, and putting reading first. With this act requires 100% of children were supposed to be proficient in reading by the year 2014. Another major piece was the accountability for all

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students in grades 3-8 to take a state assessment and the schools would be held accountable for student performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

### Accountability

Accountability was at the forefront of education with the adoption of State Standards by 48 of the 50 United States. The focus was on the performance of students and the accountability of teachers. Several schools in Southeast Missouri were looking for answers and their findings are gearing them toward the University of Virginia and the Turnaround School Program. The main focus of choosing a school for the Turnaround Project includes examining if the school is free of bureaucratic restraints, has sufficient community Turnaround partners, and clustering schools to receive supportive services (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007). The University of Virginia provides both on-site and off-site training to participants. Along with training provided by the University of Virginia the schools are paired with regional facilitators that offer supportive services (2007).

The Turnaround School Program rests on the idea pedagogy of teaching has to change and reliance upon data is crucial to the process of improving low performing schools (Darden, 2005). One of the best practices among successful Turnaround Schools is using materials that are proven to work based upon scientific research. When evaluating the effects of Scientific Based Instruction it is necessary to note that organizations such as the International Reading Association and the National Reading Panel have completed extensive research to support their claims on the best practices. In order to incorporate best practices and to improve students' scores, the research supports

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the use of coaches and strong administrative leadership (Denton, Swanson, & Mathes, 2007).

Fullan provides a discussion regarding accountability where he explains the tools to hold teachers accountable can be seen as a punishment for schools in need of improvement or a reward for high performing schools (2006). There are several tools used to make up accountability these tools should be used to gain an understanding of reality. The data such as report cards, state assessments, tests, and performance evaluations should always be used collectively not independently. This provides a holistic approach to gauging success. These tools are used to gain internal accountability (Fullan, 2006).

External accountability clarifies goals to the community and other stakeholders. It helps identify the need for improvement and changes in instruction (2006). Turnaround schools have learned to use the data to support their goals and strategies for improvement. As leaders become comfortable with the data and the ability to use the data as a tool for accountability and direction in decision making there becomes a greater sense of external accountability (Fullan, 2006). Once acceptance of accountability occurs teachers stop thinking in terms of “my classroom” and focus on “our school”, the districts focus on our district instead of my school, at the district level a look to the betterment of the state educational system is projected, of course at the state level the focus becomes that of a national or global focus (2006).

Accountability and collaboration are to be shared for the betterment of the school. This happens when people become committed to the goals and vision communicated by

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the leaders. People begin setting high standards and sharing information to improve the performance of students (Fullan, 2006).

### School Turnaround

The University of Virginia School Turnaround Program is the premise for this study. The School Turnaround Guide provides insight on how to implement a Turnaround School (Public Impact, 2010). Success for Turnarounds is to be measured at the school level and the district level. Measuring success at the school level involves reviewing student outcomes and improvements in both the school culture and the learning environment. An examination of measuring success at the district level involves focusing on turnaround-specific goals for students, schools, and the systems (2010).

Lessons learned early in the Turnaround Programs report the realization practitioners faced upon entering the Turnaround Schools. The practitioners reported they were unprepared for the severity of student needs and other issues which had to be addressed (Social Impact Providers, 2010). Key gaps identified from these lessons learned were identified as capacity, funding, public and political will, conditions, research and knowledge sharing, and high schools and rural schools. To fill these gaps the researchers implemented collective actions.

When addressing capacity the promotion of quality providers and internal candidates is important. Also, it would be necessary to create training and recruitment to develop Turnaround talent. Creating and staffing turnaround divisions was the third collective action to address the capacity issue. Funding was the next area of concern. Repurposing outgoing funding would be necessary to determine needs. Making sure funding would meet ESEA reauthorization requirements was also pivotal. Using the

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funding to build long-term capacity was also addressed as a collective action (2010). Ensuring the public was able to realize the need for change it was necessary to build relationships with students, parents, educators, policy makers, and the communities. It was also necessary to advocate and promote the needed changes for the school and district. The third collective action regarding the public and political will focused on making policies and laws to support the needed change.

The last two gaps discussed were the conditions and research and knowledge sharing. When researching the condition it was necessary to change the culture of relations between schools, districts and states. To do this the researcher discusses the importance of moving from compliance to cooperation. This can be done by establishing laws and policies that ensure the autonomy of schools and districts. The conditions are met by making sure accountability measures are developed and implemented at the school and district level (Social Impact Advisors, 2010). The collective actions focusing on research and knowledge sharing ensures funding to continue studying and comparing the solidarity of different turnaround interventions. Documentation and sharing turnaround is of utmost importance to contributing to the research and knowledge sharing and providing feedback for the challenges and successes of the program. Finally, creating an environment to document and share research is necessary to fill the gaps (2010).

The researchers state there are four different turnaround models. The models are: Turnarounds, Restarts, School Closures, and Transformations. The Turnaround Model discussed in this publications state the principal is replaced along with no more than 50 percent of the staff being rehired. The principal is granted operational flexibility to rehire staff, plan the calendar, schedules, and budgeting. A restart transfers the control of the

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school to a school operator. The school closure is self-explanatory. The school is closed to never reopen. Transformations replace the principal while increasing school leader effectiveness (Social Impact Advisors, 2010).

The researchers examined the issue of the difficulty implementing Turnaround or Restart in rural districts. It was widely accepted that there was not enough resources of staff to facilitate the models. Also, in the rural areas it was impossible to implement school closures due to the lack of surrounding schools. The U.S. Department of Education released final SIG grants to stress the newly available resources to rural districts to help them overcome any boundaries (2010).

The School Turnaround Guide offered an explanation as to four Turnaround models and the gaps left to be addressed. The article focused briefly on the struggles of rural low performing schools. However, the article discussed a lack of significant research available to support the Turnaround Project. The article did not list any specific research with results. The four models listed for Turnaround focused on removing the principal or closing the school. However, due to limited resources in rural districts this may be problematic.

School Turnaround in Southeast Missouri was examined by a group of professors from Southeast Missouri State University. Dr. Lisa Bertrand and Dr. Ruth Ann Roberts completed a case study of an elementary school involved in the Turnaround Project the results of this study were published in the Southern Journal of Educational Administration (Bertrand & Roberts, 2013). The article examined one school which participated in the Turnaround Project and overcome school improvement during the two year process. The school took a transformational approach to Turnaround as discussed in

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the previous article by Social Impact (2010). However, this particular school decided to keep the building leaders and administrators of the district in place and not to replace the administrative leaders. The school relied heavily on support from the University of Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (UVA-STSP).

The guidance for developing the leaders was crucial in the advancement of this elementary school. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided funding for low performing districts to participate in the UVA-STSP in conjunction with professional development support from the Southeast Regional Professional Development Center.

District leaders composed a 90 day action plan and the Southeast Regional Professional Development Center monitored these plans to ensure fidelity was given to the program. The district sent the curriculum director, assistant superintendent, and the elementary principal to the University of Virginia for extensive professional development. The district reported a heightened sense of instructional practices and use of skills was implemented upon return from the UVA-STSP training. The principal had a leadership group who was provided training and guidance was provided for instructing professional learning communities (Bertrand, & Roberts, 2013).

Bertrand and Roberts reported interviews with school personnel described a new sense of ownership for improving. Student's data was examined and students were placed in groups conducive to optimal learning. The faculty was given the data and guidance for improvement and therefore took an active role in the ownership of the turnaround. The focus of the school was to reach a quick success in the implementation of the first 90 day

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plan. The first gain was reported to be cosmetic. This would provide students an atmosphere conducive to learning.

Next, came a change in classroom practices. Teachers began using data notebooks to keep information on their students learning. A change in the schedule allowed for teachers to have common planning periods to collaborate on teaching and learning practices. The teachers began working in teams and were able to create common assessments and ensure each grade level teacher was teaching the same Missouri Grade Level Expectations (Bertrand & Roberts, 2013). It is reported these new practices lead to a gain in student performance.

The implications and recommendations in the article inform the reader this school can serve as a model for improvement. Teachers being involved in the decision making process allows them to be active participants in the Turnaround Project which led teachers to a sense of empowerment and led the school to make significant gains. In summarizing the article, Bertrand and Roberts note there is still more work which needs to be done and more improvement made as not all schools in the project made significant gains (2013).

Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss in their book *Leading School Turnaround How to Transform Low-Performing Schools* offer Turnaround through a transformational approach as discussed by the Social Impact article, and the article by Bertrand and Roberts. Turnaround is seen as a “wicked problem” as it was defined by Churchman (1967) as a problem that is difficult to solve. There is no magic solution to turning around low performing schools. The discussion of many factors that contribute to the low performance of schools and the decision to turn them around are discussed. Factors



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include the attitudes of leadership, staff members, political figures, governmental control, students, and student achievement (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). Sustainability was seen as a challenge. Not only was Turnaround crucial but, the need to sustain the improvements in schools is necessary. Therefore, schools have to have leaders committed to the transformation of schools. The authors advise that for every school experiencing success there are many more falling into the status as a low performing school (2010). It was discovered during the research for the book there is no chance for a turnaround without a strong leader. Thus, many turnaround schools lead the change by changing the leadership to promote the success of a turnaround.

Successful turnaround leaders have practices in place to ensure the improvement of the school. The leader is responsible for building the confidence of staff, encouraging staff, and providing psychological support for the staff during the process (2010). As a leader the principal is the primary support person for the building. Another key characteristic of the successful leader is the leader takes the role in stimulating the professional development of their colleagues. The idea of taking the lead role in professional development has been seen as a key factor in the former two articles being reviewed. Modeling key practices is another common characteristic among successful turnaround leaders (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). These leaders perform the same tasks they are requiring of their colleagues. This creates a set of values of the leader which can be witnessed by and demonstrated for faculty members.

Collaboration among faculty members serves as a contribution to success of the turnaround process. Communicating a willingness to work together to achieve the common goal of improving the school improvement status is critical to the success of the

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program. Thirteen studies of different turnaround schools identified collaboration as part of the success (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). Collaboration with staff is not the only contributing factor. Successful turnaround projects developed an understanding of the family environments of students and the political pressures associated with the environments of the community members and other stakeholders. Developing relationships and support from these contributors led to success in the turnaround process (2010).

One aspect examined by Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss that is worthy of discussion is sustainability of the turnaround after the program has ended. A foundation for long term sustainability and growth must be established. One school examined was revisited two years later. The only aspect that had changed was the leader took a different position in the same district. Upon that change there was a decline in student scores by 9% the first year after the change (2010). Continuing the sustainability of the turnaround depends on a widely shared moral purpose. This is student learning in schools. Strong leadership keeps the organization focused on sustainable performance.

Other contributing factors for sustainability are the economic value and the organizational capabilities. Accountability increases due to the presence of threats to close or restructure schools have been short-lived (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). Sustainability was possible when an internal infrastructure is formed to manage external or internal challenges. Successful change is consistent with a change in the cultural aspect. For sustainability to work there must be cultural trust, positive staff and student relations, and a willingness to take risks. Leadership is central to success. Upon examining the organizational capabilities a leader must incorporate a constant sense of

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self-renewal, continuous innovation, and change. Leaders must actively seek out new ideas while paying attention to detail and collaboration (2010).

A discussion of the Obama/Duncan Reform Agenda proposes all students must be included in an accountability system. The System which outlines a blueprint for identifying low performing schools. These schools are identified as being in the lowest performing 5% based on student achievement, growth, and matriculation numbers (Papa, & English, 2011). The reform takes on the approach what works for one school will work for all schools. This reform agenda lacks a research foundation to support the ideology. Further, there is no mandate for internal changes, or dealing with issues of change policy. The policy requires a school to follow one of the four models: Transformational, Turnaround, Restart, or School Closure. Reforms are judged using a change model developed by Sarason which relies heavily on the support of teachers to implement a change effectively. The author notes that the Obama/Duncan Reform would not pass the Sarason Test for change (2011).

### Leadership Behaviors

Both, Bush (2003) and Anderson (2009) examine transformational leadership in education. Several different models of leadership were presented by Bush. However, only the transformational model of leadership is being reviewed as the Turnaround Program is based upon transformational leadership practices. Transformational leadership in schools occurs when school leaders focus on building vision, model best practices, demonstrate high performance expectations, and lead restructuring initiatives that focus on student outcomes. Transformational leadership can become despised based upon the assumption of power of the leader based upon teacher perception (Bush, 2003). The article by

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Anderson (2009) *Toward an Authentic Distribution of Leadership* examines school reform measures which have effective and ineffective leadership. The leadership reforms focus on the effectiveness of authentic educational teams. An authentic leadership team creates an environment where expertise is shared and group norms are established (Anderson, 2009). Turnaround Schools currently have a myriad of teams consisting of accountability, data, and leadership teams. These teams in most schools consist of the superintendent, building principals, academic coaches, and teachers.

Turnaround Leadership examines leadership practices needed to provide a successful school turnaround. Key components of a turnaround include engaging those with expertise with improving low performing schools, appointing new leadership as this is seen as a way to implement rapid change. Selecting an experienced leader to lead the change process and conducting a review to identify strengths and weaknesses to provide strategies for improvement are also imperative in school turnaround (Fullan, 2006). Making sure to monitor progress and being clear on the expectations of teachers and leadership roles are continuous improvement strategies. Along with using external service providers to implement tasks and functions unrelated to school improvement (2006). Fullan discusses how turnaround projects seem to lose their stamina as people who have put in many hours concentrating and focusing on school improvement seem to relax once the goal has been met. This allows for a resting period or a calm after the initial storm.

In examining sustainability it is necessary to build capacity. In building sustainability it is necessary to realize sustainable leadership must matter, last, spread, and improves the surrounding environment. Leadership must promote diversity, develop

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human resources, and honor the past to create a greater future (Fullan, 2006). In order to create a sustainable culture it is necessary to train those within to promote the accountability and collaboration efforts created with the implementation of the turnaround project. A culture of distributive leadership should be in place to establish leaders who are responsible in implementing the next phase with continuity (2006). With sustainability the leadership practices should not be abandoned with a change in leadership as seen by some schools.

Capacity building and changing the culture of learning with students and staff is necessary to achieve sustainability of the initial turnaround. The process of building capacity affects everything you do. The main components for building capacity center around ongoing professional development for staff, interacting with districts to assess quality improvement strategies, identify and share effective practices, develop resources for targeted areas, examine other districts, provide math and literacy coaches, summer and evening professional development, voluntarily join a program of support, and reduce class size (Fullan, 2006). The main components seem to surround professional development and building a culture for sustained professional learning and collaboration.

Papa and English examine the role of the principal in underperforming schools. Upon their examination of leaders in low performing schools the leader did not act alone. Leaders relied on a multitude of individuals in a collaborative manner to improve the performance in low performing schools (Papa, & English, 2011). The multitude of responsible individuals were made up of teaching staff, central office personnel, parents, and members of the community. The principal is the school leader responsible for reacting and being the catalyst for change.

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Principals in successful turnarounds have to have explicit beliefs and actions which contribute to their educational success. Principals must ask the difficult questions which stem across the school and community. They must encourage teachers to become learners again and rely on school teachers to become school leaders with a culture mindset on learning and keeping up with new practices in their field. The principal must sponsor professional development opportunities through a collaborative system and professional learning communities (Papa, & English, 2011).

An effective principal has to refuse to accept the idea of low expectations. It is the responsibility of the principal to plant the seed of academic success and high student performance. Maintaining the belief that the acceptance of a failing schools is not an option. That change is achievable for all schools (2011). Communicating with the parents and community the importance of academic success and educational attainment is necessary for the principal to create a cultural change in the community.

### Organizational Structure

The goals, support, and structures of the organization based on the realities of the individual in the organization are imperative when examining the transformational model. Maslow discussed the theory of human motivation and the basic needs, the need for safety, love, and esteem which play a part in setting individual goals (Shaffritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005). Anderson (2009) argued the goals of the organization reflect the individual goals of the leader. Therefore, whatever the leader sees as important is voiced to other participants in the organization so the goals of the organization become the views of the transformational leader. The support of the organization takes on the interpretations of the principals, and heads of the organization (Bush, 2003).

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Bush examines transformational leadership as being focused on the commitment and capacity of the members of the organization (2003). The emphasis is on personal commitment and a focus on meeting the goals of the organization. This will result in greater outcomes. Bush cites 8 dimensions of leadership introduced by Leithwood in 1994. The eight were building a school vision, establishing goals, providing intellectual stimulation, giving individual support, modeling best practices, demonstrating high expectations, creating a productive culture, and develop structures that support participation in decisions. Transformational leadership can be seen as a way for leaders to influence outcomes. Or it may be viewed as a way to gain control over teachers (Bush, 2007). The transformational model if not tainted by governmental control the leaders and staff share values and beliefs regarding the interest of the schools (2007). Transformational leadership forces the leaders to engage with staff and stakeholders to promote and achieve a level of commitment conducive to achieving the goals and vision of the organization and improving student outcomes (2007).

Greenfield (1984) voices the opinion it is individuals and not the organization which makes a difference. Also, everyone has their own realities and what is a reality for one is not the same reality for a different individual (Greenfield, 1984). Anderson (2009) focuses on the No Child Left Behind Act and restructuring of schools during this process. The success of the program is only authentic as long as the individuals responsible for implementing the program have buy-in or support for the program.

One element used to change the structure of low performing schools is the addition of an instructional coach. Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009) discuss the coaching elements necessary for successful implementation. The elements include

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regular meetings at an off-site training facility for the coaches. Coaches were able to share ideas and training video clips on how to enhance classroom instruction. Coaches were guided on how to implement meaningful conversations with classroom teachers after formal coaching observations. Another aspect of the research includes weekly grade level meetings with administrators, coaches, and grade level teachers. This research was limited to the state of Minnesota (2009). Data was gathered to learn about the different strategies by having eight coaches shadowed and observed. The observers were responsible for compiling the data and reporting the information using the school effectiveness rating, reform effort, and the Gates-MacGinitie comprehension assessments. All of the conversations were recorded and transcribed. To maintain the validity of the study the researchers restrained from participating in any of the conversations between the literacy coach and teachers (2009). Based on reviewing the articles and research the data collected and literature the strategies for the best practices and Scientific Based Reading Research are backed by research. Articles examined are based on theory, research, and practice.

An article published in the Bloomberg Businessweek focused on the Turnaround Project and the organization of the formation of the Turnaround Project in a school. The focus was on how to get principals to think like a manager. However, the article begins with a description of how a principal became involved with the project. The principal was given a directive from the central office to enroll in the University of Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (UVA-STSP). It was noted the principal began by writing a 90 day transformation plan for her building. She then provided time for collaboration among teams of teachers. She provided for a data analysis room for student data to be



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posted. She explained she took the best practices in business and translated those to fit education (Damast, 2012).

The article examines the cost of the program and notes the program comes with a hefty price tag of \$75,000.00 per school. With this expense the UVA offers classes at Darden, on site review by UVA staff members. The article raises the argument there is not enough research to be clear on if the program will have sustainability (2012). The article provides information as to an increase in reading scores by 33%, and math scores increasing by 37%. However, some schools have received both mediocre and negative results other programs withdrew (2012). Again, the issue of sustainability is in questions along with ideas on how to correct the toughest problems facing districts (Damast, 2012).

Authentic distribution becomes invalid once resources and individual values begin to change. Therefore, based on the power of the individual making the decisions and the opinion of the individual determine the success of the program. Anderson blames the low achievement of students on the hegemonic discourses of participation which seem to stifle common sense (2009).

### Power and Politics

The following articles focus on the politics surrounding the field of education and structural change in leadership. Anderson focuses on how and where the resources are distributed among schools can be a political issue facing the leadership teams among schools. Sources of politics in education can be seen as power. When examining the political frame the focus will be on the power, conflict, and coalition in the Turnaround School Project. Sources of power can be found in authority, rewards, coercion, expertise, reputation, personal power, alliances, control of agendas, and framing. The struggle for

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power can result in organizational conflict and coalition building in the organization of a school district.

The sources of power come from position, expertise, personal, control, coercive, and control of resources (Bush, 2009). Central office administration has the formal authority to control power through funding. Smaller schools have distributed the power through delegation by central office staff to other members of leadership teams such as coaches, principal, and teachers (Heller & Firestone, 1995). Examining successful leadership in schools which are undergoing the change process focusses on the collaboration and political efforts by those involved (1995). The power of state and local governments has been examined and a power shift determined when implementing No Child Left Behind Act. When examining the power of state control it seems that policy implementers remain to have political control in the schools (Malen, 2003). Examining the organization and culture are detrimental in determining where the power lies in school districts. Larsen (1997), discussed identifying the power structures in a school aides leaders in understanding the culture and politics surrounding the school.

When examining power it is necessary to note the five assumptions of power laid out by Bolman and Deal (2008): (a) Organizations are made up of coalitions (b) the members have different values (c) information, and perceptions, resources are scarce and must be distributed (d) available resources and differing values make conflict at the center of daily activities (e) bargaining and negotiation takes place daily to persuade and influence goals and decisions (2008).

In companies or organizations the presence of power is essential to the success of the organization. Power may be defined as the ability to make things happen. Jeffrey

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Pfeffer notes: “In order to assess power, one must be able to estimate (a) what would have happened in the absence of the exercise of power; (b) the intentions of the actor attempting to exercise power; and (c) the effect of action taken by that actor on the probability that what was desired would in fact be likely to occur (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005).

When examining the constructive side of politics it is important to have a skilled manager taking care of the organization. School Boards are composed of elected officials responsible for implementing policy for a school district. The role of local school boards should be to advance school reform goals (Rhim, Quarles, and Wong, 2013). The findings of the research give the premise it is not the responsibility of the board to run schools. Boards should establish the vision and mission of the school and supervise the superintendent. Boards who take on the responsibility of running the school have proven to be some of the most dysfunctional.

Another source of power and politics in the field of education rests with the elected school board. The focus of a board historically has been on “the Killer B’s” (books, budget, buildings, and busses) (2013). However, a main focus should be on academic achievement of the district. Turning around low-performing schools as a focal point local school boards need to be part of the equation. The accountability of local boards has been ignored at the national level. Language was added to include the accountability of the board with Race to The Top (RTTT). But, was removed when RTTT was released (Rhim, Quarles, & Wong, 2013). Part of the reason for deleting the requirement for the accountability of school boards is the lack of clarity for using student performance to hold boards responsible for meeting performance expectations.

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Upon examination of boards at this time in history school boards are more diverse under both gender and ethnic lines. Board members still are among the highest wage earners in the community they serve. Board members report their key responsibilities are attending sporting events, reading background information, attending meetings, interacting with their constituents, preparing students for college, and aligning policies to meet federal and state guidelines, budgets, hiring and evaluating superintendents (Rhim, Quarles, & Wong, 2013).

Upon examination of dysfunctional boards it was found the district had a higher turnover rate of superintendents, principals and other administrative staff members. These schools were also among those recognized as a school in need of improvement (2013). The decisions by these boards had a negative impact on principals, teachers, and students than those boards which functioned to align their resources to best foster academic achievement throughout the district. One solution to the problem of dysfunctional boards is to require board members to attend training to inform the board on the role of the board, and substantial policy which has an impact on the education of students. Another significant factor in dysfunctional boards is often times a board is left out of the implementation of a School Improvement Grant (SIG) awarded to low performing schools. This can lead to discord and resistance to school improvement measures (Rhim, Quarles, & Wong, 2013).

There is not an abundance of information on the role of the school board in the accountability of low-performing schools. However, one factor which contributes to a low-performing school is a dysfunctional school board. Requiring training and support for school board members regarding their roles and responsibilities could alleviate

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misconstrued ideas of what responsibilities are required of board members. Training board members on the evaluation of policies and procedures and the evaluation of the superintendent would be a step in the right direction.

Bolman and Deal (2008) outline four key skills to successfully survive as a politician. In order to maintain an organization it must be constructed with agenda-setting, mapping the political terrain, networking and forming coalitions, and bargaining and negotiating. By this it is meant that a good manager understands what each person wants to gain from an initiative (2008). Agenda setting is necessary in order to carry out the best interest of the organization during organized meetings with staff and outside players which may have influence over the organization. Kotter recognizes an effective leader has an agenda for change to achieve the vision of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Bolman and Deal (2008) examine the organization as a political arena it is important to acknowledge the use of power by Rosabeth Kanter. Kanter suggest the idea of power being something that is denied, hungered for, and done in secrecy (2008). Much of the organization in the political arena is similar to that of the construction of effective managers. Bolman and Deal (2008) reflect on the importance in developing agendas, mapping the environment, managing relationships, and negotiating alliances. The political arena determines where the power sits and what cultural factors affect the relationship of power within an organization and society.

Bolman and Deal (2008) examine the manager as a politician. It is the responsibility of the manager to map the political terrain, set the agenda to reflect organizational interest, and build coalitions. One way this can be achieved is by

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delegating power. In order to build relevant relationships managers need to recognize the relationship between individuals in an organization. Recognizing those who may not welcome change or policy is necessary for effective management. Nixon alludes to the process of power in education as he discusses the necessity for universities to become involved in the Democratic Process and policy decisions (1996). Another strategy Bolman and Deal emphasize is develop alliances with opponents through negotiation (2008). The bargaining and negotiation process are important in obtaining power in the political arena. Determining the realization of sacrificing minor things in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the organization is necessary to have a successful organization. Kanter (2005) discusses staff managers and their ability to sell their agendas and bargain to obtain resources (Shaffritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005).

### Data Analysis

A major focus of the Turnaround Project is data collection. The following articles provide insight into the importance of data collection. Data collection through assessments to determine the most effective teaching practices for student learning to occur are key to determining the best practices for instruction (Denton, Swanson, & Mathis, 2007). During the Turnaround process schools are encouraged to use data to make decisions regarding student growth and performance. An academic coach collects data and presents the data to classroom teachers for reflective conversations regarding teaching practices in the classroom (Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2009).

Another data model used by schools in the Turnaround project is the Response to Intervention Model which is a Scientific Based Reading Model which relies on a three tier approach to reading in order for all students to benefit (Samuels, 2008). Data should

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be used to determine intervention groups and provide classroom instruction based on scientific research which is differentiated to meet the needs of all learners (Tomlinson, 2002).

A qualitative approach was taken to examine the data for the research on the Turnaround School Project and how the schools use leadership to aide in the success of the schools. Upon choosing a multisite case study it was necessary to analyze and provide a description into a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Examining two cases of schools involved in the Turnaround Project provided the program of study for the research. In using qualitative analysis a phenomenon of what is occurring will be evaluated. To complete the multisite case study it has to be determined how precise the data collection is going to be. How many subjects will be interviewed and how much time will be spent on observation.

An advantage to multisite case study is there are no restrictions on data collection. All methods of gathering data can be used to form the research. This manner is chosen so a focus can be placed on insight, discovery, and interpretation (Merriam, 2009). The phenomenon of aspects which continue to be effective and what practices have been discarded after the completion of the Turnaround Project. The multisite case study provides for a rich, description of the phenomenon being investigated. This provides an insight into how the program worked and how things can be expected to result from the findings of the study. A case study can reinforce previous ideas or a modification of previously held generalizations could occur (2009).

A cross case analysis will be used as two different sites are being examined to assist the researcher in determining what aspects of the program were successful, those

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which are no longer being used, and the similarities and differences which play a role into how the program was implemented at each site. Both of the cases share a commonality of being members of the UVA-STSP and being identified as schools in need of improvement. The multisite case study can assist in providing structure for future research and advancing the knowledge for researchers when examining how to turnaround low performing schools (Merriam, 2009). It is noted that multisite case studies are not without their limitations. One limitation to keep in mind is the sensitivity of the researcher. As the investigator has to report on her own instincts and abilities (2009). Being aware of possible bias is critical to the researcher.

Creswell provides a guide into five approaches of qualitative inquiry. His discussion of a case study leaves the researcher with beneficial information and ideas for thought. One example of this is his discussion on how to leave the location of the research. During this discussion it talks about leaving the site as undisturbed as possible. It reminds the researcher to be mindful of the participants and research by maintaining the thoughtfulness of being sensitive to the possibility the research could disrupt or exploit the site (Creswell, 2007). Creswell points out the same definition of a case study as discussed by Merriam. A case study involves an issue being studied in a bounded system (2007). The system being evaluated is a multisite case study examining two schools identified as low performing which participated in the UVA-STSP. Creswell cites Merriam in his discussion regarding case studies. The researcher may select multiple sites to give insight into different perspectives within the same bounded system (2007).

Challenges to conducting a multisite case study were discussed. Of the challenges listed setting boundaries to determine the beginning and ending of the case is necessary.



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The case study uses multiple forms of data. Of these forms interviews, observations, documents and artifacts are pertinent along with a reflection by the researcher. Rich descriptions are necessary to allow the researcher to accurately describe the research (Creswell, 2007).

Creswell sets up a procedure for reporting the research. This information assist researchers in the layout of the case study. He explains the importance of opening and closing vignettes to capture the reader's attention. The researcher then gives an introduction to the study and provides descriptions of the cases. After the description is given the researcher provides a detail of the development of the issues with details regarding these issues. Finally, the researcher gives assertions and concludes with another vignette (2007).

Validity and reliability of the case study is important when completing research. Two forms of maintaining validity in qualitative research is prolonged engagement and persistent observation, along with providing a rich thick description. Providing prolonged engagement allows participants to become familiar with the researcher and trust is built. Rich descriptions allow for the readers to make comparisons and descriptions based on information presented by the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Reliability is enhanced through the use of intensive field notes and good quality recordings.

Data maintained through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was examined to create a holistic evaluation of the qualitative data gathered through interviews backed by statistical data to determine the gains or losses in the Turnaround Schools in Southeast Missouri.

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### Summary

An introduction to the study was included in chapter one which focused on the need to examine low performing schools in Southeast Missouri and their attempt to turnaround student achievement in each district. There are approximately 5,000 school districts in the nation that fall into the 5% population described as low Performing (Kutash, Nico, Gorn, Rahmatullah, and Tallant, 2012).

The literature regarding structural frameworks, education reform, accountability, leadership behaviors, organizational structures, power and politics, and data analysis are a crucial element in researching the research questions: What type of leadership behaviors were exhibited prior, during, and after the Turnaround Program? What structural changes remain? Were there any political influences that had and continue to have an impact before, during, and presently in the district? What was the most useful aspect of the Turnaround Project?

Chapter 3 will examine the research design and methodology including the population sample, research questions, population sampling, and data collection as related to enhancing the academic performance in Southeast Missouri Schools.

Chapter 4 will examine the findings and case studies which will be completed during the research portion of this study. An in depth description of each school along with the data analysis will be presented. Each research question will be examined and results regarding changes in leadership behaviors, school structure, and the power of politics will be reported based on the findings in each school district. The researcher will ensure confidentiality of these school districts by coding each school and participant with a pseudo name.

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Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions and recommendations for low performing schools in need of improvement. Also in this chapter the researcher will use data provided by DESE to determine how many of these schools continued to use the research they were given during the Turnaround Program or if they discontinued the use when the accountability to report was complete.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Methodology

School improvement is a major problem facing many school districts in America. With the focus of school accountability and student performance schools must focus on programs proven to enhance the academic performance of students. Identification of school improvement was recognized by the Reagan Administration with A Nation at Risk. The document alerts the public to the failing education systems in the United States and the neglect of high expectations and discipline of students (The National Commission on the Excellence of Education, 1983). Goals 2000: Educate America focused on reform with accountability as student mastery levels would be assessed in grades four, eight, and 12 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). No Child Left behind (NCLB) the most recent legislation required even more teacher accountability and challenging 100% proficiency for all students in the area of reading (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This reform and accountability focused on leadership in the form of instructional coaches to hold teachers and administrators accountable for their performance (2002).

The University of Virginia's Turnaround Schools Project incorporates several changes which must be implemented for a school to be able to turnaround students' academic progress. Changes suggested include: leadership changes, school policy changes, program changes, changes in processes and procedures, changes in personnel, classroom practices, parental and community involvement, and changes in school facilities (Darden, 2005). The Turnaround School Project is a two year program. Schools

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reaching the school improvement status are encouraged through state resources, to participate for the academic success of the students.

Several Southeast Missouri Schools have attained school improvement status due to low scores on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Annual Yearly Progress Report (AYP). For these schools it is necessary to make intensive instructional changes in the day to day operations of public schools to improve the academic achievement of students. Changes being implemented focus on transformational leadership along with structural changes in the organization. These changes are being led through the University of Virginia's Turnaround Schools Project.

To assist in the success of Southeast Missouri schools it is necessary to examine the leadership strategies and changes which need to occur in order to improve area schools. Changing learning through individual, team, whole organization, and community learning as suggested by Gill (2010), serves as a framework for a successful Turnaround School Project. Transformational leaders, a change in the structure of the organization of the school, the role of power and politics are all issues involved in the Turnaround Schools Project.

Southeast Missouri had five schools involved in the cohort through the University of Virginia's Turnaround School Project. The schools had students of mixed ability and a high number of free and reduced lunch populations. Although, all five schools have participated in the program the results are tailored to the specific demographics of each school.

The design and methods portion examined the purpose for the research to learn about different leadership approaches, organizational structure, and the power which

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influences school districts. The Turnaround program for these schools came to an end in 2011. It was important for the researcher to take a look back to find where they are now, since participation has ended and they are no longer receiving a School Improvement Grant. The data collected will examine what worked, what didn't, the roles of administrators, faculty, board members and the community.

Triangulation of student achievement data, interviews, and observations were used to support the internal validity and reliability of this research project (Merriam, & Tidsell, 2014). This multi-site case study examined two Turnaround Schools to determine where they were prior to the Turnaround process, the changes implemented during the process, and what is going on since the conclusion of the Turnaround Program. An open ended interview will focus on leadership strategies in successful Turnaround Schools as opposed to the leadership strategies used in less successful Turnaround Schools. The organizational structure was examined to determine if a lateral approach was more beneficial than a vertical approach as discussed in Bolman and Deal (2008). Interviews will determine what worked best and continues to be implemented and what aspects of the program have been eliminated from the day to day operations of educating students. Finally, the role of power and politics and the effect power had on the success of the program was examined.

### Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine two Southeast Missouri Schools who followed the Turnaround project to assist them in getting out of School Improvement status. The study will provide a view as to where they are now. Now that the program is over the researcher will interview administrators, shepherds and teachers to determine

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positive and negative outcomes of the schools which participated to determine effective use of strategies and the role of leadership to enhance instruction in low performing schools, and what improvements gained from the program have been sustained three years after the conclusion of the Turnaround program through the University of Virginia. A multi-site case study of two schools three years after their participation will be conducted to determine what works, what does not, and what obstacles the schools faced and may still be facing.

Interviews will be coded and field notes examined to determine leadership and instructional styles that were used for improving student performance. The perspectives of administrators, shepherds, and teachers will be examined to determine if there were shifts in the culture of the school and if changes in the styles of teaching have been sustained. Interviews will be coded to identify what types of changes were exhibited by the different members involved in the Turnaround Program.

The next purpose of the research is to focus on the organizational structure and the role of power and politics in the participating Southeast Missouri school districts. If there was a change in the organizational structure what were they? Did power and politics affect the changes in a positive or negative way? Participants will be asked to recall any specific events that were key into making these changes. Also, is evidence remaining that the organizational structure has changed or politics were a determining factor in deciding what changes would occur.

The study examines the positive and negative outcome of the schools which participated to determine effective use of strategies and the role leadership has in the

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enhancement of instruction in low performing schools and to determine if the improvements gained from the process have sustained longevity.

Both of the schools researched concluded their participation in the spring of 2011. Interviews will be conducted to determine which schools strategies and changes were most effective at ensuring student success through research based methods and change. What practices were successful, what is the same, what has changed after the three year period?

The administrators, shepherds, and lead teachers from two of the Turnaround School Districts will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to help gain an understanding of the Turnaround program and where the district is now the Turnaround Program ended three years ago. Administrators, shepherds, and teachers who were from the two schools selected are currently employed in the same district. Each participant will be interviewed at their perspective school district. This will allow for the participants to be in a more comfortable, familiar setting.

### Research Questions

To ensure low performing schools have the opportunity to learn and provide support to students to enhance their academic performance it becomes necessary to review factors which have an impact on the performance of the schools. In this study the research questions will focus on the role of leaders, structure of the schools, the power and politics in the Turnaround Schools and the effect these components have had and continue to have on the Turnaround Schools.

1. What type of leadership behaviors did the school have prior, during, and after the Turnaround Program?



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2. What structural changes remain?
3. Were there any political influences that had and continue to have an impact before, during and presently in the district?
4. What was the most useful aspect of the Turnaround Program?

### Design for the Study

A multi-site case study will be conducted in two of the five Turnaround schools. The research from interviews with administrators, shepherds, and lead teachers will be gathered to determine where the schools are three years after participation in the Turnaround project. Interviews to determine the changes in leadership behaviors of the principals, any structural changes and the impact those changes had on the districts, instructional strategies used, what was useful in the process, what has changed, and the role of the power of politics on each district will be gathered to gain research to the success or shortcomings of the Turnaround program for the Southeast Missouri Districts and the performance of the schools three years later.

The rationale for interviewing principals, shepherds, and lead teachers is to gain insight into effective leadership in low performing schools. This will also pinpoint which research based strategies are effective and those which are not very useful, how structural changes influence teaching strategies, and if politics had a positive or negative impact on the Turnaround Program. The interview questions which were chosen has a myriad of questions which will enable the researcher to determine which change in leadership behavior each principal exhibits, what strategies in the Turnaround program were useful, which strategies did not work, what structural changes occurred, and how politics has impacted where the schools are now. The interviews the researcher will conduct will

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examine the everyday activities of the principals, shepherds, and lead teachers during the Turnaround Project and the ideologies regarding their behaviors, the role of power and politics, and the effectiveness of structural changes that may have been discovered during the Turnaround Program.

In order to gain a better understanding of the Turnaround process and the effects of leadership, organizational structure, and the role of power and politics it was necessary to use a multi-site case study. Once the quantitative data provided by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was reviewed questions began to arise which prompted the use of interviews with open and closed ended questions. Based on the research by Creswell (2009), and Mertens (2005) the multi-site case study with semi-structured interviews was conducted. This allows for a more personable experience and provides a more human-to-human relationship between the researcher and respondents (2005).

A multi-site case study was used in this qualitative approach to conduct the research for the study. The case study design is based on the premise multiple-sites and interviews with multiple subjects from two different Turnaround districts will be used to gather information on how the program is doing since completion. An analysis of what worked, what changes have been made, and what the districts still use in the years post Turnaround were examined. Semi-structured interviews are used to analyze, and draw conclusions based on the data (Creswell, 2009).

Collections of interviews and field note observations to gain a more accurate understanding of the problem support the design of the multi-site case study design. The interviews conducted used both open and closed ended questions supporting the

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qualitative approach (2009). Inferences gained from the quantitative information prompted the use of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews to confirm the researchers initial inferences (Mertens, 2005). Validity and reliability was established by triangulation of student achievement data, interviews, and field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### Population and Sample

The population and sample included statistical information from five school districts located in Southeast Missouri. Semi-structured interviews were gathered from two Turnaround school administrators. Quantitative information was used to assist the researcher in gaining a statistical understanding of improvements or decline made during the process and since the program has concluded. The Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report released by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) was used to help the researcher visualize the information prior to conducting the multi-site case study. Samuels (2008) discusses successful implementation to Response to Intervention which relies heavily on assessing data. Current data is available from the University of Virginia and the Turnaround School Project for some of the schools located in Southeast Missouri. The sample used was a typical case sample (Mertens, 2005) as the cases sampled had all been involved in the implementation of the Turnaround Schools Program. The individuals interviewed were knowledgeable about the program and had access to relevant data to assist in gaining answers to the interview questions (2005).

To answer the research problem of which instructional changes are effective in improving classroom instruction it was necessary to sample principals, shepherds, and lead teachers from schools who are or have been low performing schools which have and

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have not made academic gains in instruction as based on annual AYP reports from the Missouri DESE.

The area chosen for the study was located in a rural area in Southeast Missouri. The communities were farming communities with low socio economic status. Most of the districts had between 500 and 1000 students. Some schools had high African American populations while others had a high population of Hispanic students who have recently migrated due to the availability of farm work in the area. The schools with a high Hispanic population also have a high migrant population. When examining the districts in the area some utilize instructional leaders while others do not. The data will be compiled from the elementary, middle, and high schools that participated in the Turnaround School Project. The two schools selected were an elementary building and a middle school. These schools were selected based on their proximity to each other and the different student demographics between each Turnaround school. Pseudonyms will be used for each principal.

Table C

### School Names

Turnaround School Name	Role	Experience	Gender
Every Student Can Learn Elementary Ms. Berry	Principal	25 yrs.	F
Every Student Can Learn Elementary Ms. B	Teacher	14 yrs.	F
Every Student Can Learn Elementary Ms. C	Shepherd	21 yrs	F
May Welcome All Middle School Mr. Right	Principal	14 yrs.	M
May Welcome All Middle School Ms. D	Curriculum Director	20 yrs.	F
May Welcome All Middle School Ms. E	Teacher	17 yrs.	F

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### Data Gathering Tools and Procedures

To assist with improving low performing schools in Southeast Missouri it is necessary to examine the leadership strategies and changes which needed to occur in order to improve the area school Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). This was done by collecting statistical school performance data, and semi-structured interview transcripts conducted by the researcher,

### Data Collection Procedures

Student achievement data was collected to help the researcher gain focus for the interview questions to ask of Ms. Berry and Mr. Right. The data was used to determine if the schools had an increase or decline during the Turnaround program and if the progress continued after the program was completed. Examining and using data collected from this public domain gave the researcher insight into the performance of schools in the Turnaround Program.

Examining only two schools in Southeast Missouri was justified by the demonstration of the high AYP scores which demonstrated the districts made significant growth during and after participation in the Turnaround Project. These two schools have retained many of the participants who were on the University of Virginia Turnaround Team during the initial process. The schools continued to have similar growth during, and after the Turnaround Program.

### *Instrument One Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Report*

Data analysis which is available for public view on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website using the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report will be used to determine improvement on the Turnaround Schools (AYP).

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Samuels (2008) discusses successful implementation to Response to Intervention which relies heavily on assessing data.

A series of data is collected to determine annual trend lines in schools having a status of school improvement. Data for schools in the Turnaround Program will be analyzed prior to the school districts participation in the Turnaround Program, during the Turnaround Program, and Post-Turnaround Program. The data is analyzed to determine if there is a positive, negative, or a non-pattern trend line showing continuous improvement on the state assessment. The years of data collection will include 2008-2013 public school data. The data available on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website will be examined to determine the similarities and differences between the districts located in Southeast Missouri.

This instrument was used early in the stages of the research project to guide the multi-site case study used in this project. The data gave a numerical recording of the performance of the students, the demographic information for both school districts, along with the average teacher salaries in each district.

### *Instrument Two Field Notes*

The researcher used field notes to describe and capture the visions, sights, and impressions during the semi-structured interview process. The field notes will assist the researcher to gather visual, spacial, and emotional perceptions of the participants.

### *Instrument Three Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews used were conducted by the researcher. The researcher used a design and interview protocol (Creswell, 2007) and selected the participants from administrators, shepherds, and lead teachers involved in the Turnaround School Project.

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### Human Subjects Protection

All measures to ensure the protection and confidentiality of all research participants was taken during this research project. Approval by the Institutional Review Board is necessary for the protection of the study of human subjects. The University of Missouri-Columbia Office of Research further adds that the selection of participants must be equitable and risks to participants must be minimized. The proposal was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research involving human subjects prior to the collection of any data.

In addition, each participant signed an informed consent form prior to participation. The consent form outlines the purpose of the study, the potential use of the information collected from the semi-structured interviews, and that the process had been approved by the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board, explaining that research procedures safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The consent form stated that participation was voluntary and subjects were allowed to cease participation without penalty at any time, subjects were not required to answer all questions, and all answers would remain confidential.

### Data Analysis Procedures

After the semi-structured interviews were complete a coding process was used to determine the significance of what worked, what did not work, and the continuity of the practices upon completion of the program. The interviews collected by the researcher were coded based upon. How do the leadership practices in progressing Turnaround Schools differ from the leadership practices in less successful Turnaround Schools? What changes do current principals use? How did changes in structure result in positive

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changes and student success? How does power, the perception of power, and politics affect the performance of teachers and students in Turnaround Schools? To ensure credibility of the qualitative data the researcher coded transcripts looking for consensual validation and referential adequacy (Creswell 2007).

### Assumptions and Limitations

All schools want to get out of school improvement is one assumption of the research project. Schools want their students to perform well as this is a reflection on the performance of the community, staff, and faculty. Another assumption of the study is students want to perform to the best of their ability on state mandated assessments. These are only two assumptions foreseen in the research study.

The study is not without limitations. Only schools in Southeast Missouri were examined due to the proximity of the researcher. The researcher has bias towards schools which have instructional leaders, due to serving in the role of an instructional leader. All schools are from low socio-economic communities. The schools involved in the study are made up of rural districts in the southern most area of Southeast Missouri. Therefore, the effects of the study will not be compared to other urban schools in the state of Missouri. However, the researcher is aware of these limitations and will consciously avoid any misconstrued biases.

### Summary

Several schools located in Southeast Missouri are labeled as schools in need of improvement. One solution to school improvement is to join the Turnaround Schools



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Project through the University of Virginia. Five schools located in Southeast Missouri were members of the University of Virginia's Turnaround School Project.

The methodology used for the research was a multi-site case study. The population sample included administrators, shepherds, and lead teachers. The research tools used were quantitative data provided through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Interviews of administrators, shepherds, and lead teachers were used and coded to determine the change in leadership behaviors, changes in the structure since the program, the role of politics, and to answer the questions of what was most beneficial from the Turnaround Program.

The research design and methodology introduced the study providing background knowledge and the purpose for the study. The research design provided the selection and rationale for the design. Next, the population and sample was introduced with sampling procedures explained. Data gathering and the research tools followed the sampling procedures. Data analysis was explained with citations for the reliability and validity of the study. Finally, the assumptions and limitations were presented.

Chapter 4 will examine the findings and case studies which will be completed during the research portion of this study. An in-depth description of each school along with the data analysis will be presented. Each research question will be examined and results regarding change in leadership behaviors, school structure, and the power of politics will be reported based on the findings in each school district. The researcher will ensure confidentiality of these school districts by coding each school with a number and each participant with a pseudo name.

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Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions and recommendations for low performing schools in need of improvement. Also in this chapter the researcher will use data provided by DESE to determine how many of these schools continued to use the research they were given during the Turnaround Program or if they discontinued the use when the accountability to report was complete.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This multi-site bounded case study examined the Turnaround Program and the effects on two schools located in Southeast Missouri. The focus for this study was to determine where they are now. What took place prior, during, and post Turnaround. The schools were examined through the lens of change theory. The case study sites were bounded through the participation of both schools in the Turnaround Project. The schools will be referred to as Every Student Can Learn Elementary, and May Welcome All Middle School. The principals and teachers will be given pseudo names.

The research study was designed to look through the lens of change theory to allow the researcher to take a look at schools in the Turnaround Program three years after the program has ended. The research was guided by four questions which were used to provide the focus for the findings and case studies. The questions are as follows:

What type of leadership behaviors were exhibited prior, during, and after the Turnaround Program?

What structural changes remain?

Were there any political influences that had and continue to have an impact before, during and presently in the district?

What was the most useful aspect of the Turnaround Program?

With change theory as the conceptual lens for the research, data gathered will consist of interviews with administrators, teachers, and other professional faculty members involved in the direct implementation of the Turnaround Program along with descriptive field notes taken by the researcher, and student achievement data. During the

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interview process a total of six individuals were interviewed. The participants consisted of two building administrators, two teachers who served as teacher leaders and two directors of curriculum and instruction who had a role in the Turnaround Program as school shepherds. There were a total of six interviews ranging from 20-30 minutes were audio recorded and transcribed for coding purposes.

Table D

### School Names

Turnaround School	Name	Role	Experience	Gender
Every Student Can Learn Elementary	Ms. Berry	Principal	25 yrs.	F
Every Student Can Learn Elementary	Ms. B	Teacher	14 yrs.	F
Every Student Can Learn Elementary	Ms. C	Shepherd	21 yrs	F
May Welcome All Middle School	Mr. Right	Principal	14 yrs.	M
May Welcome All Middle School	Ms. D	Curriculum Director	20 yrs.	F
May Welcome All Middle School	Ms. E	Teacher	17 yrs.	F

## Findings

Based upon the perceptions of the six participants which consisted of administrators, teachers, and shepherds there were four major findings that contributed to the changes prior, during, and post-Turnaround in the two participating districts.

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Finding No. 1: A successful turnaround is attributed to data analysis used to lead instruction based on individual student needs and differentiated instruction based on student data. (*Data*)

Finding No. 2: A major contribution to change in both schools was brought about by a change in school climate and the day to day routines in the schools. (*School climate*)

Finding No. 3: Buy-in by school leaders, teachers, parents, and students were critical to the success of the changes implemented from the Turnaround Program. (*Buy-in*)

Finding No. 4: There were political factors which had an impact on the changes brought about by the Turnaround Program. (*Politics and Power*)

The findings above were based on perceptions of the individuals who participated in the Turnaround Program and field notes. The findings were generally formed by all participants in the interviews. The remainder of this chapter will represent two case studies of schools located in Southeast Missouri which participated in the Turnaround Program and will examine the districts prior to implementation, the changes during the Turnaround Program, and the sustained changes three years post Turnaround. The remainder of this chapter consists of multi-site case study of two districts followed by a cross-case analysis comparing and contrasting the findings at each site. The two case studies and the cross-case analysis provides introductory data in support of each finding.

### Every Student Can Learn Elementary

Every Student Can Learn Elementary, the first case study site, was located in Southeast Missouri in an area referred to as the Bootheel. The researcher began making

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contact with the school administrator in 2012 regarding the research for the multi-site case study. The school had approximately 455 students in the school in 2013. The student population was made up of 61.5% white, 29.5% black, .70% Asian, 7.5% Hispanic, and .40 percent Indian. The free and reduced lunch population was 74.3%. The school sits on the south side of the district in a rural impoverished area of the state. The main industry is agriculture and there are several agricultural related businesses, two factories, Wal-mart, and several small businesses. All participants interviewed at Every Student Can Learn Elementary had 60 years of experience collectively.

Every Student Can Learn Elementary is located on the bypass into town. From the highway there is a paved circle drive indicating the front entrance of the building. To enter the building the secretary had to activate the electronic door system to allow visitors in to protect the students of the district. Upon approaching the secretary's window to be signed in there is a waiting area with school achievements and two comfortable chairs to allow visitors to wait. There are several bright colored wall murals throughout the building making the school student friendly and welcoming.

### *Pre-Turnaround*

Prior to beginning the Turnaround Project teachers from Every Student Can Learn Elementary had participated in Professional Learning Communities (PLC's). However, Every Student Can Learn Elementary was not the desired assignment for district teachers. The school had low test scores and was identified as a school in need of improvement. Although, PLC's were in place a school shepherd stated, "How we measured success was through their intuitive feelings, as opposed to looking very closely and carefully at data." As one teacher reported, "ESCLE was not the place to be they had never made AYP."

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It was reported the emphasis was not placed on data analysis but the idea teachers had about their own teaching practices and methods. During the PLC's most of the focus was on norms and establishing norms, not improving instruction. Mrs. Berry stated, "This was not because we didn't want to do it right. We just didn't know any better." Prior to beginning the Turnaround Program ESCLE was identified as a school in need of improvement and was awarded a School Improvement Grant (SIG). Thus, Turnaround was born.

The Superintendent at ESCLE approached the school administrator and informed Mrs. Berry her building would be using the SIG funds to enroll in the Turnaround Program. Mrs. Berry reported the Superintendent and the Board of Education had approved the program and she reluctantly agreed. She stated, "I went kicking and screaming." During the summer she along with the School Shepherd and a central office administrator attended the summer training at The University of Virginia, Darden School of Business. It was at the summer session Mrs. Berry realized the importance of taking a new approach to school improvement. Mrs. Berry realized the PLC's which were being implemented needed to be overhauled. Norms were created by the administrator, and the focus was placed on individual student data. At the summer session the discussion of attainable, visible goals was discussed in order to gain buy-in by staff.

### *During Turnaround*

Upon return Mrs. Berry and the administration for ESCLE began the task of making cosmetic changes which would be visible to students, parents, and staff members. Murals were painted inside the building to enhance the appeal of the building to be more student friendly. Another, Turnaround change which was implemented required teachers

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to visit each student's house to introduce themselves to their students prior to the first day of school. This was done to enhance the relationships with teachers, parents, and students.

### *Data*

Another major change was data analysis. Mrs. Berry created a data room and placed all teacher's data on the data wall. The school shepherd, Mrs. B. stated, "in the beginning, teachers felt the data wall was a gotcha. They soon discovered it was about enhancing instruction for each student." The focus was on improving instruction based on data not on the intuition or feelings of staff members. Teachers were reluctant to begin the data process and changing classroom instruction. With support from the Superintendent, Board of Education, and Mrs. Berry teachers began to take risks and implement the Turnaround according to a plan set forth during the planning sessions at The University of Virginia's Turnaround Program. Mrs. Berry elaborated on reluctant staff and stated, "some of the staff members left the district either through resignation or retirement and others made a move within the district if they weren't willing or ready to buy-in to the program. Teachers were not given the option to refuse to change."

### *School Climate*

Along with data analysis came common planning periods, and weekly data meetings. During these common planning time and data analysis meetings norms were followed, assessments were discussed, and grade level expectations and classroom presentation was implemented. Teachers began differentiating instruction based on the individual needs of students through benchmarking assessments and study island instructional data. During this time there were teachers who felt challenged and resisted



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the changes implemented under the Turnaround Program. Mrs. Berry explained to them “if I lose my job because of what I have implemented that is on me. But, I will not lose my job because you will not do what I have recommended.” Once, the Superintendent came in to explain this was not optional and Mrs. Berry was completely bought in to the Turnaround Program the teachers began to buy-in.

To enhance classroom instruction kidney shaped tables, smart boards, and text books were purchased to assist teachers in providing instruction. Mrs. Berry stated, “Instruction had to be differentiated to meet the needs of all students. Whole group instruction would not work to improve test scores. Students were no longer ability grouped as this wasn’t fair to teachers.” She went on to explain if students were ability grouped it would prevent the teacher and students from reaching their highest potential. One particular program allowed teachers to assess specific grade level expectations and determine if students had grasped the understanding. If not, the teachers assigned individual practice and re-assessed after the students had additional instruction and practice with the specific grade level expectation.

### *Buy-in*

During this process an integral component was parent buy-in. Mrs. Berry and her faculty had meetings to explain the important role of parents and what parents could do to help their students be successful. Mrs. B said, “We had to feed them to get them to the meetings. Once they were there we could tell them what we were doing, how their student’s danced every day, and the importance of a good night’s sleep.” Mrs. C also addressed the issue of collecting data to determine the needs of the students. She stated they learned a number of students were hungry and food deprived. She spoke about the

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importance of meeting the student's basic needs and the implementation of free breakfast and backpacks for kids to provide food during the weekend for students.

During the first year of the Turnaround Program when it was time for the MAP assessment the district along with support from community members decided to have a MAP assembly to get the students excited about testing. There were incentives for student attendance and performance during testing week. Each student received a MAP themed t-shirt. The teachers and administrators had implemented the program with the assistance of members from the University of Virginia's Turnaround Program and the scores increased after the first year.

Mrs. Berry along with a team of teachers and the school shepherd returned to the University of Virginia for the second summer retreat. During this retreat they underwent more training and learned more strategies for improving student performance. During this time teachers who were given the opportunity to attend summer training went back to ESCLE recharged and ready to conquer school improvement once again. During this time period Mrs. Berry realized she could increase teacher buy-in with data notebooks instead of displaying all data upon the walls.

### *Politics*

The Turnaround team was committed to enhancing instruction to benefit the needs of all students. The belief in the Turnaround Program was evident in the increase in student's scores on the MAP. The teachers continued to have weekly data meetings. This led to the enhancement of instruction at all grade levels at Every Student Can Learn Elementary. There was resistance from one school board member and that member had made several statements of opposition to the Turnaround. A school board meeting was

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scheduled to discuss the opposition by this school board member. The night of the board meeting several teachers from ESCLE attended the meeting to defend the program and the teaching practices which had become part of the institution at ESCLE. The teachers presented data and examples. After the board meeting that particular board member was not re-elected due to her opposition of the Turnaround Program.

Teachers continued meeting students and their parents during home visits prior to the first day of school to enhance parent and community involvement. Mrs. Berry continued the tradition of MAP t-shirts and assembly prior to testing. During year two of the Turnaround Program ESCLE MAP achievement scores improved and the school was no longer classified as a school in need of improvement. Mrs. Berry and her staff were recognized for their accomplishments of turning around ESCLE.

### *Post-Turnaround*

Three years post-Turnaround Program Every Student Can Learn Elementary continued to make improvements on the Annual Yearly Progress report. Students continued to make gains on the MAP assessment. Mrs. C, a teacher at ESCLE, stated, “Once the Turnaround ended the changes which were implemented by the program continued as the culture of the school had changed. Data analysis and differentiated instruction are business as usual. It’s the way we do things.”

Weekly grade level meetings continued post-Turnaround. Mrs. Berry continued to require teachers to keep data notebooks and to make instructional decisions regarding instruction based on individual student data. The teachers at ESCLE continue to be student oriented and to make sure students basic needs were met. The community and parents continued to support Every Student Can Learn Elementary by providing the

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annual MAP assembly and continued to purchase MAP t-shirts for every student at ESCLE.

All three participants at Every Student Can Learn Elementary stated the climate and the school culture were completely changed as a result of the Turnaround Program. Three years after the conclusion of the Turnaround Program the leaders remained in the same positions they held prior and during the Turnaround Program. Mrs. Berry stated, “I could not imagine working as a principal anywhere else. My teachers need me.”

### May Welcome All Middle School

In 2012, the researcher began contacting the administrator of May Welcome All Middle School (MWAMS). MWAMS is located in an area of Southeast Missouri referred to as the Bootheel. MWAMS is located in a district which has two main campuses. MWAMS is located in a town 15 miles away from the elementary and high school. Interviews of the current superintendent which was the principal during the Turnaround Program, Mr. Right along with a former curriculum director Mrs. D, and a teacher Mrs. E who was highly involved in the Turnaround Program were interviewed. All three educators interviewed had a combined 51 years of experience in education.

The town which housed May Welcome All Middle School has no grocery store, gas station, or factories. The town had a cotton gin and was highly supported by local farmers. The district consisted of students who lived in several smaller communities which were located within the boundaries of the school district. Some students may have had a bus ride of 45 minutes to 1 hour to get to school. The town which houses the elementary and high school consists of a gas station, Subway, a few small stores, and two cotton gins. The population at MWAMS consisted of 246 students. The student

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demographics were made up of 64.2% white, 35.4% Hispanic, .40% Indian and a Free/Reduced Lunch population of 66.7%. May Welcome All Middle School was affected by an increase in Hispanic students. The number of Hispanic students doubled in 8 years.

### *Pre-Turnaround*

Prior to the implementation of the Turnaround Program at May Welcome All Middle School the teachers and students felt they were less significant than those working at the elementary and high school. Ms. D stated, “Being 15 miles away the teachers felt there was very little support.” Mr. Right, the principal stated, “Data was not discussed prior to the Turnaround Program. We looked at the scores at the beginning of the year and then we didn’t examine them after that. They never got individual student scores.” Prior to the Turnaround Project there was no common planning time for teachers to discuss curriculum. s

Upon entering the school prior to the interviews May Welcome All Middle School appeared very well taken care of. At a glance it appears there are three separate facilities. These brick buildings appear to be several years old but in good condition. The lawn was free of trash and well-manicured. A baseball field was located directly behind MWAMS. To gain entrance to the building visitors were allowed in by the school secretary for the safety of the students. In the entry way there are several trophy cases full of trophies from previous years. In the center of the foyer there is a wooden statue of the school mascot. All three buildings had electronic door systems to provide a secure building for student’s safety. All buildings had red lockers and the school color scheme

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painted throughout the building. The basketball gymnasium has the school mascot painted on the basketball court. School spirit is prevalent throughout all of the buildings.

### *During Turnaround*

Upon return of the Turnaround Team Mr. Right along with the superintendent chose to make cosmetic changes to make early gains in student performance and teacher morale. Changes that were made included installing new lockers in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade building, putting new tile down in the buildings, making significant architectural changes to the fine arts section of the building, and painting the buildings school colors. This led to increased student and teacher morale. Mr. Right stated, “Once cosmetic changes were made to the building and the school mascot was in the foyer everyone seemed to be more welcoming to changes.”

### *Data*

In the beginning there was not a major focus on data analysis. Data that was collected focused on discipline referrals, attendance records, and teacher absences. This was the beginning of learning to analyze data. Mrs. D stated, “We were given binders to keep up with absences, behaviors, and teacher attendance. We used this to identify who needed tutoring.” The extent of parental involvement and notification of school improvement status was the form letter which was required to be sent home under No Child Left Behind. Mr. Right addressed tutoring, “Parents didn’t understand how if their child had a good grade they were required to come to after school tutoring. We had to explain their state assessment scores were basic or below basic. We had to explain this to the board, too.”

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A data analysis program was purchased to assist teachers in benchmarking students and determining the needs of students based on the student's performance on the benchmarking assessment. In January of the first year the curriculum director and data analysis coordinator began providing training for the staff at MWAMS. At the conclusion of the first year May Welcome All Middle School witnessed a drop in Communication Arts Scores and an increase in Mathematics. Mr. Right explained data analysis as, "MAP data was considered the autopsy data. It was necessary for teachers to use the data to determine the needs of the students. We had to learn to compare apples to apples. Prior to Turnaround we were looking at a different group of students from year to year. Turnaround helped us focus on the gains of the same group of students and their growth." Mrs. D discussed the ACUITY program was used to disaggregate data. Mrs. D voiced the concern, "in the specific area I taught there was not a large bank of questions available for students to enhance their understanding of the Grade Level Expectations."

During the second year of the Turnaround Program Mr. Right along with a team of teachers went to The University of Virginia and were part of the Turnaround Program. It was during the second year when teachers realized the importance of data analysis and using data to drive their instruction. Mrs. E stated the focus was on "the kids we could move that were within 10 of being proficient. We kept pretty close data on those kids." Mrs. E emphasized using data was a significant change and identifying students was something that had not been done prior to the Turnaround Program. The focus was to introduce and use data as a tool. She discussed that some teachers used classroom data while others did not prior to Turnaround.

*School Climate*

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May Welcome All Middle School implemented monthly data meetings. During data meetings a focus was placed on finding practices and patterns to direct classroom instruction. Common planning time was incorporated for teachers. The administration and curriculum director communicated changes that were being implemented to the school board and community. At the conclusion of the second year of the Turnaround Program May Welcome All Middle School made significant gains in both Communication Arts and Mathematics.

### *Buy-in*

At May Welcome All Middle School it was Turnaround was a program began as a push by the liaison from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The principal along with the school shepherd and the data analysis coordinator discussed the importance of the Turnaround Project and doing what was best for the students in the district. Mrs. D. stated, “The data analysis coordinator came to assist our teachers and help them understand what the performance on the grade level expectation and student performance had in common.”

### *Politics*

Mr. Right was approached by a liaison from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding the necessity of enrolling in the University of Virginia’s Turnaround Program. He discussed this as a factor influencing the decision to participate in the program. He attended the summer session along with four other schools located in Southeast Missouri which were seen as schools in need of improvement. School Improvement Grant (SIG) money was used to pay for the Turnaround Program. Under the program improvements were expected to be made at the



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middle school. “When people from other agencies came in to tell you what you needed to do we knew we had to make a change and they were there to help us” said, Mr. Right.

The Turnaround Program was paid for with SIG money. Therefore, the teachers were required to implement the program. There was no formal discussion with faculty members explaining the program or the expectations of the teachers.

### *Post-Turnaround*

May Welcome All Middle School had many changes in administration during the three years post-Turnaround. The principal Mr. Berry assumed the role as High School Principal. The school shepherd was no longer employed in that district. The data analysis coordinator took a position as a high school principal in another district. Two of the teachers were teaching in different areas. When reflecting back on the changes which were beneficial the consensus by all three participants was the significant role of using data to drive instruction. Mrs. E stated, “Education changes about every three years. We all know in three years there will be something new and then it too, will pass.”

### Cross Case Analysis

Many similarities existed between Every Student Can Learn Elementary School and May Welcome All Middle School. Both schools were located in rural areas of Missouri known as the Bootheel. The area was an impoverished area of the state where the main industry was agriculture. Both districts have high unemployment rates and large minority group representation. During the time prior to the Turnaround Program both schools were identified as schools in need of improvement and were selected to receive a School Improvement Grant through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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Both schools decided to keep their current administration in place, both used a school shepherd, and data analysis coordinator. During the implementation both schools learned how to change the structure of their organization by changing the way the teachers taught. Teachers began to make teaching decisions based on student data and no longer decided the effectiveness of teaching on feeling the students understood the content. The teachers were taught how to examine and collect student data to make educated instructional decisions based on mastery of the Missouri Grade Level Expectations.

Turnaround suggested schools should replace school principals and school leaders to assist in the achievement of the Turnaround Program. However Every Student Can Learn Elementary or May Welcome All Middle School chose not to replace principals or school leaders. The districts decided to use the leadership which was currently in place to make the necessary school improvements.

During the interviews four main themes regarding change began to emerge. The themes which occurred due to the Turnaround Program were data, school climate, buy-in, and politics. These four themes were recurring between the two schools. Each played a part and have impacted the changes which occurred as a result of the Turnaround Program.

### *Data*

Both districts stated the most important change in the Turnaround Program was the use of data. Both districts implemented a testing program called ACUITY. Districts were able to assign ACUITY to measure student's progress on specific grade level

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expectations. Teachers were then able to disaggregate student data to focus on the individual needs of students and provide differentiated instructions to the classrooms.

Every Student Can Learn Elementary began the process by using data rooms. All teachers' data was posted on the walls for each teachers to view. Mrs. Berry stated, "Not all teachers liked this approach. That is why we decided to use data notebooks in year two." ESCLE continued to use the data notebooks three years post-Turnaround and the teachers discussed the data weekly at grade level meetings.

May Welcome All Middle School began using data halfway through the first year of the Turnaround Program. Teachers were required to have data notebooks and to track students who were 10 points or less from moving from proficient to advanced, or from basic to proficient on the MAP. Teachers tracked several forms of data including MAP, ACUITY, behavioral, attendance, and demographic. Data was used to drive classroom instruction to improve student performance.

Three years post-Turnaround Every Student Can Learn Elementary continued to use data to drive instruction and continued to have weekly data meetings. Mrs. Berry and Mrs. B. continued to facilitate the data meetings and to gather resource and supplemental materials for classroom teachers. May Welcome All Middle School discontinued the use of monthly data meetings as reported by Mr. Right, Mrs. D, and Mrs. E. Mrs. E reported some teachers continued to use classroom data in their classrooms. Monthly collaboration meetings were discontinued.

### *School Climate*

Both districts focused on small gains of cosmetic benefits to improve morale and change the climate of the school. Prior to the Turnaround Program teachers were

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frustrated and as Mrs. C stated, “It wasn’t the building you wanted to work in.”

Turnaround taught the principals to celebrate small victories to increase morale and the initial victories were in school pride and building improvements.

Every Student Can Learn Elementary used data to enhance instruction and to track student performance. Teachers began visiting students home prior to the start of the school year to increase positive relationships with students and parents. Incentives were given prior to MAP testing and parents were invited in for an informational meeting and dinner. The administration was supportive in the changes taking place and was present to oversee the implementation of the Turnaround Program. The teachers were given the materials and training required to enhance classroom instruction and assist students achieve academic success. The initial Turnaround Team remained in place three years post-Turnaround Program therefore sustainability was reached. Mrs. C stated, “The ideas implemented from the Turnaround Program are just business as usual. Now Every Student Can Learn Elementary is where everyone wants to work.”

May Welcome All Middle School adopted data implementation six months after the initial Turnaround retreat. Teachers were required to meet monthly to discuss student data which was collected. Students were assigned after school tutoring based on their performance on the MAP. Mr. Right explained, “It was tough telling parents your child has a good grade but are not proficient on the MAP and will need to stay after school for extra practice.” ACUITY was used to benchmark students and check the progress. Post-Turnaround several Turnaround team members were moved to other positions. With the Turnaround principal, data analysis coordinator, and shepherd all moving into different positions sustainability was not achieved. Mrs. E stated, “Once the principal moved and

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the data analysis coordinator left there was no one to ensure we continued collecting data. Just like other programs after three years it was discontinued. However, some teachers continued to do their own data collection.”

### *Buy-in*

Participants from both districts discussed buy-in as a component of the Turnaround Program. Every Student Can Learn Elementary witnessed buy-in through a top-down approach. The initial push for participation came from the Superintendent of the school district. He placed an emphasis on the program and communicated the urgency to Mrs. Berry, the building principal. Mrs. B recalled this event vividly. She explained, “The superintendent was very smart, he made sure to go to faculty meetings and show he was impetus of the program and he had complete backing from the school board.” Mrs. Berry was adamant in making sure to inform all stakeholders of the importance of the program. She began a campaign to increase parental involvement and teacher relations.

Buy-in at May Welcome All Middle School came from a push from the liaison with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The principal, Mr. Right was encouraged to participate in the program and to choose a shepherd to help him during the process. Teachers did not begin the new initiatives until Mr. Right had conquered a few tasks prior to pushing for a complete Turnaround. Mr. Right began by, “building trust through cosmetic changes which helped increase morale.”

### *Politics*

Participants from both districts reported power and politics were active prior and during the Turnaround Program. The view of each was perceived differently from each district. Every Student Can Learn Elementary participants spoke about the role of the

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Superintendent and Board of Education. The political role these stakeholders played was viewed in a positive manner. Mrs. C stated, “The Superintendent made sure to go to a faculty meeting at school and explain to the teachers they were expected to implement this program and Mrs. Berry had the full backing of administration and the school board. From this point forward teachers accepted the changes.”

With support from the administration and board of education Mrs. Berry was determined to implement the Turnaround Program and to assist her faculty in developing teaching practices which became best practices or institutionalization as referred to by Fullan (2006). Mr. Right was approached by a liaison from the state department and he was more cautious during the first year of the implementation process. He began with cosmetic changes to the buildings and did not begin data implementation until after the first semester.

May Welcome All Middle School participants discussed the fact that a liaison from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approached the administration and informed them they would be participating in the Turnaround Program. Mrs. D stated, “They just told us we were going to do this program. There was some push back at first.”

### *Post-Turnaround*

Three years post-Turnaround Every Student Can Learn Elementary continued many of the components of the Turnaround. The teachers were required to keep data notebooks, and weekly data team meetings continued. All of the initial administrators that were involved with implementation of the Turnaround Program continued in their initial job capacity. This ensured the sustainability of the program and contributed to changing

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the school culture. Mrs. Berry informed the researcher, “Some teachers would have liked to go back to ability grouping. That was not what was best for the teachers or students. Therefore, we continued differentiating instruction in all classrooms.”

May Welcome All Middle School continued to have a rising Hispanic population. The initial Turnaround Program leaders had all changed positions during the first year after the program ended. Changes which remained in place were the initial cosmetic changes and the sense of school pride brought about by those changes. Mrs. D stated, “Some teachers took the initiative to continue collecting student data. However, monthly data meetings were no longer a focus with the new administrator.” Mr. Right responded to the question about which changes remained were the district as a whole continued to use MAP data as “autopsy data” and the teachers realized the importance of using data to determine what enhancements needed to be made to instruction.”

### Summary

Each of the cases along with the cross-case analysis demonstrated many similarities and differences of changes implemented during the Turnaround Program and post-Turnaround. Four reoccurring themes which emerged from the case studies and cross case analysis from the bounded system case study encircling change theory was the commonalities of buy-in, school climate, data analysis, and power and political factors.

During the second year of the Turnaround Every Student Can Learn Elementary achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Although, May Welcome All Middle School fell short of achieving AYP the scores in English Language Arts and Mathematics were significantly higher during the second year of Turnaround.

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Post-Turnaround the emergence of the sustainability of change based on the continuity of leadership was prevalent in the cross-case analysis. All Turnaround team members continued in the role they were assigned during the Turnaround Program at Every Student Can Learn Elementary. The year following the Turnaround Program at May Welcome All Middle School the Turnaround leaders assumed different roles in either the same district or received a promotion elsewhere. Chapter 5 discusses the findings offered through this bounded system multi-site case study and to offer further research and recommendations for schools trying to implement and sustain change throughout the school improvement process.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This bounded system multi-site case study demonstrated characteristics of change theory pre, during, and post-Turnaround Program implementation. The change process was intertwined throughout both cases and prevalent upon the completion of the cross case analysis of both case study sites. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study and important conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter 4. A discussion of the implications for action and recommendations for further research will be presented.

#### Conclusions

Four major findings emerged through this study as related to change theory and the Turnaround Program implementation pre, during, and post-Turnaround Program participation. This bounded system multi-site case study focused on what changes worked and which changes were no longer in use post-Turnaround. This study may be used to encourage districts in high poverty areas to implement changes based on the research in this study and how more sustainable changes may enhance the academic achievement in other districts. The four major findings are as follows:

Finding No. 1: A successful turnaround is attributed to data analysis used to lead instruction based on individual student needs and differentiated instruction based on student data. (*Data*)

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Finding No. 2: A major contribution to change in both schools was brought about by a change in school climate and the day to day routines in the schools. (*School climate*)

Finding No. 3: Buy-in by school leaders, teachers, parents, and students were critical to the success of the changes implemented from the Turnaround Program. (*Buy-in*)

Finding No. 4: There were political factors which had an impact on the changes brought about by the Turnaround Program. (*Politics and Power*)

Four specific research questions were used to guide the study and were predominantly fulfilled by the four findings presented above.

What type of leadership behaviors did the school have prior, during, and after the Turnaround Program? (*Finding 3*)

What structural changes remain? (*Finding 1 and 3*)

Were there any political influences that had and continue to have an impact before, during and presently in the district? (*Finding 2*)

What was the most useful aspect of the Turnaround Program? (*Finding 1 and 4*)

A better understanding of the two districts studied along with the cross-case analysis which defined the differences and similarities of each district based on the uniqueness of each school will be constructive to future districts seeking to enhance academic instruction by implementing a new program and sustaining changes which come forth from the program. For example, sustainable change throughout the Turnaround for both schools was originally achieved through strong administrative

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support at Every Student Can Learn Elementary. The support given was set forth by the superintendent and initiated by the building principal. Buy-in was achieved by the staff through continuous efforts by administration. At May Welcome All Middle School positive changes were made during the program. However, when the administrator and faculty responsible for program implementation assumed different roles the program was not sustained with fidelity.

Analysis of the districts determined school climate changed as a result of implementation of the Turnaround Program. The most important aspect reported by both districts was a change in the way student achievement was assessed. These changes were brought about through the initiation of data meetings and training in data analysis. This brought about a change in the school climate and culture in both districts. These schools implemented different strategies for data collection and changed the focus over time. However, one thing remained constant three years post-implementation. The state assessment data continued to drive instruction at both districts. Both districts witnessed and adopted the importance of data analysis to drive classroom instruction and examination of standards taught. Differences arose post-Turnaround in both schools as one school continued with weekly data meetings and one discontinued the systematic use of data and data meetings. The post-assessment MAP data showed a decline in scores for the district which discontinued the use of monthly data meetings and common planning time.

Both districts cited power and political factors which impacted the district during the Turnaround process. The teachers at Every Student Can Learn Elementary School banded behind the principal when the principal was met by opposition from a school

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board member. Once teachers united and were able to communicate successful components of the program the board supported the school and the board member which opposed the changes was not re-elected for another term. At May Welcome All Middle School power was voiced in the form of a representative from the Missouri DESE. The principal stated implementation was expected as a directive was given by a representative from DESE informed the district they would participate in the program. The political factor of pressure by DESE helped drive change at MWAMS. However, once gains were revealed the representative focused on other districts and less emphasis was placed on May Welcome All Middle School.

The success of the program could be contributed to staff buy-in and making the parents and political stakeholders aware of the changes and the effects of the changes which were taking place during the Turnaround Program. Informing faculty, parents, students and community stakeholders of the need for student improvement and the steps to be taken to gain student improvement will assist other districts in communicating positive changes in academic achievement along with a strategic plan to assist the district in raising student achievement. The change in the program which resulted at Every Student Can Learn Elementary resulted in a permanent change and has become institutionalized (Fullan, 2006)

Data Analysis to drive instruction was seen by both districts as a key component of successful change. Every Student Can Learn Elementary moved from a Professional Learning Community to Data Teams. May Welcome All Middle School were trained in data analysis and implemented common planning periods which focused on data analysis. Both districts reported data as one key factor to obtaining successful Turnaround and

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receiving higher MAP and AYP scores. Every Student Can Learn Elementary reported data continued to be used three years post-Turnaround to guide and enhance academic instruction. Data analysis could be used by schools interested in gaining student achievement and enhancing classroom instruction.

Although, similarities were discussed both schools had differences. Each school is made up of independent characteristics as do all schools. The Turnaround Program offered training, best practices, and collaboration among all Turnaround Schools. However, success depended on how each district chose to implement the changes necessary to see an achievement in student performance.

Three years post-Turnaround Every Student Can Learn Elementary had continued making gains in student achievement. Prior to Turnaround English Language Arts Scores were at 44.4% proficient and advanced, mathematics scores were 52.8% proficient and advanced in 2009. In 2011, ESCLES continued to have increasing MAP results, English Language Arts was at 68.2% and mathematics was 77.3%. The 2013 MAP English Language Arts Scores were 68.8% proficient and advanced and mathematics were 79.1% proficient and advanced.

May Welcome All Middle School began with 39.3% proficient and advanced on English Language Arts, and 28 % proficient and advanced in Mathematics. After the first two years of the Turnaround Program English Language Arts increased to 49.8% and mathematics rose to 43.5% proficient and advanced. However, 2013 data three years post-Turnaround resulted in a decrease in English Language Arts to 40.2% proficient and advanced and mathematics declined to 34.32% proficient and advanced (DESE, 2014).

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Sustainability of change can be seen through the continuation of leadership. Every Student Can Learn Elementary continued with the same leadership team three years post-Turnaround Program. The results continued to improve, data meetings, and buy-in continued. All three participants elaborated on the schools success was due to data analysis and data teams which were implemented as a result of the Turnaround Project. All three referenced teaching practices being “business as usual” or as Fullan suggest institutionalized (2006).

However, May Welcome All Middle School had a complete change in the leadership team. Research presented by Leithwood stated a different school faced a 9% decline in AYP once the leaders assumed different roles within the same district (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). This factor held true at MWAMS as the leadership team assumed different roles and test scores declined post-Turnaround.

Although, the scores increased during the Turnaround the case was not true three years post-Turnaround. During the interview process the question regarding what practices from the Turnaround are still being used arose. Mrs. D stated, “honestly nothing”...sure some may continue individual data collection but as a whole, nothing.”Mrs. E stated, “Just like any program it ran its course and after three years we were finished with the program.” Mr. Right said, “The elementary may continue to use some of the things from earlier. But, common planning time just didn’t fit with our schedules.” Schools interested in sustaining positive changes may need to examine the sustainability and training of leadership teams to encourage continuity of new programs which may be implemented.

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The research suggests, sustainability of the program is a direct result of the continuity of leadership. In the case of Every Student Can Learn Elementary the same leadership team was in place three years post program implementation and student assessment data continued to improve. However, May Welcome All Middle School had a significant change in leadership and student achievement data began to decline.

Although, both schools had different results post-Turnaround Program all six research participants voiced the most important aspect they believed attributed to student success during the Turnaround Program was the use of data analysis to determine student's needs.

### Recommendations

Further research should be conducted to include additional schools which participated in the program to determine what changes were successful and continue to be in used that have contributed to positive changes throughout the Turnaround Schools. Additionally, there were schools which did not see a positive impact as a result of the Turnaround Program and research may be conducted to determine the causes of the program to be discontinued without changes being implemented.

All participants voiced the relevance of meetings which were held on-site at the University of Virginia, Darden School of Business. Participants stated an annual refresher course for school improvement may be beneficial in continuing to see the success of the initial Turnaround Program. Further information may be gathered to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of change if an annual collaboration meeting between schools in the Turnaround Program was held whether it be a local meeting or an annual retreat.

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Many additional elements which contributed to change brought about through the Turnaround Program were alluded to by participants. The use of data analysis programs used by students to enhance student achievement may be researched to determine the effectiveness and beneficial aspects students receive from using these programs. Researchers could compare and contrast the multiple programs used to assess student performance and mastery of achievement on state testing standards. The research may guide additional low performing districts in the implementation of technology programs to assist in greater student achievement.

A major difference between Every Student Can Learn Elementary and May Welcome All Middle School was the use of incentives and rewards. Every Student Can Learn Elementary implemented a pre-testing assembly which every student had the opportunity to attend. Parent meetings were held to inform parents their responsibilities to assist their child to perform well on the state assessments. Dinner was provided for families that attended the pre-assessment meeting. All students received a MAP t-shirt. Once testing was completed students performing well and making gains on the state assessment were taken on a field trip. May Welcome All Middle School talked to the students about the importance of success and if they scored proficient or advanced on the MAP they were taken to eat at a nearby restaurant. However, parents were only identified of school improvement through a form letter initiated from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Researchers may incorporate further research to discover the benefits of positive rewards to produce effective achievement.

### Summary



## A Study of Two Turnaround Schools: Where Are They Now?

Through the change theory lens of this bounded system multi-site case study of two low performing schools which participated in the Turnaround Program started with a look at where they began, the process during the Turnaround Program, and examination of the school three years post-Turnaround. Insight into the changes sustained and those discarded in both schools were discovered through this research. Through the change theory lens this research has demonstrated the importance of sustainability of leadership in the change process of program initiation. Research has also shown implementation post-Turnaround had continuity partially due to a change in the school climate and culture. For a school to Turnaround a significant piece to the Turnaround Program and its success was due to data analysis. Finally, a discussion of the power and political factors were included as both districts were impacted due to these influences.

The findings indicate success of these two Turnaround schools was due to a change in school culture and climate. This was brought about through the political influences from administration and members of DESE. The importance of high academic achievement was communicated by both administrators and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Buy-in from parents, faculty members, school board members, and students were a major contributor to implementing successful change in both districts. Data analysis was continued by both districts to enhance student performance and guide classroom instruction. Decisions regarding student mastery were based on data and continued to be used three years post-Turnaround. Data analysis was seen by both districts as a significant factor used to enhance positive changes.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How many years have you been in education?
2. How many years have you worked in this district?
3. In what capacities have you worked in the education field?
4. What was your role in working with school improvement?
5. Can you describe your role in regards to the Turnaround Project?
6. Please describe the school prior to the implementation of the Turnaround Project?
7. What were the major focuses placed on the staff during the project?
8. Describe the implementation steps of the Turnaround Project?
9. What changes stand out in your mind during this process?
10. Can you give some examples of how the day to day operations changed prior, during, and after the conclusion of the Turnaround Project?
11. Were there any power or political factors prior, during, and post turnaround?
12. What significant changes took place because of the Turnaround Project?
13. What implementation practices worked the best?
14. What changes do you continue to use from the Turnaround Project?
15. Have any practices that were implemented from the Turnaround been modified or discontinued?
16. Please describe the role of the community, school board members, and teachers during the process.
17. What practices do you feel were most beneficial now that the school is no longer in the Turnaround Project?

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Appendix B

RECRUITING EMAIL SCRIPT

Hi, my name is Jeri Kay Hardy, I'm e-mailing you about research that I'm conducting for my dissertation and completion of my degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. The study is about Turnaround Schools and where they are post Turnaround program. You will be asked to complete an interview in your office or classroom when students are not present. Participation is confidential and voluntary. Also, you can withdraw any time if you change your mind. There are no known risks to participation.

If you would like to participate, please let me know what days Tuesday March 8th through Friday March 11th would be best for you.

If you would like to participate, please select the date and time when I can come and reply to this e-mail message. Remember, that the session will take about 30 minutes. I will send you a follow-up message with information about the time.

If you do not want to participate, please send me a reply e-mail saying 'No thanks.'

Thank you for your time.

Jeri Kay Hardy



Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jeri Kay Hardy

TITLE OF PROJECT: A Study of Two Turnaround Schools: Where

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to examine two Southeast Missouri Schools who followed the Turnaround project to assist them in getting out of School Improvement status and provide a view as to where they are now. Now that the program is over, the researcher will interview school administrators, and faculty members to determine effective use of strategies and the role of leadership to enhance instruction in low performing schools, and what changes implemented during the Turnaround Program have been sustained four years after the conclusion of the Turnaround Program through the University of Virginia. A multi-site case study of two schools four years after their participation will be conducted to determine what works, what does not, and what obstacles the schools faced and may still be facing.

**DURATION:** The interview will last about 30 minutes and will be audiotaped.

**PROCEDURES:** Participants will engage in a qualitative interview process. Observations will be done in offices and classrooms of faculty members during a time when students are not present. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Questions will include, but are not limited to the following: a) What type of leadership behaviors were exhibited prior, during, and after the Turnaround Program? b.) What structural changes remain? c.) Were there any political influences that had and continue to have an impact before, during, and presently in the district? d.) What was the most useful aspect of the Turnaround Program?

**WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO:** I am requesting to interview you. Observations will be done in offices and classrooms of faculty members during a time when students are not present. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

The last four digits of your telephone number will be used to identify responses.

**POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:** Risks could be possible familiarity of the reader with the facilities in the project. Discomforts are the discomfort of the interview process.

**POSSIBLE BENEFITS:** The benefits to your participation are to assist in determining lasting components made from the change implemented by the Turnaround Program which had a positive impact on school districts.

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS:** There are no alternative procedures.

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**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Records will be audiotaped and identified according to the last four digits of your phone number to ensure confidentiality. The researcher will code responses to aide in maintaining your confidentiality. Audiotapes will be locked and secured using a pass code.

**CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:** If you have any questions about the research, your rights as a research subject or problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Jeri Kay Hardy at 573-344-5748 or by email at jkhw5@mail.missouri.edu

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been and will continue to be given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator.

You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

**ADVISOR:** Dr. David Stader  
573-382-9206  
dstader@semo.edu

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

---

DATE

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SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

VITA

## A Study of Two Turnaround Schools: Where Are They Now?

Jeri Kay Hardy was born Jeri Kay Tice in a small rural town in Southeast Missouri. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 1998 from Arkansas State University. Upon completion of her degree she began a career for the State of Missouri working with the Division of Family Services. In 2002, she returned to college to obtain a Bachelor Degree from Southeast Missouri State University in Elementary Education. She was awarded this degree in 2006. In conjunction with completing her Bachelors in Education she began working on her Masters Degree from Southeast Missouri State University. She graduated with her Masters in 2007. Jeri Kay Hardy graduated from Southeast Missouri State University with an Educational Specialist Degree in May, 2012.

Early in her career in education Jeri Kay served as an elementary teacher, an academic coach, data analysis coordinator, and curriculum director. She accepted the position as Assistant Principal at an elementary school for two years. She has served in the capacity as High School Principal for a period of four years. During this time she was giving the award by the Missouri Association for Secondary School Principals as an Emerging Principal of the Year for the Southeast District. She was also recognized by the community and was awarded the Carl Townsend Best Principal Award for her service to the students and community. In addition to her professional responsibilities, Jeri Kay enjoys traveling with her husband Rick and their two children. She and Rick have been married for 21 years. Her daughter is enrolled in college and plans on attending nursing school. Jeri Kay's son is involved in playing baseball for his high school team.