Program Evaluation of Departmentalizing in Upper Elementary

Pamela Crabb

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Program Evaluation of Departmentalizing in Upper Elementary

Pamela Crabb

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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Dean's Representative  Date Approved
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of departmentalization as a strategy at the elementary upper grades to affect gains in the school’s accountability and gains in achievement performance. Based upon standardized testing measures, accountability for student achievement has dramatically increased in elementary schools; rigorous standards have increasingly affected teachers to become highly skilled in subject content areas. This increase in teacher content knowledge expertise requirements have caused many administrators to seek alternative instructional strategies to meet this need. Departmentalization is one of many potential methods that administrators and educators may implement in order to provide expert subject area instructors at the elementary grades. This study determined if there was a significant difference in the success of students in the fourth and fifth grades when departmentalizing versus maintaining a traditional classroom organizational structure. Research, interviews and state assessment data looked at determining the success of departmentalizing. Results of this study did not definitively suggest that departmentalization was the answer to increase student achievement, but the research, surveys and interviews do suggest that departmentalization is effective when implemented with several additional supportive factors such as, teacher buy-in, communication and sufficient professional development.
PREFACE

The context of my program evaluation, “Departmentalizing in Upper Elementary”, was developed because I saw a need for teachers to be able to specialize in their subject area and hone their craft. Precise instruction met the demands of standardized state assessments. This topic is relevant to administration, teachers, parents and students since my study examined the difference in academic and social achievement between elementary students in a departmentalized setting and a self-contained setting.

Significant leadership lessons learned throughout this process includes utilizing research to keep personal feelings out and concentrate on the data. Another leadership lesson that I learned was that I needed to delve deeper and not take the information at surface level. There is not much research available about departmentalization, but as I looked deeper, the research that was available was similar to my data collected. Most teachers and administrators are lifelong learners and professional development is necessary. Students need experienced, well-prepared professional teachers who are experts in subjects they teach. My research suggested that departmentalization is successful pending several factors. These factors include, professional development based on a teacher’s specialty area, collaboration among teams of teachers that departmentalize and passionate teachers that want to increase knowledge in their area of expertise.

I feel that this process has given me insight in professional development needs of all teachers. Many teachers come to meetings and sit without taking away anything meaningful. I have learned that change comes about through looking at research, data, surveys and interviews. This process has also made me realize that many different
factors make departmentalization successful. Many schools have different views on the success of departmentalization, however most of the research and data agree with a need for factors to be in place.
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I would like to thank my committee members for their time, expertise and support through my journey. I would especially like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Susan Moxley for her many hours spent with me to give me feedback and meet with me for countless hours of edits that helped make my writing what it needed to be. Her encouragement kept me going and was a huge reason behind my success. I would also like to thank my professors throughout this journey. Your insight and knowledge was a large part of the reason for my success in the program. Another huge thank you goes out to my cohort TA010. We were always there for one another and I appreciate their support and encouragement. A huge thank you goes out to my friend, Diana Greer for always pushing me to get the work done and not procrastinating. We went through this journey together and kept each other motivated to finish. I would like to thank my district for allowing me to conduct my research. I would also like to thank the administrators, teachers and students who participated in my research. Their willingness to participate and give me the needed insight and feedback helped tremendously concerning informing my topic.
DEDICATION

I dedicate my work and my most sincere thanks to my best friend and husband, Michael Crabb. He is my heart and inspiration. His understanding of the time and effort it took to reach this journey’s end was amazing. He constantly supported and encouraged me at times when I did not think I was going to make it. He was the main reason why I made it to the finish line. My mom, Mrs. Willodean Stinson, passed away during my journey, so she did not get to see my completed goal, but I know she would be proud. I also want to dedicate this to my three children, Devin, Garrett and Trenton Crabb. Always believe in yourself and strive to reach your goals. You can be and do whatever you want, never let anyone tell you different. I also dedicate this to all other family members who believed in me and supported my journey to continue my lifelong learning.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The context of my study is on the departmentalization and separating of classes by subject areas instead of having students in the same classroom for all subjects. The students move from one class, with one teacher and subject, to a different class with another teacher and subject to departmentalize the learning. My research includes a school with five fifth grade classes. This school is a small community school of about 600 students this school year. However, next year school ABC’s population will grow to 800 students due to rezoning. The mission and vision of ABC Elementary School is: “To be the top producer of successful students in the nation and to lead those students to success through the support and involvement of families and the community” (citation omitted to preserve anonymity). This mission and vision states and addresses that our school wants all our students to be successful. This mission and vision also involve families and our community support. At ABC Elementary School, we want all students to succeed and with the influx of 200 students this upcoming school year, we will need to embrace this mission and vision and the new families who arrive. I want the community, teachers, and school staff to accept students and give continued support to all students.

Teachers need to be skilled in their subject content. How well teachers know the instructional subject area is crucial when covering their content and standards. Teachers of both fourth and fifth grade students have expressed their desire to teach either reading or math. They feel they lack the deep content knowledge for one or the other and want to focus on developing their skills for the subject they prefer. “Teachers individual beliefs in their capabilities to pursue a course of action to meet given situational demands, or
self-efficacy” (Chang, 2009, p.197), is a factor when departmentalizing since teachers will need to become content specialists to narrow their scope instruction from all subjects to a few, thus becoming more proficient in one subject area. Therefore, I am researching if departmentalizing would benefit student achievement by allowing teachers to focus on their craft in one subject area.

My problem statement is that some teachers are not deeply skilled in all content areas that they teach. Teaching more than one subject area limits teacher ability to develop skills toward mastery in one subject. Student scores on the State Standards Assessment and student learning affect teachers who do not have the depth of subject knowledge to teach to the rigor of the state standards.

Since some teachers are not deeply skilled in the specific content they teach, I will need to focus on professional development as it relates to content areas in reading and math. There will also need to be time and planning involved in communication, schedules, and conferences with both teachers. Teachers will need to develop time to debrief with each other. By securing time to debrief together, teachers will develop a larger community and serve their combined students. The sharing of materials can become an issue, especially if there are not enough to go around for both classes, so organization is a necessary part of departmentalization.

**Purpose of the Program Evaluation**

The program that I will be evaluating is the departmentalization of fourth and fifth grade and how departmentalizing in the elementary upper grades may affect the accountability and effectiveness of a school’s achievement data. Standards are increasing in rigor and depth at the elementary level in all subject areas. Departmentalization
isolates subject areas, allowing teachers to focus on one subject area, such as reading or math. This focus will allow teachers to focus on one subject area and increase their content expertise. Student achievement data determines if the students are achieving learning gains in the departmentalized classrooms.

A description of the program that I am evaluating is a departmentalized environment, meaning that there are teams of two teachers. Each teacher on the team focuses on one area, reading or math, for a certain amount of time, then students switch classrooms. Elementary schools typically have traditional classrooms where students have the same teacher for all of their academic subjects. By departmentalizing, students have a different schedule than the typical elementary school schedule where teachers split instructional duties with one teacher assigned to math and the other teacher assigned to teaching language arts.

Teachers and parents have expressed an interest in having the fourth grade classrooms departmentalized like the fifth grade classrooms are now at ABC school. Four of the fifth grade student classrooms in ABC school building departmentalize and one-fifth grade classroom is a self-contained classroom. This program has been in place for five years. The first year the grade level departmentalized, the state changed the test format and criteria. State testing went from the State Comprehensive Achievement Test, to the State Standards Assessment. Since the testing has changed, limited sources of consistent data from the standardized testing is available for comparison. Common assessment data where personnel at each school create grade level assessments and use iReady data, which is a differentiated computer program for reading and math in each grade level, is available. Educators to examine the academic needs of students use this
data. Students may need to spend extra time in one departmentalized classroom, math or reading, depending on their learning needs.

Another reason for looking at departmentalizing was that one of the fourth grade teachers moved up with her classroom to fifth grade and was the single, traditional teacher for fifth grade at ABC school. Monitoring the fifth grade i-Ready data and common assessment data and have shown good growth. Since i-Ready diagnostics are web based and specifically assess student mastery of the state standards, the growth monitoring diagnostics are an accurate indicator of student growth. “With more than 4.3 million student users throughout the country, i-Ready helps educators to identify students’ strengths and areas in need of improvement, offer individualized instruction, and monitor progress to improve learning outcomes” (Curriculum Associates’, 2017, p. 57). By monitoring this data and her classroom, ABC school is able to compare her traditional classroom with the other departmentalized classrooms in 5th grade. This particular teacher was a traditional English Language Arts teacher in 5th grade for the upcoming school year and her data compared this school year’s data with her data from the previous school year.

Fourth grade teachers, at ABC elementary want to departmentalize for the school year. Since some teachers are stronger in one subject, this will allow teachers to specialize in their subject area. The intent was to determine if there is a difference between the teacher’s delivery methods of traditional instruction and departmentalized instruction in reading and math when comparing data in the different classes. The comparison groups were the stand-alone class in fifth grade and the stand-alone class in fourth grade. Meaning, since students in fourth grade were moving into fifth grade
departmentalized except the one fifth-grade class, I could compare data. Some students went into the stand alone fifth grade classroom and were in a separate class. Comparisons of these students to how they learned previously, in a traditional classroom in fourth grade, using their state test scores to determine academic differences.

Fifth grade teachers reported that because they departmentalize in reading and math, they were able to concentrate on only one subject matter and really understand the practice of working on a particular instructional standard. Teachers report that when they departmentalize, they could focus on their specialized subject to help support student achievement. Teachers that departmentalize also reported that they felt like they are able to devote more time to differentiating and deepening the knowledge in their subject area.

A drawback of departmentalizing was that teachers reported they needed more individualized resources for their particular subject matter and they sometimes felt isolated since they only had one other teacher who departmentalized with them. When teachers teach the same students in a departmentalized setting, they share students. Teachers then reported that they are not able to connect fully with individual students since they may not be as supported because student’s success is shared (Chang, Munoz, & Koshewa, 2008).

Teachers reported that the transition time between changing classrooms during the day may be causing too long of a disruption in the start time of the next classroom. Teachers also report that since they only have two teachers per subject area, two for English Language Arts and two for mathematics, their Professional Learning Communities lack the benefit of more than one other person to add to the discussions and resources that a larger team of teachers Team exhibit.
The program relates to student learning because one of the most common issues in elementary schools is a lack of time for in-depth standards-based lessons in all content areas. This is especially true when talking about these lessons occurring on a daily basis, because usually one subject area is lacking due to a myriad of reasons.

According to Morton and Dalton (2007), “The use of time in schools has been a way of increasing student achievement and research has focused on the amount and allocation of time that is given to instruction and the way in which time is used” (p. 1). For students to achieve goals and increase their achievement in their schoolwork, they need time to devote to the learning activities and to produce these academic gains. The students also need time to absorb the content from the teachers and to practice with teacher feedback. Teachers that departmentalize can devote this time to helping students because they only need to focus on one subject area and one period that is devoted to a specific area.

In elementary school, teachers in a regular education classroom are required to teach all content areas. Unfortunately, the teachers usually only have time to brush the surface of the standards and are not able to do a deep dive into the standard that is needed for students to comprehend the material and this affects student achievement.

The purpose of my evaluation has been to analyze the departmentalized classes and demonstrate effectiveness or fidelity to the original goal. I analyzed the departmentalized classes by using surveys and interviews of teachers in the departmentalized classrooms to see if teachers feel that students are making learning gains. I used surveys and interviews from the administrators, teachers and students to compare data from departmentalization verses self-contained classrooms. According to Duke (2006), changes in the organization of elementary school is shifting:
The cherished image of the traditional elementary school with its self-contained classrooms and solitary teachers is disappearing. In its place, is a much more complex and complicated organization involving more team teaching and team planning, greater reliance on specialists, and variable schedules dictated by student needs? The case studies reveal that turning around low-performing elementary schools may necessitate flexible ability grouping, a host of supplementary programs, and partnerships with community groups. (p. 27)

I am in total agreement with Duke. Traditional elementary schools from the past are gone and team teaching and planning are now a necessity. “Flexible ability grouping is most effective when done for one or two subjects, such as ELA and math and data is tracked continuously and assessed by teachers to monitor and adjust as needed” (p. 28). This is one reason why departmentalization should work. Students that participate in departmentalized classrooms in elementary school are able to have the differentiation of flexible ability grouped and heterogeneously grouped. By having teachers concentrate on one subject area, teachers are able to help their students with specific skills in their specialty area and differentiate the skills for students that are struggling.

**Rationale**

My rationale for selecting departmentalization as my program to evaluate was to determine which program model, traditional or departmentalization provides the greatest expertise in teacher instruction. Some pros for departmentalization include that departmentalization gives students the opportunity to benefit from the expertise of a teacher that has specialized in a particular subject area and receive specialized instruction in that content area. By departmentalizing, students have an opportunity to move
between classrooms and work in different environments. When departmentalizing, students have a chance to acquire higher order thinking skills while in a classroom taught by the most qualified teachers for each subject area. I studied this particular program because ABC school’s fourth grade teachers want to departmentalize like our fifth grade teachers. This is due to the increase in the fifth grade scores for the SSA test and the increased improvement. The teachers in fifth grade voiced that they were able to focus their craft on a specific subject and therefore able to increase scores in their subject area.

Some pros for the traditional classroom setting are that the traditional classroom setting gives elementary aged students a stable and secure learning environment with the opportunity to develop a close relationship with the teacher. The traditional classroom also does not allow the classroom teacher to have control of all of the content, meaning, that as a traditional classroom teacher, lessons can be integrated together to incorporate all the subjects, however in departmentalization, the subject might not join as easily. Transition time that is lost when departmentalizing can become an issue that traditional classrooms do not have as much of making it more difficult for students to settle into the next routine.

My personal connection to departmentalization began when I taught a multi-age second- third grade classroom with a fellow teacher. This new concept allowed student work together to benefit and accelerate student learning. We ended up working together and switched classes one time a day to share the conferences, responsibilities, and we worked together to create units that helped students by differentiating the curriculum. I was the English language arts teacher and was the math teacher. We collaborated and were able to hone our crafts. The students excelled in their learning and a few of the
students skipped a grade. I have always thought that by focusing on the one subject area, we made a difference and helped those students achieve excellence.

A critical issue related to the program that make me want to study departmentalization is, there is little research on whether departmentalization is effective even after a century of discussions on the subject. In addition, there are questions about the importance of the organizational structure to effective instruction (Des Moines Public Schools, 1989). According to Elmore, Peterson and McCarthey (1996), “it is not the organizational structure itself that matters, but the impact of the selected structure on teaching and learning.” I agree with Elmore in the quotation, because by structuring the classes so the teachers can hone their craft to one subject area, students benefit from their specific expertise and learn more. In addition, an elementary teacher is responsible for all subject areas and should be strong in all subject areas, but every teacher has an area of expertise and is usually stronger in one area than another. By giving teachers more time to invest in their area of expertise, we enable the teachers to specialize and therefore the students benefit from their proficiency.

At ABC school, observations of fifth grade students this year and their buy in to the different subjects and teachers that departmentalize is noted. One student even commented that his teacher has helped him in math because she “gets it”. He went on to say that, he never felt like a teacher really understood the way he learned until he had a teacher that also “liked” math like him. This teacher taught a standalone math class and was able to raise her iReady math diagnostic at the end of the school year in both of her standalone math classrooms.
Stakeholders such as parents, teachers, staff, district, and community are all important pieces of the evaluation of this program. Parents have a stake in their student’s education and want their students to learn the state standards thoroughly. Communication with parents was necessary, so parents stay informed of the program and its success. Parents are able to help their child and partner with the school to keep the school informed of any situations or difficulties they might encounter. One parent commented that their student, who has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, was able to concentrate more by being in the departmentalized classroom. Students and the change in teachers, teacher style of teaching, and classroom environment helped him focus more, therefore helping him do better academically.

The community was expected to want the evaluation outcome of the departmentalization program because the success of the departmentalization program ultimately affects the value of the community, meaning, a successful school and its programs brings up property values and effects community involvement. When the value of a community increases, the support for the school and its community involvement also increases.

Teachers can be more successful with students by teaching to students different strengths because teachers also have different styles and strengths. State standards have to be covered and teachers that specialize in one subject area are able to cover the standards more thoroughly and teach more in-depth lessons. Data and tests, from state assessments, iReady program, and common assessments connect to teacher evaluations and pay.
The district looks closely at a school’s data, teacher effectiveness, and school grades. The evaluation of departmentalization examines learning gains, trends, and overall effectiveness by the grade level. Schools data and state data are used compare and evaluated the effectiveness of the programs implemented.

Staff members benefit from departmentalization because they also have a buy-in with parents, students, and teachers. The staff works with teachers, parents and students, and are essential in the departmentalization process. Parents, teachers, students and staff who are satisfied with the current situation of the students’ academics and well-being, are able to connect with each other and everyone is more open to the continuum of learning without judgments.

**Goals**

The intended program evaluation goals determine success of departmentalizing and how teachers, when specializing in a certain subject area, can benefit student learning. Research below suggests there is nothing that informs how a ‘specialist’ improves student learning. Deborah Ball while serving at the University of Michigan reports that, “Departmentalizing will help in cost because it is a way of improving instruction because professional development can be individualized to fewer teachers and additional teachers will not need to be hired” (Hood, 2010, p. 3). Another objective of the program was to determine if students are able to benefit from more than one teacher’s technique as they transition to the different classrooms. Yet another goal of the program was to see if the students who tend to have different learning needs would do better in the departmentalization program since it would break up some of the monotony and allow
the students to be with different teachers, different instruction and a different environment, throughout the day.

The program evaluation goals related to student learning because by departmentalizing, the teachers had only one subject on which to focus. Since teachers only have to focus on one subject, the information had to be rich and allow students to get the full implementation of the lessons. This quality of instruction benefitted the students by allowing them to receive specialized instruction and challenged students academically since they were able to concentrate on one subject area. In non-departmentalized classrooms, teachers may take subjects they enjoy and extend the lessons. By extending the lessons that they enjoy teaching, other lessons that are not the teacher specialty lose extensions. However, if a teacher departmentalizes, they can “chunk” their lessons into smaller manageable sessions, which makes the lessons more easily controlled because they have the entire class period or session to teach one subject. This can also benefit student learning by meeting the needs of all students learning styles.

Another program goal related to student learning is Exceptional Student Education (ESE).

In the state of my study, children with disabilities who need specially designed instruction and related services have the title, exceptional students. The special help they given at school is exceptional student education (ESE). The purpose of ESE is to help each child with a disability progress in school and prepare for life after school (Department of Education, 2011, par 1).

Additionally, students in Exceptional Education benefit from departmentalized instruction since some of these students have tendencies to be distracted and need to be
constantly engaged to keep their attention. By breaking up the day with movement during the day and different teaching styles, these students benefit from the departmentalized learning. Students with an attention issue or hyperactivity have more mobility, move frequently and this tends to help with the inattention to instruction. Different teaching and learning styles in different classroom environments is another way that students with difficulty focusing can be successful.

**Research Questions**

This inquiry examines elementary school programming where a teacher teaches one subject, departmentalization, as opposed to the traditional elementary classroom in which a teacher teaches all subject areas. My primary research questions elicited perceptions from a variety of school personnel concerning departmentalization. By surveying and asking the questions, I was able to assess departmentalization and have a better understanding of whether a departmentalized class in an elementary school setting had a higher rate achievement than a non-departmentalized configuration. My primary research questions are as follows:

1. What do the fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students and other administration report is working well in the departmentalization program?
2. What do the teachers in fifth and fourth, fifth and fourth grade students, and other administration report is not working well in the departmentalization program?
3. What do the fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students, and other administration report as the greatest challenges in departmentalization?
4. What do fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students, and other administration report as ways to improve in the departmentalization program?

Secondary research questions I investigated are included below.

1. What are the teachers’ cognizance regarding the effect of departmentalization on subcategories of students, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education students (ESE)?

2. What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding what type of professional development teachers need to make the departmentalization a success?

By finding out the perceptions of the teachers in the subcategories and the professional development needed, the evaluation of the program was intensely broken down to exactly what teachers may need to make the program a success.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the departmentalization of upper elementary grades anticipated success with student involvement and participation, parent involvement in the decision making, improve parent school relationships and increase student achievement (Epstein, 1992; Kowalski et al., 2008). Teacher participation and buy in elicited assistance with motivation to successfully implement and involve the teachers in departmentalization. Departmentalization benefits Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students and helps the teachers fulfill the requirement of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the ESE students. Since the teacher specializes in a particular subject area, they are able to know and provide support for the annual goals and provide accommodations and specific
learning needs that the student may have and address it on their IEP. Since school ABC intended to add departmentalizing to fourth grade teachers, it is important to note these teachers wanted to departmentalize. By wanting the departmentalization, teachers are motivated to make the change to departmentalizing resulting in improved student achievement. Surveying the stakeholders about departmentalization helped school ABC in the data gathering and input communicated to the stakeholders as the year progressed. I gathered data from surveys including teacher, student, and administrative surveys. As the main researcher, immersing oneself in the community to gain understanding of the context and the data collection process as well as the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Owens, 1982).
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Once the school year ends test scores, improvements target student achievement. Weak areas in student achievement become a focus, and strong areas in student achievement become commended. The goal of every school is to have students achieve academically, and schools, as well as districts, evaluated their performance on state tests. NCLB says schools and districts have to meet annual yearly progress that is set by the state and show growth toward being proficient, as well as making sure their students perform at a proficient level, so the schools can receive state government funds (New America Foundation, 2015).

School funding depends on successful achievement on state testing, so, many administrators are looking at different ways to meet the rigorous testing. One alternative teaching method is departmentalization, which uses teacher specialists to teach one subject area instead of the traditional elementary classroom that teaches all subject areas in one classroom (Hood, 2015). This traditional classroom or self-contained classroom, which has one teacher and a group of students in the same grade level.

In the departmentalized classroom, one teacher teaches one subject area and the students change classrooms with a different teacher for a different subject in that grade level (Strohl, Schmertzing, & Schmertzing, 2014). In 1965, departmentalization was just beginning exploration and there were higher grades included in elementary school since the grades went through the eighth grade. There are different variables when comparing how departmentalization from the 1965 period was similar to the article publication. Differences in departmentalizing depends on many variables such as: knowledge of the
teaching staff, availability of the facilities, behaviors of the students, ability levels of the students, and teachers that were adequately prepared to teach one subject. Another factor was social skills and the maturity of students. This maturity level played a part in students being able to handle the departmentalization (Educational Research Service, 1965). The purpose of my evaluation is to look at the departmentalization and its effects on student achievement, the research in the history of departmentalization, classroom environments, student perceptions of the departmentalized classroom, and advantages of traditional and departmentalization to help me determine the success of departmentalization based on data.

**History of Departmentalization**

During the course of American education, departmentalization attempted to increase student achievement by finding different teaching structures, beginning with the “one-room” schoolhouse, where the highest level of achievement was eighth grade (Gutek, 1992). Elementary schools, which were located in rural areas and agricultural communities, were some of these first schools. Around the 19th century high schools were developed and in the early 20th century, high schools were reported to need specialized attention and were departmentalized (Gutek, 1992). Elementary schools housed grades first through eighth and around the 19th century, junior high schools emerged taking seventh and eighth grades from the elementary schools and specializing in different subject matter separations or departmentalization. However, elementary schools, grades one through sixth, remained as a one-room schoolhouse and one teacher was responsible for teaching the students all of the subjects (Spring, 2001).
The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) carried out a survey in 1965 on departmentalization of four hundred school districts. This study focused on how effective and applicable departmentalization was in the elementary grades first through eighth. A finding was that the upper grades seemed to do better with departmentalizing than the lower grade levels in elementary school (AASA, 1965). Keeping in mind that middle school grades, sixth through the eighth grade, were in 1965, considered elementary school, social skills and maturity of students played a part in students being able to handle the departmentalization. Although there was some mention of departmentalizing in all of the elementary school grades, first through eighth, the most successful departmentalization came from grades fourth through eighth (Educational Research Service, 1965).

In 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) emerged and reports were made that the school systems were not up to par and that new structures and teaching needed to be implemented and testing was a component of NCLB (Ballantine & Spade, 2014). At this point, the structure that was in place was the self-contained classroom. The departmentalized model from middle and high schools model explored schools having more success and teachers were encouraged to become experts and focus on teaching one subject (Mitchell, 2013).

Departmentalization still exists in elementary education today. Art, music, and physical education departmentalize in elementary schools and some schools have elected to have their math and reading departmentalized. As educators, we would not hesitate to send students to separate classrooms to learn art, music, and physical education, since those teachers specialize in those subject areas. Consequently, teachers trained in certain
subject areas perform better than teachers that do not have the specialty in that particular subject area (Liu, 2011).

I believe that the history of departmentalization has helped me understand the way departmentalization effected student achievement. By looking at the different programs historically provided to students, I have a deeper understanding of departmentalization and its differences from the past strategies in education to current educational strategies. I was able to compare how departmentalization is the same or different from one period to the current times as I write my dissertation on departmentalization. The differences in the grade levels that were in elementary school in 1965 and grade levels in elementary schools to date, has allowed me to compare the ages of the students and how departmentalization may play a factor in the social and emotional behaviors of students as it results in the effectiveness of departmentalizing.

**Classroom Environments**

During the course of education there have been different types of learning in elementary school, examples include simple repetition, complex learning, interpretation, and analysis. This type of elementary school that is limited to only two types of learning, no longer exist. This elementary school had just a basic curriculum. Elementary schools were concerned with many different types of rigorous learning and education is achieved by “the act of learning itself, not simply through the acquisition of knowledge” (Seegers, 1947). There are different types of classroom environments such as the traditional classroom, the departmentalized classroom, and relationships obtained in the classroom to meet these new demands.
In the traditional classroom, teachers teach all subject areas to a group of students for one school year. All core subjects, social studies, and science are included. In the departmentalized classroom, different teachers divide subject areas, where students rotate to different rooms to focus on one subject area. These classes divide the core subjects such as reading and math between different teachers allowing the teachers to specialize in one subject area. If departmentalizing, elementary teachers, who normally teach only twenty-two students during the day, would then teach more students than the teachers that are self-contained. However, the teachers of departmentalized classrooms would only have to prepare for one maybe two subjects (Chang & Munoz, 2008, p. 133).

No matter which classroom, traditional or departmentalized chosen, the goal of education is student success. School districts must abide by the rules of the state to make sure that students meet the annual yearly progress (AYP). School funding is dependent on testing, so administrators and districts look for innovative strategies to meet the state regulations and increase test scores (New America Foundation, 2015). As reflected in the research and literature reviews, there are advantages in both the traditional and departmentalized classrooms.

**Advantages in the Traditional Classroom**

Arguments for the advantages of the traditional classroom setting lean toward stability for the students because the students have the stability, meaning, the students have the same teacher during day for the school year instead of switching classes for a different subject area. A proponent for the traditional classroom argues that students need to be critical thinkers and they need this critical thinking to go across all the subject areas and not just in one classroom with one subject (Hood, 2010). Other arguments for
the traditional classroom are that social connections are a benefit to the traditional classroom setting. Students can create a social connection with their teachers by building a trust and an increased comfort level with their teachers. Students are also more apt to create a stronger social connection with their peers in the traditional classroom since they are with them all day in the traditional setting. Yet, another connection for students in traditional classrooms is the integration of subjects. Flexibility in instruction helps because students are with the teacher the majority of the day and extending units is possible (Liu, 2011).

Integration across the different subjects is a plus with the traditional classroom and by teaching all subjects; teacher’s flexibility allows for integration. Comprehension of the subject matter in the traditional classroom consider being at a deeper understanding for the students. Connections made also help bring about a deeper understanding for students according to Liu (2011). By connecting with the whole child and strengthening the teacher child relationship, the traditional classroom was suggested to be the education model to have students love to learn and produce lifelong learners. Whether the teacher is teaching in a traditional classroom, or a departmentalized classroom, teachers perceptions play a significant role in their abilities, especially when it leads to student success.

While block scheduling is more of a high school and middle school structure, departmentalization in elementary school is similar. Research on block scheduling and school structure by Canady and Rettig (1995) suggests that departmentalizing can depersonalize the time that the teacher spends with the students making it more of a production line, thereby suggesting that the traditional classroom is the better setting. Canady and Rettig also suggest that a traditional classroom setting allows the teacher to
focus more on individual student strengths and weaknesses and enables teachers to get to know student personalities better which helps with relationships.

**Advantages in the Departmentalized Classroom**

As the demands continue to increase for districts and schools are answerable for student test scores, many leaders look for different ways to increase student achievement. Departmentalizing is one way to look at meeting the rigorous state academic achievement for students. When looking at some advantages of departmentalization, teachers reported that workload was significantly lower in departmentalization than in the traditional self-contained classroom setting. Teachers felt more confident in their teaching since they only had one subject to prepare for, especially since they felt confident in the subject area in their departmentalized specialty. Teachers felt like they collaborated with their partners more and since they had more interaction with their teacher partner, several teachers asked that a consideration be to pair teachers together that had similar personalities and teaching styles. Interactions with parents and students were initially slow, but into the second quarter, teachers reported that they were able to connect more with students and parents based on the individual knowledge of the subject area and the workload condensed to one area. Teachers reported their lesson plans for departmentalization went further and they were receiving positive impacts on teaching methods and the extended lessons were able to meet students’ needs (Strohl, Schmertzing, & Schmertzing, 2014).

A teacher who is required to teach all subject areas will, most likely, not be an expert in every area. Therefore, it is reasonable to say most teachers are not able to spend the time needed expertly developing all curriculum areas to the expertise that would be needed in the traditional setting. Suggestions are that it would be impractical to expect
this of elementary teachers, therefore, making departmentalization the advantage over the traditional school setting (Fosnot, 2013). Andrews reported that teachers, teaching multiple subjects have difficulty being an expert in every subject that they teach. (Andrews, 2006). Ackerlund wrote even though teachers in a self-contained traditional setting have a closer bond with their students than in the departmentalized classrooms, it is still hard for teachers to teach all subjects. He did a study of 231 teachers and 109 teachers favored the traditional classroom while 122 favored the departmentalization (Ackerlund, 1959). Teachers’ beliefs strongly influence what they do in the classroom and the success of their instruction.

The main finding represented in the article by Chang and Koshewa, was that departmentalization for lower elementary grade levels need consideration. The results revealed that teachers in self-contained classrooms build better relationships than those in departmentalization and that departmentalization many not be developmentally appropriate for younger students. The younger students in elementary school seemed to feel less connected to their teachers when student’s subjects departmentalized. If departmentalization is to succeed, departmentalize in upper elementary grades only (Chang & Koshewa, 2008).

Departmentalizing in the elementary school can have benefits for students in special education. At times, the traditional classroom can become tedious and students with an attention deficit problem or other disabilities often need a break in the school day. By departmentalizing, different classroom settings with different teachers, students transition, and for some of these students this can reduce behavior issues and increase attention to the academic instruction (Hood, 2010).
Student Perception of the Departmentalized Classroom Model

Students’ perceptions of a classroom and the environment that they work in is just as important as a teacher’s perception of their work environment. It is crucial to have quality instruction and experiences for students in the classroom as it pertains to school and their learning gains (Chang, Munoz, and Koshewa, 2008). Students need to feel connected to their school environment and to do that they need to form relationships with their teachers, which have an impact on academics and behaviors (Chan, Terry, & Bessette, 2009). Student–teacher relationships in elementary school are especially important at an age range of 5 to 11. Opponents of the departmentalized model believe the self-contained model in the early grades helps teachers build stronger student–teacher relationships (McGrath & Rust, 2002). By departmentalizing, opponents say there is a decreased amount of time and contact that students have with the teacher and this reduces the connections the student has with the teacher (Anderson, 1962; Chang, Munoz, & Koshewa, 2008). In addition to not connecting with teachers, the expectations, procedures and routines, and differences of having many teachers who do not teach in the same way, can be confusing to the students (Liu, 2011; Gerretson, Bosnick & Schofield, 2008).

Proponents for departmentalization—felt students should experience different teaching styles and that it would be beneficial to the students exposing them to a plethora of teaching styles, and different role models (Strohl, Schmertzing, Schmertzing, & Hsiao, 2013). The students have exposure to a variety of teaching techniques by having multiple teachers. There is a greater probability the student will respond and connect with one teacher more than another connects. When students’ connect with teachers, this teacher
connection, helps to link team teachers when they collaborate and consult with each other regarding student success in both academics and behavior problems that they may face during common planning time (Anderson, 1962).

**Conclusion**

The main findings in these literature reviews have been very helpful as I looked for research that is helpful in considering both the disadvantages and advantages of departmentalization when compared to the traditional classroom setting. An important consideration between traditional and departmentalization is that students need to feel connected to their teacher. In addition, a proactive community helps the teacher and student feel more involved and successful, both academically and socially. Another consideration when looking at the advantages of either traditional or departmentalization is the expertise of the teacher, particularly what subject they are stronger in or even their specialty. Teacher productivity and contact time with students was evident in the classroom and important to the success of any program (Watts and Castle, 1992). This may have an impact on a decision made to departmentalize or not. School ABC was able to departmentalize my fourth and fifth grade classrooms this school year, 2018-2019, and was excited to embark on the journey.

By reviewing the literature on departmentalization, specifically the advantages and disadvantages and the traditional elementary setting, School ABC saw the need to look at the two models and decide which best meets the needs of students, teachers, and parents at my school. Little research that exists as to whether the departmentalized model is developmentally appropriate for the lower grades such as kindergarten, first or second (Chang, Munoz, & Koshewa, 2008). After reading the literature on departmentalization
or traditional classroom setting, I feel that Berman and McLaughlin stated it best when they said, “for schools to succeed in school change, the teachers need to be an integral part of the implementation” (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978).
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design Overview

Patton (2008) states, “Programs, like airplanes, need all their parts to do what they’re designed to do and accomplish what they’re supposed to accomplish” (Patton, 2008, p. 308). Departmentalization is a program that separates classes by subject areas instead of having students in the same classroom for all subjects. The students move from one class, with one teacher and subject to a different class with a different teacher and subject to departmentalize the learning. For departmentalization to work, many parts are included. I have evaluated how effective departmentalization is in different schools to determine if the program works and what specifically effectively implements a successful departmentalization program in upper elementary grades.

In 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) emerged and reports were made that the school systems were not up to par and that new structures and teaching methods were needed. At this point, the structure that was in place was the self-contained classroom in most schools. The departmentalization model from middle and high schools appeared to be having more success and teachers were encouraged to become experts and focus on teaching one subject (Mitchell, 2013). Based on school ABC’s improvement plan (SIP) initiated for the 2018-2019 school year, the goal is: “Student achievement will increase as a result of the continuation of District Professional Learning Communities in the use of close reading strategies and create opportunities for rigorous discussions of complex texts” (SIP, p. 9). As part of the District Professional Learning Community (DPLC), another learning focus is to use close reading strategies. By using these strategies and participating in rigorous discussions, students were able to organize their thinking and
write in response to complex texts. This has been a critical need as school ABC’s lowest 25% of students made minimal learning gains in ELA. The research discussed in the Literature Review supports that departmentalization showed that when teachers focus on one subject, they can specialize in that subject and therefore focus on a skill that students need.

We depend on teachers to be skilled in their subject matter. How well teachers know the instructional subject area is crucial when teaching their particular content and standards. Teachers in both fourth and fifth grade, at ABC school expressed a desire to teach in either reading or math because they feel they lack the deep content for one or the other. They would like to focus on developing their skills in either reading or math, not both. Therefore, school ABC explored if departmentalizing benefits students and their achievement if teachers were able to hone their craft in a subject area of math or reading and not have to teach both. Since teachers are not deeply skilled in the content that they teach, and the teachers are teaching more than one subject, they are not able to focus on developing their skills to the extent that they need to become most effective. Students’ State Standards Assessment scores and overall student learning affects teachers’ concentration on only one subject matter.

I asked in my research questions what is working well with departmentalization, and the challenges and suggestions or ideas to address the issues with departmentalization. From what I had researched, I ascertained the need to focus on professional development that is exclusive to the content areas of both reading and math. I additionally ascertained the need for time and planning for communication, schedules, and conferences with both teachers. Sharing the students, the teachers needed to develop
time to collaborate with each other and develop a larger community feeling, since the
students are with more than one teacher. A huge part of departmentalization was the need
to organize the coordination of shared materials. My research questions are as follows:

Primary research questions include:

1. What do the fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students and
other administration report is working well in the departmentalization program?
2. What do the teachers in fifth and fourth, fifth and fourth grade students, and
other administration report is not working well in the departmentalization
program?
3. What do the fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students, and
other administration report as the greatest challenges in departmentalization?
4. What do fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students, and
other administration report as ways to improve in the departmentalization
program?

Secondary research questions I investigated are included below.

1. What are the teachers’ cognizance regarding the effect of departmentalization
on subcategories of students, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted,
Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education students
(ESE)?
2. What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding what type of professional
development teachers need to make the departmentalization a success?
The perceptions of the teachers and the professional development needed provided data to intensely evaluate the departmentalization program and break down what teachers need to make the program a success.

**Participants**

The key participants I have chosen for gathering research data are teachers, students, and administrators in ten schools in the urban district under study. The district randomly selected 10 schools in one geographic area of the district that departmentalize in the upper elementary grades. The teachers and administrators in the ten schools took a survey and participated in an interview. Data from these stakeholders were helpful in considering the advantages and disadvantages of departmentalization as compared to the traditional classroom setting. I believe an important consideration between traditional and departmentalization is that students need to feel connected to their teacher. In addition, a pro-active community helps the teacher and student feel more involved and successful, both academically and socially. Another consideration when looking at the advantages of either a traditional classroom structure or departmentalization is the expertise of the teacher, particularly what subject they are stronger in or even the subject in which they specialize. This may have an impact on a decision made to departmentalize or not. I departmentalized my fourth and fifth grade classrooms this school year.

Through this program evaluation, which includes interviews, surveys and a review of data, I will be able to identify the perceived impact of departmentalization. This will determine if departmentalization benefitted students, teacher, and parents’ needs at ABC school and at other schools. Administrators are an important part of the process and depending on which classroom, traditional or departmentalized chosen, the goal of
education is student success. “The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is a U. S. law passed in December 2015 that governs the United States K–12 public education policy. The law replaced its predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act, and modified but did not eliminate provisions relating to the periodic standardized tests given to students (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Four academic indicators of ESSA are mandatory. The mandatory indicators are; academic achievement, academic progress, English language proficiency and high school graduation rates. School funding is dependent on testing. Administrators and districts look for new methods to meet the state regulations and increase test scores (New America Foundation, 2015). There is evidence through the research and literature reviews, that there are advantages in both the traditional and departmentalized classrooms. Therefore, the participation of teachers, students and administrators are all critical participants in this research.

**Data Gathering Techniques**

The data I gathered answered my research questions through interviews, surveys, state test scores and common assessments constructed by grade level teams. I plan to gather this data from ten schools in the urban district under study that departmentalize in the upper elementary grades. The district chose the schools randomly. I gathered and analyzed the departmentalized classes by using surveys and interviews of administrators, teachers and students in the departmentalized classrooms. I used this data to see if there are situations or issues with departmentalization and if teachers and administrators feel that students are making learning gains. I used the data to determine if students feel like connections to their teachers compared with when they were in separate classes in previous grades. Another reason for this process is to find out how students feel about the
departmentalization verses self-contained classrooms with respect to the connection with their teacher(s). I used surveys from the students, teachers, and other administration to compare data from departmentalization versus self-contained classrooms.

**Surveys.** I gathered mostly qualitative data for my research, which included the information gathered from surveys and interviews from teachers and administrators, as well as only surveys from students. Ten administrators, forty-four teachers, and 57 students participated in the survey. The survey consisted of a brief, voluntary open-ended survey. The survey went out to all departmentalized teachers and administrators in the elementary school in the district.

Schools involved were in the urban school district, which includes ten schools randomly selected by the district that have a departmentalized program. These schools are departmentalized urban schools with 4th and 5th grades, which could include ten different schools in my learning community approved by the district. In my final report, I used a fictitious name for all schools, participants, and district. The students who participated in the survey were both male and female in ABC school that departmentalize fourth and fifth graders. The number of student participants were 57. The estimated age of the student participants is between 8 and 12 at ABC elementary school.

I sent out an email invitation (Appendix G) to the teachers and administrators from schools in the urban school district chosen by the district. Ten schools participated in the survey. By making the surveys anonymous, the teachers and administrators filled out the survey without pressure. If the teachers or administrators choose to participate, the survey took approximately 10 minutes to finish. Teachers or administrators who did
not want to participate simply deleted the survey. I told all participants that the survey is completely anonymous, and no one knew their identity. By making the survey anonymous, I hope that teachers and administrators were very honest with their responses.

I recruited participants for the student survey by sending out an Informed Consent for Participation Parental consent for Child (Appendix I) by email to parents of students to ask if they want their child to participate in the departmentalization survey. The students received a paper copy. The Informed Consent for Participation Parental Consent for Child informed parents of the likelihood of any risks and any benefits in order for parents to decide if they wanted their child to participate and the personal information was confidential. I explained in the consent form that student participation was voluntary, and students may choose to stop participation in the survey whenever they choose with no consequences. All participants’ identities were anonymous and confidential so that data would not be identifiable. By using anonymous surveys, it was my hope that participants would answer the questions honestly and participate fully in the surveys.

**Individual interviews.** Interview data was qualitative and gathered from the administrators and teachers of the ten urban schools chosen randomly from the district. By interviewing teachers and administrators, I hoped to find out more detailed, in-depth information than answered in a survey. Administrators and teachers chosen for the interview based on their participation in the departmentalized classrooms at their schools. Interviews conducted were in person. The interview was approximately 30 minutes in length and followed with no more than six emails as necessary to clarify comments. This research study did not require student interviews.
**State test scores.** Other data that was included in the study was quantitative. This data derived from common assessments and state assessment scores of students in the 4th and 5th grades from ABC school. This data compared student scores from previous years. The comparisons were of the classes that participated in departmentalization to the classes that did not participate in departmentalizing.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations for this research, an email invitation (Appendix G) was sent to the teachers and administrators from 10 schools that departmentalize in an urban district that were randomly chosen from the district to ask for participation in the survey. Teachers and administrators agreed to take the survey using the Informed Consent Form (Appendix G), which is confidential. They were able to signify their consent by clicking on the link at the end of the Informed Consent form and take the anonymous online survey (Appendix A) regarding voluntary departmentalization participation in the learning community, teachers and administrators, in the schools that had departmentalization at their schools. By making the surveys anonymous, the teachers and administrators were provided an option whether or not to take the survey. If the teachers and administrators chose to fill out the survey, the survey took approximately 10 minutes to finish. Teachers or administrators who did not want to participate just deleted the survey. I told participants that the survey was completely anonymous. By making the survey anonymous, I hoped that teachers and administrators felt free to be very honest with their responses.

Additionally, I collected surveys from students. I recruited participants for the student survey by providing an Informed Consent for Participation Parental consent for Child (Appendix I) by email to parents of students to request they agree to allow their
child to participate in the departmentalization study. A paper copies went home with the student. The Informed Consent for Participation Parental Consent for Child informed parents of the likelihood of any risks and any benefits for parents who decided they wanted their child to participate. I explained in the consent form that student participation was on a voluntary basis. Students were able to choose to stop participation in the survey with no consequences. The parent and child reviewed the form that asks for consent. Consent and signature acquired from both the parent and the child if they chose to participate in the survey and returned to school in an envelope provided. All participant identities are anonymous and confidential; fictitious names used as needed. By using anonymous surveys, it was my hope that participants answered the questions honestly and participated fully in the surveys. I was the only person with access to the data and I plan to keep it protected for up to 5 years after the project’s completion then destroyed after completion.

Once I receive the Informed Consent for Participation Parental consent for Child back from the parent with the student and parent signatures, I gave the students an Informed Consent for Participation Child Assent form (Appendix J) to fill out. I explained the Consent for Assent form to the students and the research and allowed the students to decide if they wanted to complete the survey. I explained the consent form to the students with specific description, including risks, benefits and intention to protect their privacy and data. I sent out through email an anonymous online survey for voluntary departmentalization participation, to the students who had parental consent and student assent at my elementary school and who had departmentalization in their classrooms. By having anonymous surveys, the students were encouraged to participate without coercion.
Students who do not want to participate could just delete the survey and would not feel coerced to participate. I emphasized to participants that the survey was completely anonymous. By making the survey anonymous, I hoped the student would be very honest with their responses. Fifty-seven students participated in the anonymous survey by using a Google link.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis for the departmentalization evaluation focused on qualitative data and descriptive statistics from the surveys and interviews collected from teachers, students and administrators. I also analyzed qualitative data from interviews and used the different patterns that are prominent to draw conclusions about how departmentalization was working in the upper elementary setting. Teachers, students and administrators had recommendations that emerged which have the potential of improving the program and its value as it relates to increasing student achievement. Quantitative data collected for students from the State Assessment was a performance indicator for the school year.

**Surveys.** I analyzed the survey data by first looking at the response rates and at any remarkable differences in the answers to the questions. Distribution of the surveys were anonymous. By starting with an overview of the whole survey results, I looked at the questions that were multiple choice and then moved to the open-ended questions to find any different values.

**Individual interviews.** Interview data recorded by using the digital recorder then transcribed. I then organized and processed the data to analyze it. To analyze the data, I coded the data to make it more manageable and gathered insights into the research. Labeling relevant pieces of the data and coding helped me with interpreting the data. I
identified interview responses as repeated, unexpected, or consistent with a theory or concept related to departmentalization.

**State test scores.** State test scores are located on the Department of Education website for each school desegregated by grade level. I looked at this data and compared it to other schools that departmentalize with the same demographics. By looking at the data, I was able to draw conclusions of similarities and differences in schools that departmentalize.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, when looking at the methodology and research for this study, I needed to take into account student data compared to the year before. The survey and interview data gave me information on the culture of the classrooms that departmentalize, the connect ability of teacher pairs and students bonding with the teacher, as well as challenges and successes in departmentalization. Tests, whether state mandated or classroom assessments are not always a true measure of a student’s ability. Outside influences can have a bearing on students’ performance as well as classroom influences. By using surveys, interviews and state test scores, this research offers insight into how well students in the upper elementary school grades perform when having two different teachers and changing classrooms.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

A description of the organizational changes that my program evaluation topic of departmentalization needs was in the findings that follow. The purpose of my evaluation was to analyze the departmentalized classes and demonstrate effectiveness as it relates to student achievement. I gathered and analyzed data from the departmentalized classes by using surveys and interviews of teachers in the departmentalized classrooms and administrators of ten schools that departmentalize, to see if the problems addressed if teachers and administrators felt that students were making learning gains. Duke (2006) examined changes in the organization of elementary school quoted below:

The cherished image of the traditional elementary school with its self-contained classrooms and solitary teachers is disappearing. In its place, is a much more complex and complicated organization involving more team teaching and team planning, greater reliance on specialists, and variable schedules dictated by student needs? The case studies reveal that turning around low-performing elementary schools may necessitate flexible ability grouping, a host of supplementary programs, and partnerships with community groups. (p. 27)

Some teachers are stronger in one subject than others are. I explored the difference between traditional instruction and departmentalized instruction in reading and math. My program evaluation findings provided answers to my research questions about departmentalization in the upper elementary grades and its impact on student achievement. I investigated and analyzed the effect that departmentalizing in the upper elementary grades, specifically fourth and fifth grade, has on academic achievement as
compared to academic achievement of students in a self-contained classroom. Surveys and interviews distributed to all fourth and fifth grade administrators and teachers in ten schools in a large, urban school district checked to see if the implementation of departmentalization in the upper elementary school grades affected student test scores, specifically the State Assessment. Surveys distributed to students in fourth and fifth grades in ABC school. Due to the district restricting the other nine schools from participation.

Findings

This study utilized ten schools in a large urban district. These schools were located in one area of the county with similar size and demographics. These ten schools all departmentalized in both fourth and fifth grades and had a mixture of traditional and departmentalized classroom environments. The findings of this research gathered data in an answer to the following research questions:

1. What do the fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students and other administration report is working well in the departmentalization program?

2. What do the teachers in fifth and fourth, fifth and fourth grade students, and other administration report is not working well in the departmentalization program?

3. What do the fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students, and other administration report as the greatest challenges in departmentalization?

4. What do fifth and fourth grade teachers, fifth and fourth grade students, and other administration report as ways to improve in the departmentalization program?
Secondary research questions I investigated are included below.

1. What are the teachers’ cognizance regarding the effect of departmentalization on subcategories of students, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education students (ESE)?

2. What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding what type of professional development teachers need to make the departmentalization a success?

Another related research question was; what do fifth and fourth grade teachers, students, and other administration report as ways to improve in the departmentalization program? I interviewed and sent surveys to 10 schools in the district that departmentalize in grades fourth and fifth. I compiled qualitative and quantitative data to review the effectiveness of the participant’s views using both survey and interview data. Survey data came from 44 teachers, 57 fourth and fifth grade students, and 10 administrators. Interview data came from five administrators and 10 teachers.

**Teacher surveys.** The departmentalization surveys for teachers (Appendix A) went out to ten schools in a large urban district. Teachers that departmentalize in fourth and fifth grades in these schools received an email to ask for consent and anonymous Google link-requesting volunteers to participate in the survey about departmentalization. Out of the 84 surveys sent out to teachers, 43 returned, resulting in a response rate of 52%.

Teachers answered survey questions about demographic information in the first four questions, such as years teaching, grade taught and how long the teacher had taught in a departmentalized grade. By looking at this demographic information, I was able to
determine teaching experience in relation to number of years taught as well as number of years teaching in a departmentalized setting. Out of the 44 responses on years as a teacher, 39 of the teachers had five years or more and four had less than five years teaching experience (Figure 1). This tells me that these teachers have most likely taught both in the traditional and departmentalized settings.

![Bar chart showing years of teaching experience](image)

**Figure 1.** Survey question 2: How Many Years Have You Been A Teacher? Departmentalization in upper elementary grades on how many years you have been a teacher (n=43)

However, 39 out of 43 had been departmentalizing for less than six years (Figure 2). Departmentalization has not been that popular in elementary schools until the last decade due to the uncertainty of state scores and the hesitancy to try something new and different.
In question 4 (Figure 3) teachers answered the survey question, what grade did they teach. Twenty-four (57%) of the teachers surveyed taught fifth grade and 18 (43%) taught fourth. I expected the number of teachers to be a greater percentage in fifth grade since this is typically the grade the elementary schools departmentalize, and in my experience when talking to teachers, they want to teach a specialized subject. Within the past five years, the district under study increased in the number of schools that are departmentalizing in grades other than fifth.
In questions 4-10 in the teacher survey question, teachers determined what is working in a departmentalized program that is different from a traditional classroom. Thirty-two (75%) teachers said that their lesson delivery is better in a departmentalized program, 29 (68%) teachers said they had more time to do lesson plans in a departmentalized program, 29 (67%) said it was easier for them to differentiate their instruction, and 27 (62%) feel like their students learn more in a departmentalized model. Twenty-six (60%) teachers responded that there are positives when teaching in a departmentalized classroom and grades are excelling.

When looking at the specific breakdown of the questions, in question 5 (Figure 4), 25 (61%) teachers strongly agreed that the lesson delivery is better in a departmentalized setting. An additional seven (17%) agreed with this statement as well. This presents a majority of 34 (78%) of teachers relating their perception that departmentalization provides them “with more crucial time in their day to develop and prepare their lesson plans” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality).

![Figure 4. Survey question 5: My lesson delivery is better in a departmentalized setting (n = 43)](image-url)
Question 6 (Figure 5), resulted in a response rate of 29 (69%) of teachers who strongly agreed that their lesson delivery was better in a departmentalized setting. With an additional six (14%) agreeing with better lesson delivery in a departmentalized setting, the results show 35 (83%), a large majority of teachers, felt that departmentalization contributes to more effective lesson delivery. This reflection on the part of teachers seems highly encouraging in light of the ultimate goal of improving classroom instruction with the end of increased student performance.

![Bar chart](image)

*Figure 5. Survey questions six queries as to if teachers’ perceive that their lesson delivery is better in a departmentalized setting (n = 43)*

In question 7 (Figure 6), 24 (57%) teachers strongly agreed that it was easier for them to differentiate instruction in a departmentalized setting. With the additional 10 (24%) of teachers responding in agreement, this is a 35 (81%) of the teachers’ perception that differentiated instruction is easier to facilitate in the departmentalized setting.
Figure 6. Survey question 7: My students learn more in a departmentalized setting (n=43)

In question 8 (Figure 7), 22 (52%) of teachers strongly agreed that their students learn more in a departmentalized setting. Ten teachers (24%) agreed with the idea that departmentalization setting contributes to student learning gains and presents a 33 (76%) teacher rate of concurrence in this perception.

Figure 7. Survey question 8 asked teachers what they feel is working well in the departmentalized program? (n = 42)

In question 9 (Figure 8) 31 (74%) teachers strongly agreed that they were able to specialize in one subject area. With nine (21%) teachers in agreement with this statement, almost all teachers 40 (95%) responded that they find departmentalization a platform for teacher specialization in one subject area.
In questions 4-9, more than half of the teachers surveyed strongly agree with the question, however in question 10, (Figure 9), teachers responded to the question if student grades were excelling, 17 (42%) agreed with this question, 10 (25%) were neutral and only eight (20%) strongly agreed. When looking closely at the surveys, the teachers that were neutral represented more teachers that had departmentalized for a longer time.

What is not working in the departmentalization program identified through questions 11, 12, and 13? In question 11 teachers responded to the question, about too much time is wasted in transition; 28 (69%) disagreed that time is wasted in
departmentalizing, seven (17%) agree that time is wasted, and seven (17%) were neutral in their response. Teachers responded to question 12 students not as connected to their elementary school teacher in the departmentalized program, 23 (57%) of teachers disagree, 13 (31%) of teachers agree and two (5%) of teachers were neutral. In question 13, teachers answered: if they felt like the grades were decreasing, 29 (71%) of teachers disagree, seven (17%) of teachers were neutral and four (10%) of teachers agreed (Figure 11). The majority of the teachers disagree with the statements on survey questions eleven through thirteen, which is positive toward departmentalization; however, a few teachers that did respond that these survey questions were some of the things that are not working in departmentalization.

![Survey Questions](Figure 10)

*Figure 10. Survey questions 11 through 13 queried teachers as to what is not working in departmentalization: 11. Wasted time in transitioning classrooms; 12. Students not as connected to a teacher; 13. Student grades are decreasing. (n=41)*

In the teacher survey, question 11, teachers answered a question about challenges in the departmentalization program through questions fourteen through sixteen in survey form (Figure 11). In question 14, teachers answered a question about whether they
thought that professional development in departmentalization was a challenge. Twenty-one (50%) teachers surveyed said that professional development was not a challenge, 15 (36%) teachers said that professional development was a challenge and six (14%) teachers were neutral when asked if professional development is a challenge. When asked, if planning time for teachers was difficult for the entire team in question 15, 23 (55%) teachers disagreed that planning time was difficult for the whole team, 15 (36%) teachers felt like planning time for teachers was difficult for the whole team and two (5%) teachers were neutral. Two (4%) teachers surveyed added in that as long as the teachers had common planning time then planning was not difficult for the entire team. When asked if teachers favor one class over another in their departmentalized classrooms for question 16, 20 (48%), teachers disagreed that they favored one class over the other, 11 (28%) teachers agreed that they favor one class over the other and 10 (24%) teachers were neutral. Although the majority of the teachers had a positive reaction to the question about the challenges and did not feel that there were many challenges, the teachers that agreed that there were a few challenges in departmentalizing were more positive toward departmentalizing when addressing challenges than in previous questions.
Figure 11. Survey questions fourteen through sixteen: challenges teachers have when departmentalizing (n=41)

Ways that departmentalization can be improved was identified through questions seventeen, eighteen and (Figure 11). Pick teachers that are qualified to teach the subject which was question 17, had a response of 32 (77%) teachers that agreed with this question on the survey with nine (21%) teachers being neutral and only one (2%) teacher that disagreed. Having teacher buy in to departmentalize was another strong reason to improve departmentalization according to teachers in question 18. Thirty-six (88%) teachers agreed with this survey question, five (12%) teachers were neutral and no one disagreed. In question 19, 39 (95%) teachers answered that class distribution when departmentalizing needed to be considered and only one (2%) teacher disagreed with one (2%) teacher in the neutral range. Although in previous questions teachers agreed that they favor departmentalization, this question on ways to improve departmentalization
held high agreement on the need for picking qualified teachers, having teacher buy in and considering class distribution.

Figure 12. Survey questions seventeen through nineteen asked teachers to respond to ways to improve departmentalization; the figure displays the agreement percentage levels (n = 41)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Agreement Response Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. Pick qualified teachers</td>
<td>31 (76.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Have teacher buy in</td>
<td>36 (88.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Consider class distribution</td>
<td>39 (95.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 20 was open ended and teachers were able to respond if they had, any other comments that they would like to add. Seventeen (3%) of the 44 teachers commented and their comments were positive toward departmentalization. However, one comment was “I feel like students need to be developmentally ready for departmentalization,” and another comment from a teacher was, “Pairings need to be really looked at so that the teachers are compatible who work together in the same class pairing” (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). These two comments from the two teachers were the only negative comments toward departmentalization. There were not any other negative comments, and one comment was that “Departmentalizing has helped me perfect my craft as a reading teacher.” In question 21, teachers shared what their preference was, departmentalized or traditional. Thirty-five (79%) teachers chose
departmentalization and nine (21%) teachers chose traditional, which was a strong preference for the departmentalized program (Figure 13).

![Bar chart showing the preference between traditional and departmentalized programs]

_Figure 13. Survey question 21: How long have you departmentalized at your school. (n = 42)_

Questions 22-27 were all open comment questions. In question 23 I asked the teachers; what is working well in the departmentalization program? (Figure 14). There were 37 comments for this question, 17 (47%) of the comments from teachers showed that specializing and becoming experts in their subject area by having to focus on one core subject and being able to master instructional techniques was a plus for departmentalizing. Thirteen (35%) teachers who felt being able to plan for only one subject helped them with more in depth lessons. This gave them more time to become familiar with the standards. Seven (19%) teachers expressed that departmentalization helped with fatigue, made conferences easier, and since they only had to prepare for one subject, they could focus on making that subject stronger. Two (5%) teachers felt that time management is essential and felt that they were held more accountable. Overall teachers responded that being able to specialize in their subject area was more beneficial.
to the teachers in the departmentalization program.

Figure 14. Survey question 23: What is working well in departmentalization? (n = 42)

In question 24 I asked teachers what is not working well in the departmentalization program in an open comment style (Figure 15)? Thirty-six teachers commented on this open comment question. Ten (28%) teachers commented that partnerships were an issue in departmentalizing. The teachers said that their partnering teacher was an issue if they were not on the same page as you or did not teach in the same style. Partnerships with their team was another issue that teachers commented on and they felt divided the team on the grade level. Nine (25%) teachers felt that the schedule was a problem, specifically, that each class receive equal instructional time and one teacher having time that is more academic with the students than the other teacher is. Six (17%) teachers felt that the transitions between classes took too long and too much time was lost in transitioning. Six (17%) teachers felt that there was nothing wrong with the departmentalization program. Five (14%) teachers felt that it was more difficult to get to
know the students in the departmentalized program and that it was harder to create relationships with all of the students since they were not with them the entire school day. Four (11%) teachers responded that departmentalization was difficult when grading papers, they sat in meetings that did not pertain to their subject, and there were too many students to monitor.

Figure 15. Survey question 24: teacher response percentages to what is not working well in departmentalization? (n =42)

Teachers answered what the greatest challenge in the departmentalization program was through question 25 using an open comment style (Figure 16). Thirty-seven teachers responded to this question, 12 (32%) of teachers reported that planning with a partner teacher and having good communication was a key factor that was missing for them when departmentalizing. By having the same or similar teaching styles as their partner teacher, teachers responded they would be able to be more of a cohesive unit, which would affect student achievement positively and lay out expectations for both parents and students. Often (27%) teachers responded that time in general was an issue;
whether it was time to meet with the team or making sure that the teachers have a set time in the schedule and stick to it. Six (16%) teachers reported that classroom management needed to be consistent across teachers especially if teachers collaborated. These teachers reported that this would help with student / teacher relationships and the class culture across the teams. Five (14%) teachers responded that there was not a challenge when departmentalizing. Four (11%) teachers reported that being departmentalized was actually more work for them. Having to grade more papers and less teachers to plan with so, teachers responded that they had to do more work since the planning could not be divided amongst more teachers. Two (5%) teachers reported that transition time was a challenge especially when changing classes and the time lost when getting the students on track. Two (5%) teachers said that student / teacher relationships were a challenge and getting to know 45 to 50 students was difficult.

Figure 16. Survey Question 25: What is the greatest challenge in departmentalization? (n = 42)
Teachers responded to some ways to improve departmentalization program in question 26 (Figure 17). Thirty-two teachers responded to this question. Nine (28%) teachers responded that the schedule had too many constraints but realized that the master schedule was a district issue, meaning that the district departmentalization schedule is non-negotiable and difficult to change. Seven (22%) teachers responded that communication with parents, partner teachers and allowing more teacher input for distributing students needed improvement. Five (16%) teachers responded that overall departmentalization works well and had no comments on how to improve it. Four (13%) teachers responded that an improvement would be to give more flexibility to teachers to move students around if they were not bonding with students in the classroom or were not achieving in the same way as their peers. Three (9%) teachers answered that transitions needed improvement although they had no suggestions on how to do it. Two (6%) teachers expressed that they would like more planning time with their partner teacher and with their team as a whole grade level.

*Figure 17*. Survey Question 26: teacher responses by percentage rates to the question, what are some ways to improve the departmentalization program? (n = 32)
In question 26, teachers in the teacher survey openly commented on departmentalization and the effects of departmentalization on subcategories of students such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE). There were 33 teacher responses for this question. The majority of the responses, 20 (64%) teachers said that the effect on these diverse demographic groups were positive. Some comments were that the students are able to receive more specialized instruction if teachers are experts in the subject area and the teacher is able to differentiate to meet the student’s needs. Another comment was that students are able to receive instruction from different teachers in a different environment, so that they receive the scaffolding that they need in each environment. Five (15%) teachers remarked that the effect for the subcategories of students was more difficult. Comments from some of the teachers was that students in ESE have a difficult time getting to know the two different teachers and switching classes was difficult for some students. Four (12%) teachers responded that there was not any different effect for the subcategories of students. One (3%) teachers responded that the effect for the subcategories was not any different than staying with one teacher and another comment was that there was too much transitioning throughout the day and the students that are in ELL and ESE became frustrated.
In question 28, teachers responded to the question about the type of professional development needed to make departmentalization a success. Thirty teachers responded to this question. The majority of the comments, 18 (60%) teachers said that differentiated instruction in their specialty area would be the most beneficial. Six (20%) teachers felt that professional development, in time management and how to work with a teacher partner would be beneficial. Three (10%) teachers who commented selected N/A and Two (6%) of teachers felt that planning time with their team on their grade level and partner teacher would be beneficial.
Figure 19. Survey question 28: What type of professional development will teachers need to make departmentalization a success? (n=30)

In conclusion, at the end of the teacher survey, I asked teachers to comment on anything else that they would like to add. I received 11 responses, Six (50%) were positive toward departmentalization, Five (44%) were non-applicable and only One (1%) was negative toward departmentalization. Overall, teacher responses for this survey were in favor of departmentalization. One teacher commented, “The years I have been departmentalized have been my best years of teaching. I have enjoyed these years and I have grown the most in my profession during this time” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). Another comment was, “I think departmentalization in fifth grade is essential for teachers to be able to teach to the depth of the standards. It also helps prepare students for middle school” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality).

Administrator surveys. Administrators at 10 schools in a large urban district received surveys asking questions about departmentalization (Appendix B). I sent the administrators of the ten schools chosen in the district that departmentalize in fourth and fifth grades an email to ask for consent and an anonymous Google link to ask volunteers to participate in the survey about departmentalization. Out of the 10 surveys sent out to
administrators, 10 administrators returned the surveys, giving a response rate of 100% for administrator responses on the survey.

In survey question 1 administrators responded to the question, how long they had been an administrator. Four (40%) administrators had less than five years, three (30%) had been administrators between five and ten years, and three (30%) had been administrators between 11 and 15 years. Seasoned administrators and novice administrators provided a mixture of responses for this information. Since departmentalization in the elementary schools is not common, differences in experience of administrators as it relates to departmentalization and the reasons, why administrators chose to departmentalize in the upper elementary grades became clear.

![Bar chart showing the number of administrators who have been in different years as administrators.]

*Figure 20.* Survey question 2: how long have you been an administrator? (n= 10)

Administrators were asked in questions 3, 4 and 5 what they think is working well in the departmentalization program. In question 3 administrators were surveyed to see if they felt that having teachers specialize in one subject area was working well in departmentalization and nine (90%) administrators agreed that teachers were able to specialize in one subject area and one (2%) administrator was neutral, however no administrator disagreed. For question 4, teachers have more time to do lesson plans,
eight (80%) administrators agreed with this survey question, two (20%) were neutral, and no administrator disagreed. For question 5, student grades are excelling, five (50%) of administrators disagreed, three (30%) of the administrators were neutral and two (20%) agreed. This finding of additional questions as to why grades are not excelling, since the majority of the administrators agreed that the teachers had more time to do lesson plans and could specialize in one subject, yet the grades were not excelling according to the majority of the administration.

Figure 21. Survey questions 3 through 5: what is working well in departmentalization? (n = 10)

In questions 6, 7, and 8 administrators answered survey questions on what they think is not working well in departmentalization. In question six administrators answered if there was too much time wasted in transition. Five (50%) administrators agree with this statement, four (40%) disagree and one (10%) was neutral. For statement seven, students are not as connected to their elementary school teacher, five (50%) agree and five (50%) disagree. In question 8 administrators commented on whether student grades
are decreasing and five (50%) were neutral, three (30%) agree, and two (20%) disagree. In the additional comment section at the end of the survey, administrators suggested that “findings based on the effectiveness of procedures and routines depending on the departmentalized teams and teacher practices differed, specifically the differences in how teachers manage their classrooms” (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). At the time of the survey, administrators reported that since the state assessment was not available, five (50%) administrators responding neutral since they were waiting on the state results.

Figure 22. Survey questions 6 through 8 administrator response rates to question what is not working well in departmentalizing? (n = 10)

Questions 9 through 11 focus on challenges administrators face when attempting to departmentalize. In question 9, administrators answered the survey question, if professional development is a challenge for administrators when departmentalizing. Six (60%) administrators disagreed, two (20%) administrators agreed and 2 (20%) were
neutral. In question ten administrators answered the survey question, if planning time for teachers is difficult for the entire team. Six (60%) administrators disagreed and four (40%) agreed that planning time is difficult for the entire team. Teacher responded in question, if they favor one class over another in departmentalization classrooms, seven (70%) agreed, two (20%) disagreed, and one (10%) are neutral. One administrator stated that “planning time was due to the challenges that face administrators because of contract limitations from the union, which limits required trainings, so administrators’ hands are tied and instead of offering specialized professional development for the few departmentalized teachers” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality), and one administrator felt that a more global approach would benefit more teachers. Challenges for departmentalization out of the three questions above appears to be that teachers favor one class over another.

Figure 23. Survey questions nine through eleven: challenges for departmentalization. (n=10)
Administrators responded to the question, what ways departmentalization might be improved in questions twelve, thirteen and fourteen. In question 12 administrators answered if picking teachers who are qualified to teach a specific subject would improve departmentalization. One hundred percent of administrators agreed with this survey question. In question 13 administrators responded that teacher buy in is needed for departmentalization to be successful. Ten (100%) of administrator’s agreed with this survey question. In question 14, eight (80%) administrators agreed that class distribution needed consideration and two (20%) administrators were neutral on this survey question. Explanations included that administrators need to be careful not to put all academically low performing students in one class and make sure the class distribution is even and not stacked with high academic students or low academic students. Administrators agreed that teachers should want to departmentalize, and teachers need to be qualified to teach in the departmentalized subject area.

Figure 24. Survey questions 12, 13, and 14: ways to improve departmentalization (n = 10)
In question 15 on the administrator survey, (Figure 25), I used open response to ask the question, what is the reason that you chose to departmentalize at your school? There were 10 responses and the majority of the responses, seven (70%) of administrators responded that teachers requested to departmentalize. Twenty percent of administrators remarked that they wanted to see if teacher retention would increase if teachers specialized in one academic area. One (10%) administrator wanted to determine if teachers would be able to increase the rigorous instruction and go deeper in their academic area of expertise by departmentalizing and allowing teachers to focus on their craft.

![Pie chart showing reasons for departmentalization](image)

Figure 25. Survey question 15: what is the reason that you chose to departmentalize at your school? (n = 10)

In question 16 of the administrator survey, administrators responded to how long they had departmentalized at their school. Eight (80%) administrators reported that they had departmentalized for more than three years and 10% said they had departmentalized for one to two years. One (10%) administrator said that they had departmentalized for
less than one year. This data was important to ask so that I could determine the preference for departmentalizing and if administrators had decided to continue. The majority of administrators reported that they had departmentalized for three or more years, and that they would continue to departmentalize.

![Bar chart showing the number of administrators who have departmentalized for different time periods.](image)

Figure 26. Question 16: How long have you departmentalized at your school? (n = 10)

In question 17, administrators were asked how their student data has changed since they had departmentalized and to elaborate. Four (40%) administrators remarked that their student data has neither improved nor declined. One explanation was that the data has improved in some areas and declined in others, another was that the data goes up and down depending on the teacher in the particular role. Three (30%) administrators stated that their data has declined in both learning gains and in the lowest quartile. Several thoughts from administrators as to the decline were that the teacher was not strong in the instructional content assignment and the impact shows negatively in the student data. Three (30%) administrators remarked that their student data has improved and if the teacher is strong in their content area specialty, the data improves.
Question 17: How has your student data changed since you have departmentalized? (n=10)

Figure 27. Question 17: How has your student data changed since you have departmentalized? (n=10)

Question 18 on the administrative survey, was an open-ended question and administrators were asked to comment on what is working well in the departmentalization program. Ten administrators responded to the question. Three (30%) administrators reported that having teachers plan for only one subject area helped them increase their knowledge, therefore becoming a specialist and able to deliver instruction better to their students. Another three (30%) administrators reported that it is easier to track student data that represents to teacher performance. Two (20%) of administrators responded that having teachers plan with a partner on the grade level within the same specialty helped the teachers to share a common bond. Two (20%) of administrators reported that teacher moral had improved, specifically that “teacher morale and specialized authentic teaching and learning has improved due to departmentalization. More authentic teaching and learning and teacher buy in when planning common assessments has also been a plus when departmentalizing” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality).
In question 19, administrators responded to the survey question, what is not working well in the departmentalization program. This question was an open comment question and nine administrators commented. Three (33%) administrators report that finding time for the entire team to meet is not working well and the team is unable to find the time to plan together to meet the needs of all the students. Two (22%) administrators report that transitions are too lengthy, and time is lost when students transition. Two (22%) administrators also report that the data is declining due to weak teachers or teachers new to their specialization area. One (11%) administrator that it is difficult to work with the master schedule mandated by the district and another one (11%) administrator reports that students have favorite teachers and do not always respond favorably to one teacher over another.

*Figure 28. Question 18: what is working well in the departmentalization program? (n=10)*
Figure 29. Question 19: what is not working well in the departmentalization program? (n = 10)

In question 20, administrators responded to the survey question, what is the greatest challenge in departmentalization is and what some methods to address these challenges. There were nine responses from administrators in this open comment question. Four (44%) administrators reported that relationships between students are a big challenge. Teams need to get along and collaborate with fidelity according to several administrators and student relationships with both teachers in the team can sometimes be an issue. Responses from administrators indicated that students feelings should be considered, meaning, that they belong to both teachers and not just to their homeroom teacher. Two (22%) administrators noted that transitions were not working well in departmentalization from one class to another, taking up too much time. Two (22%) administrators reported that they did not have anything that was not working well in departmentalization. One (11%) administrators reported that finding qualified teachers...
was difficult, and another 11% commented the time and flexibility within the schedule was not working well but was more of a district mandate.

![Pie chart showing responses to Question 20: greatest challenge in departmentalization]

**Figure 30.** Question 20: what is the greatest challenge in departmentalization? (n = 10)

Question 21 in the administrator survey was an open comment question that asked administrators what some ways to improve the departmentalization program. There were seven responses to this question. Three (43%) administrators reported that compatibility among the teachers and hiring the right teachers for the specialized area were ways to improve departmentalization. Two (29%) administrators wrote, “More professional development focused on the subject area for teachers would benefit departmentalized teachers” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). One (14%) administrators reported that they would like to find a way to improve transition time. One (14%) administrator report that they were unsure of a way to improve departmentalization.
In question 22, administrators responded to the survey question, what the effect of departmentalization on subcategories of students such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE). There were nine open comments from administrators for this question. Four (44%) administrators report that they have not noticed any specific effects on the subcategories mentioned and Two (22%) of administrators report that it can be a challenge, especially with a pullout program and that it depends on the makeup of the class of students. Another two (22%) of administrators commented that it gives subcategories of students the ability to develop a variety of relationships with teachers and the opportunity to relate and succeed with at least one of the teachers. One (11%) administrator responded that their student academic performance data has declined overall in these subcategories of students.
Administrators commented to the survey question 23 on the type of professional development needed to ensure successful departmentalization. This is an open comment question and eight administrators responded. Five (63%) administrators responded that professional development that targets the teacher’s area of specialization would be beneficial. Four (50%) administrators commented that collaboration would be a good professional development topic. Two (25%) administrators noted that communication as a professional development area, including communication with parents, is an area of concern. One (13%) administrator noted that data analysis, usage is a needed professional development to help teachers look at data and determine student achievement needs, and to help differentiate lessons.
In conclusion, administrators indicate in the survey results, that Eight (80%) of administrators favor departmentalization. One administrator’s final comment was “Departmentalization is a great way to teach and as with anything else, there are always challenges” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). However, another administrator’s comment was that she would be looking at her state scores at the end of the school year and will be going back to the traditional setting if data has not improved after departmentalizing in fourth grade for three years with declining data.

**Fourth grade student surveys.** The departmentalization surveys, for students sent to fourth grade (Appendix C) students in ABC school since it was difficult to get the permission from parents and the district at other schools. Students in departmentalized fourth and fifth grade classes in ABC school received an email asking for consent and an anonymous survey accessed through Google link for volunteers to participate in the survey about departmentalization. Out of the 150 consent forms that sent to both fourth and fifth grade students, only 57 students whose parents agreed to allow their fourth or fifth grade student to participate actually completed the survey.
The surveys sent to fourth grade students had 23 out of 95 (24%) of students responding to the majority of the questions. In question two, students in fourth grade responded if they liked having only one teacher in the previous grades. There were 21 responses with Eight (39%) who disagreed, three (33%) agreed, and two (29%) were neutral.

*Figure 34. Fourth grade response to question 2: having one teacher in the grades below 4th grade was better than having more than one teacher (n = 21)*

In question 3, 4th graders were asked if they thought that having more than one teacher in 5th grade will be good for them. Nineteen (86%) students chose on the survey that having more than one teacher would be good for them and two (9%) chose that it would not be good for them, with a neutral score of 5%.
Figure 35. Fourth grade response to question 3 concerning if having more than one teacher in fifth grade was better for them. (n = 22)

In question 4, students were asked if they will like changing classes in 5th grade. Twenty-two (100%) of the student responses were in agreement with this survey question.

Figure 36. Fourth grade response to question 4: I am excited to be changing classes again for 5th grade. (n = 22)

In question 5, students were asked if they would like to have only one teacher in 5th grade. Twenty-one (65%) disagreed, Six (18%) were neutral. Students in fourth grade have never departmentalized, so these questions depended on what students thought they would want to do based on personal reasons, possibly knowing someone that departmentalized, or parental influence.
Figure 37. Survey question 5 prompts students to respond to the question: I would prefer to go back to having only one teacher and not switching for math and reading. (n=33)

In question 6, fourth grade students responded to the question if they thought it would be easy to keep up with assignments from two teachers. Twenty-two students responded to this question. The majority of students, 18 (82%), agreed with this statement, only two (9%) disagreed and two (9%) were neutral. Not all students had the opportunity to departmentalize before, which may have been the reason for the neutral comments.

Figure 38. Survey question 6: By having two teachers, I think it is easier to keep up with the different homework, and assignments in class. (n = 22)

In question 7 fourth graders were asked how they felt about having more than one teacher in fifth grade for the following school year compared to other years when they
had only one teacher. This was an open comment question and there were 22 responses. The vast majority, 20 (91%) said that they felt good about having two teachers compared to one teacher in previous years. Other comments were that students felt that having two teachers would prepare them better for middle school and it would help them become more organized. The remaining two (9%) of students answered that they did not know or that it did not matter to them.

![Pie chart showing the results of the survey question.](image)

*Figure 39. Survey question 7: how do you feel about having more than one teacher in fifth grade as compared to other years when you had only one teacher and did not switch for math and reading? (n = 22)*

In question 8, fourth grade students responded to the question if they thought having more than one teacher in fifth grade would make a difference in how well they did in school, and then asked them to explain their answer in an open-ended comment section. There were twenty-one responses. The majority, 14 (67%) responded that yes, they thought more than one teacher would make a difference and seven (33%) students responded no. Some of the comments included they liked having two teachers because of the different personalities of the teachers, they felt it would prepare them better for the
fifth grade and that they would be more organized. Students who answered that they did not feel having two teachers would make a difference, said that it did not matter and that they still learn the same things.

Figure 40. Survey questions 8: if they think having more than one teacher in 4th grade and then again next year in 5th grade will help you or not help you with your learning? (n = 21)

In the remaining questions (Figure 41 and 42), students responded to the question identifying their gender. There were the same number of boys as girls for this question. In addition, a question asked students how long the student had been at the current school. Answers varied for this question and only one student had been at the school since kindergarten with the majority of the students attending the school for four or five years. It would have been interesting to add a question that asked if students had ever departmentalized in their elementary career. The last question for the fourth graders was to add anything else that they wanted to say about departmentalization. Only four students answered this question and all four said that they loved their teachers and wanted to have two teachers again for their fifth grade year.
Fifth grade student surveys. Surveys for students in fifth grade (Appendix D) went only to the students in ABC school since it was difficult to get the permission from parents and the district at other schools. Teachers that departmentalize in fifth grade in one school received an email to ask for consent and an anonymous survey accessed through Google link to ask volunteers to participate in the survey about departmentalization. Out of the one hundred consents sent out initially, only 57 responses returned an agreement from parents to allow their fourth or fifth grade student to complete the survey.
There were 34 out of 100 (34%); fifth grade surveys returned using the anonymous email. In question one, fifth graders responded to the question, if it was easy for them to adjust to having more than one teacher in fifth grade. There were 33 responses and 26 (79%) of students either agreed or strongly agreed with six (18%) that were neutral or one (3%) that disagreed. No one strongly disagreed with this question.

*Figure 43. Question 1: Next year, I will be going into 6th grade and I am looking forward to having more than one teacher again (n = 34)*

In question 2, fifth graders responded if they have enjoyed having more than one teacher in fifth grade. Thirteen (39%) agreed and 11 (33%) strongly agreed with this question. Seven (21%) students’ responses were neutral, two (6%) disagreed and one (3%) strongly disagreed that they enjoyed having more than one teacher in fifth grade.
Figure 44. Question 2: Having one teacher in the grades below 5th grade was better than having more than one teacher (n = 34)

In question 3, fifth graders answered if having more than one teacher in fifth grade was not as helpful as having only one teacher in other elementary school grades. There were 33 responses to this question. Either 22 (67%) students disagreed or strongly disagreed which is positive for departmentalizing. Seven (21%) were neutral in their response and four (12%) either agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 45. Question 3: I think by having more than one teacher, has been better for me (n = 33)

In question 4, fifth graders responded to the question if changing classes in the fifth grade has been a benefit to their education. There were 33 responses to this question. The majority of fifth graders, 22 (67%), either agreed or strongly agreed with this
statement. Twenty-seven percent were neutral in their responses and three (9%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this question.

**Figure 46.** Question 4: I am excited to be changing classes again for 6th grade (n = 34)

In question 5, fifth graders replied if they would rather have one teacher or two teachers. There were 33 responses to this question. The majority of the responses, 21 (63%), disagreed with this question and 12 (36%) of those strongly disagreed which is a positive result for departmentalization in terms of how students feel about having more than one teacher. Twenty-four percent of responses were neutral, and four (12%) agreed. No responses strongly agreed.

**Figure 47.** Question 5: I would prefer to go back to having only one teacher and not switching for math and reading (n = 33)
In question 6, fifth graders answered if keeping track of their assignments from each of their teachers has been difficult for them. Thirty-three students responded. Fifteen (45%) students agreed that it was not difficult to keep track of their assignments. Twelve (33%) students disagreed and nine (27%) were neutral. This tells me that addressing this with teachers to help students with organization skill to be able to keep better track of their assignments. Even though more felt it was not difficult, the numbers are very close.

**Figure 48.** Question 6: By having two teachers, I think it was easier to keep up with the different homework, and assignments in class (n = 35)

Question 7 was an open comment question and students replied how they felt now about having more than one teacher in fifth grade compared to having had only one teacher in other elementary grades. There were 32 responses to this question. Twenty-six (75%) of the responses were positive toward having more than one teacher. Some of the comments stated that it was better, more fun, helped with their grade, helped prepare them for middle school, and an opportunity to learn more about other teachers on the grade level. Six (19%) students responded that it was harder and a big change for them. Another response was that it was harder to keep track of homework.
Figure 49. Question 7: How do you feel about having more than one teacher again next school year in 6th grade compared to other school years when you only had one teacher and did not switch for math and reading? (n = 32)

In question 8, fifth graders responded that if they thought having more than one teacher in the fifth grade made a difference in how well they did in their learning this year and why. There were 33 responses to this survey question. Twenty-five (76%) students said yes and eight (24%) said no to this question. An open comment question asked students to explain their answer from number eight. Thirty-one responses recorded that 20 (65%) said it was easier to have two teachers, five (16%) said that it felt the same, three (10%) had no comment and three (10%) did not feel that having more than one teacher “made a difference on how well that did in their learning.” Some of the explanations were that their learning affected making it easier to keep track of assignments and helped with concentration on the particular subject that they were studying. Learning differently was another plus in the comment section, since teachers have more experience in what they teach. Although one of the positives was that it was easier to keep track of assignments, this was also a negative and one of the students felt like it was harder to keep track of assignments.
Figure 50. Question 8: Do you think by having more than one teacher in the 4th grade and then again in 5th grade will help you with your learning? (n = 34)  

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Figure 51. Question 9: Please explain why to question 8 Open comments on having more than one teacher in fifth grade and if it makes a difference in how well fifth graders did in their learning. (n = 33)  

Was Not Easier With Two Teachers: 3 (10%)
N/A: 3 (10%)
Same With 2 Teachers: 5 (16%)
Easier With 2 Teachers: 21 (65%)

Teacher interview questions. In order to gather qualitative data and clarify some of the survey responses, I conducted ten teacher interviews. Four out of 10 schools participated. All fourth and fifth grade teachers’ at all 10 schools participated in the interview process. Ten teachers volunteered, and I interviewed the ten teachers, representing four out of the ten schools in the study. The interviews were 20 to 30 minutes in length and were conducted one on one. Five of the teachers were from the
fourth grade and five were from the fifth grade and the same interview questions went to both fourth and fifth grade teachers. The teacher interview questions are in appendix E.

Teachers responded in the first interview question what they think is working well in the departmentalization program. The majority of the teachers, seven of the 10, responded, what is working well in the departmentalization program included planning, less time spent grading papers, and parent teacher conferences are easier since there are two teachers to back each other up. Other responses were that several of the teachers felt like they were able to master the standards better since they had only one subject to plan for and they felt like they were an expert in their area.

Teachers responded in interview question 2, to the question, what is not working well in the departmentalization program? Four out of the 10 teachers interviewed said that everything in departmentalization worked well and they were very happy with departmentalization. However, the other six teachers interviewed expressed that transitions and scheduling could be difficult and that they felt they lost time when transitioning. Another concern was that it was harder for teachers to form strong relationships with students compared to when they were with the students all day long in a traditional classroom setting. One teacher said that she felt that students do not connect with their teacher, as much in a departmentalized classroom compared to a traditional classroom and changing between teachers can be hard on some students. In addition, time constraints make it difficult to find time for extras such as read aloud, teachable moments, and class meetings. Another concern was that some teachers have different classroom management styles and teachers feel like this could cause concern for students
who need the structure and routines. Students may behave differently in one class than another, due to the different teaching styles and discipline techniques.

In interview questions 3 and 4, teachers responded to the question, what they feel are the greatest challenge in departmentalization and ways to address the challenges. Answers varied from transition time to organization of students. However, different teachers mentioned good communication with the partner teacher and having the two teachers work as a cohesive unit several times. A suggestion, by teachers, to address this challenge was to allow teams to get together prior to the start of the school year, and one teacher mentioned that she and her team teacher went to a training together on departmentalization before working together and this helped them to work together as a “seamless team”.

For interview question 5, ways to improve the departmentalization program, four out of 10 teachers reported nothing needed to improve their departmentalization program. One teacher stated; “Each year there are new challenges. It may be the particular group of students, the schedule, a new partnership, or something new like a change in curriculum or expectation from the district. Bottom line is that all team members need to be flexible and have a positive attitude” (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). One teacher had a strong opinion that departmentalization should not be introduced in the primary grades and one teacher suggestion was to have teachers take a survey of their management/teaching style so that teacher partners could be partnered more evenly with likeminded teachers, thereby helping with class management and style.

The effects of departmentalization on subgroups such as English Language Learners, gifted, free and reduced lunch and students in Exceptional Student Education
was discussed in question 6. Eight out of the 10 teachers interviewed report positive results of subgroups of students that departmentalize. Some of the comments were that the students get more individualized time, students get more focus from two teachers, there is more differentiation, and it gives all students a chance to interact with different teaching styles and personalities. The two teachers who did not feel that departmentalization was a good fit for subgroups reported that students in ESE have a hard time switching and getting to know the rules for two different teachers. Another teacher said that there is too much transitioning during the day for ELL and ESE subgroups of students that also have to go to other classrooms for specialized instruction. The teacher went on to say that, their students in ELL and ESE become frustrated because they feel like they are missing important content when they are out of the room when they are pulled out for specialized services to address their needs.

Interview question 7 addressed professional development needed for success. The majority of the teachers remarked that they needed professional development in their subject area. Other responses included training in good teaching practices, strategies for teachers and students on organization when working with multiple teachers, and a professional development on session to learn how to establish a partnership with their co-teacher.

In interview questions, 8 and 9, teachers responded about test score results, both common assessment and the state test scores. Since the schools have not gotten state test results back yet, results from state tests are not available to discuss. However, for the question if teachers had seen a difference in common assessment data as it relates to departmentalization verses traditional classroom scores, the teachers that I interviewed
had not noticed a significant difference in scores for proficiency. However, academic learning gains in both math and ELA showed a positive increase.

In interview question 10, teachers responded whether departmentalization reduces stress in regards to preparing lessons. According to the teachers that I interviewed, they all feel less pressure since they have to prepare lessons for one subject area. One teacher stated she has more time to individualize her lesson plans with departmentalization. Another teacher said that she could plan more centers and hands on activities since she feels that she has more lesson planning time.

In interview question 11, teachers responded to the question if departmentalization enabled them to create more rigorous, engaging lessons to meet the standard. The majority of the teachers agreed with this question and one said that she did not feel any different in departmentalization or traditional since she has been in both. The teachers that agreed reported receptiveness to their specific content area. One teacher stated; “Teachers feel they are a master of their subject/standards, not a juggler of all. Teachers can plan and differentiate more efficiently. When you are a master of your standards, you are delving deep into the rigor of the standards” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). Other teachers said that they felt like they can completely focus on planning high quality lessons for their students, which align to the state’s standards. They went on to say that, they feel like they are an expert in their field.

In question 12, teachers responded to the question whether they would want to departmentalize again next year in the same grade level or go back to a traditional setting. One teacher said it did not matter to her, but the other nine teachers said that they would prefer to departmentalize. In question thirteen, I asked the teachers to share additional
information about their experience with departmentalization. Out of the ten teachers, two were passionate about departmentalizing and expressed that they “love it.” One teacher said that a key component for a successful departmentalized team is the team itself and the probability of the team being successful is not high. She felt that for departmentalization to be successful, the teams needed to be given time to work together prior to the start of the school year to determine their non-negotiables, such as discipline plan and parent communication so that they could be consistent.

Administrator interviews. In order to gather qualitative data and clarify some of the survey responses, I conducted five administrator interviews. The interviews were 20 to 30 minutes in length and were conducted one on one. The administrator interview questions are in Appendix F. In question 1, administrators report what seems to be working well in the departmentalization program. All five administrators remarked that specialized authentic teaching and learning was better especially since the teachers wanted to departmentalize and only had to plan for one subject area. Two administrators felt that teacher morale was better and that the teams worked well together. One administrator reported that it was easier for her to track student data tied to teacher performance and this helped teachers analyze the data and focus on revising and re-teaching since they were able to see their specific data.

In interview question 2, administrators reported on what is not working well in the departmentalization program. Four out of five administrators felt that the time was an issue for teachers, specifically time to plan together with their partner teacher and not just the teacher on the grade level that specializes in the same subject area. Administrators remarked that the teachers needed to look at the whole child as well as the specialization
subjects to meet the needs of the student as a whole. Another concern by two of the five administrators was that one teacher who is weak in their specialization area could affect 44 students’ verses 22 when not departmentalizing. Since the master schedule is district mandated and there is very little room to change it, all five administrators expressed that it was difficult to work with the master schedule with all of the other requirements that the master schedule entails, such as required minutes for wellness and physical education and recess requirements.

In interview question 3, administrators responded to the greatest challenges in departmentalization. All five administrators commented that relationships among teachers are a must if there is going to be collaboration and fidelity. This also affects students if they feel any tension among the team teachers. Relationships with the students was another challenge. Some teachers do not have a bond with both classes and favor one class over the other, which can be obvious to parents and students. Transition times were a challenge for three out of the five administrators, specifically wasted time, going from one class to another and then getting the class settled in to start academics right away.

In interview question 4, administrators described ways to address these challenges in departmentalization. For the issue of relationships, pairing teachers together at the beginning of the year, and asking teachers for their opinion to check for compatibility was one of the answers that administrators described as a way to address some challenges. Trust is another way to build relationships and build collaboration. Teachers need to take time to plan together as a whole team and not just with the teacher in which they specialize. By looking at data together, parent conferences would not show a
preference for one teacher over the other if one teacher has more of a bond. By working together, both teachers are aware of student data and personalities and can present a united front. A suggestion for transition time was to set a timer, have bell work on the board when students enter, so that students can be better prepared to begin their day and also when transitioning from their ELA or Math classes during the day.

In interview question 5, administrators described ways to improve in the departmentalization program. The number one answer from all administrators was compatibility. Teachers that collaborate need to be compatible with their same team subject partner, ELA and Math as well as each other. This will help with parent conferences as well as team planning. Content driven professional development focused on a teacher’s area of specialization was a way that two of the five administrators reported improvement for teachers. Transitions for this question, as well as hiring the right teachers to specialize and making sure that they have a passion for the subject that they teach concerned these two administrators.

In interview question 6, administrators responded to what are the effects of departmentalization on subcategories, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE). Two out of five administrators mentioned that subcategories of students have an opportunity to see two teachers a day and form different relationships, therefore giving them the opportunity to relate and succeed with at least one of their departmentalization teachers. Two of the five administrators felt that when the subcategories of students were in a pull out program, departmentalization could be a challenge, but if the students were in a push in program, the students benefit from the extra services provided by the
exceptional education teacher that services the student’s goals on their Individual Education Plan. One administrator mentioned that their data for subcategories overall has declined and one felt strongly that the make-up of the class was key to the success of subcategories when departmentalizing.

In interview question 7, administrators responded to what type of professional development, would teachers need to make the departmentalization a success? Four out of five administrators suggested that professional development that specializes in the subject area that the teacher is teaching would make a difference in the success of departmentalization. Professional development on collaboration was another common answer among administrators. All administrators implied that teachers would need to collaborate and communicate well with each other and the team. Differentiating the lessons by having small groups in centers to reteach or enrich was a suggestion by one administrator to help make departmentalization a success and relationship building with students was another suggestion.

In interview question 8, administrators responded if they have seen a difference in departmentalized student scores verses non-departmentalized scores. Four of the five administrators stated that traditionally their fifth grade scores have been better than their fourth grade scores. However, two of the five administrators discussed their previous scores for departmentalizing verses traditional and reported that the grades had declined from previous years when their fourth grade classes were traditional. One administrator stated that her fourth grade scores had declined two years in a row and she was thinking about only departmentalizing in fifth grade for the following year if the trend of declining scores in fourth grade continued.
In interview question 9, administrators responded to the question if they have seen a difference in departmentalized student scores verses non-departmentalized scores. Two of the five (50%) administrators stated the learning gains for the subcategories had declined, but overall proficiency was good. Since state scores had not come out yet, administrators were looking at previous year’s scores, had addressed the learning gains with teachers, and constructed a plan to increase learning gains in the subgroups.

Administrators interviewed in question 10, commented if departmentalization of curricular areas reduced stress for teachers in regards to preparing lessons. Three out of the five (60%) administrators agreed that reduced stress in teachers when preparing lessons was evident. One administrator commented that if the teachers who teach the same subject area are compatible and have similar styles, the lesson planning is easier, but she has one team in her fourth grade who do not relate well to each other and complain about the planning. Another administrator remarked that some of the teachers work harder than others work and are strong in the content area while others want to departmentalize because it is easier than planning for all the subjects in a traditional classroom. This created stress among the team.

In interview question 11, administrators commented on the question whether departmentalization enabled teachers to create more rigorous, engaging lessons to meet the standard. Three out of the five (60%) administrators agreed that the lessons were more engaging and that teachers were able to create lessons that are more rigorous. One administrator did comment that teachers are able “to increase the rigorous instruction and go deeper with students in their academic area of expertise” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). She went on to say; “however, several teachers felt like they were
carrying the other team members and were getting frustrated that not everyone carries their weight” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). Another administrator said that she believed that several of her teachers asked to departmentalize, because they thought departmentalizing and not teaching all subject areas would be easier. Teachers also mentioned to this administrator, that they were not going deeper, in the individual subject area, as wanted and when the content is not strong, data results impacts negatively.

In question 12, administrators responded to the question, if there anything else you would like to share about your experience with departmentalization. Only two (40%) of the administrators had any other comments. One said; “Departmentalization is a great way to teach, and as with everything else, there are always challenges.” Another administrator commented, “I am disappointed with my fourth grade data and several of my teachers don’t seem to have the passion to specialize and work closely with their specialization partner, so I am looking to re-vamp for the following school year” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). I asked if this meant going back to the traditional classroom setting and she was not sure. She said she might just do one pair of teachers, who were very passionate about departmentalizing, and have the other three be traditional.

**State Results.** The state test result depicted in Figure 52 and Figure 53 mirror findings in my survey and interview results. Teachers and administrators both remarked that grades were declining in proficiency but that learning gains were going up due to the specialization in the departmentalized classrooms. Overall proficiency declined, but when specializing, learning gains increased in the overwhelming majority of schools. The
results from the state tests data, for the ten schools surveyed and interviewed, show that seven of the 10 (70%) schools that departmentalized in reading and math went up overall in reading and math from the previous year. Further breakdown is below:

• Math proficiency shows four of the ten (40%) schools, that departmentalized went up, five of the 10 (50%) went down and one (10%) stayed the same from the previous year.

• English Language Arts proficiency shows four of the 10 (40%) schools that departmentalized went up, five of the 10 (50%) went down and one (10%) stayed the same from the previous year.

• Math learning gains show that seven of the 10 (70%) schools that departmentalized went up and three of the 10 (30%) schools went down from the previous year.

• English Language Arts learning gains show that nine of the 10 (90%) schools that departmentalized went up, and one of the 10 (10%) schools went down from the previous year.
Learning gains calculated by the state to show growth in performance indicators in order to gain an increase in the school’s performance score. In addition to grade level proficiency, each student should demonstrate annual yearly growth. The figure 53 below portrays a more precise breakdown of the percentages of overall proficiency and learning gains demonstrated by the schools based on state performance formulas over a three-year period.
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**Figure 53.** More in-depth look at state test results showing results from the ten schools participating in the study for fourth and fifth grade (State Department of Education, doe.org. Retrieved from [http://www.doe.org/accountability/accountability-reporting/school-grades/](http://www.doe.org/accountability/accountability-reporting/school-grades/) on 9-12-19)
As Is

When looking at the four C’s “As Is” chart (Appendix O), contexts, culture, conditions and competencies, as it relates to the data from the surveys and interviews, we can gain a greater understanding of what the problem statement is addressing. My research questions, surveys and interviews, address the 4 C’s in the As Is chart and the feelings of teachers and administrators toward departmentalization in the 4th and 5th grades. The results based on the surveys, interviews and data gathered.

When applying the 4 C’s, context, culture, conditions and competencies; relationships among the 4 C’s are important to connect to improve education and build a system. The research questions applied to the study, helped define and address the problem statement, which is that teachers are not all skilled in content areas and it is affecting student achievement. This process will help describe the ways the questions asked helped reach the outcome of the analysis for departmentalizing in fourth and fifth grades.

**Context.** One of the four c’s is the context or the influence of factors involved in the study. When talking about context, Wagner says that one of the factors is students and when he refers to all students, he is referring to “skill demands that all students must meet to be successful as providers, learners, and citizens” (Wagner, 2006, p. 104). The question in both the teacher and administrator interview asked what teachers and administration report as ways to improve in the departmentalization program helps address what Wagner mentioned in his quote above, which is the skill demands that students and teachers need to be successful and how it is an important part of the data that was collected. Teachers, who teach students in the departmentalization program, need to
have content knowledge of the specific subject taught and the effect it has on student achievement. Some broader external forces that affect departmentalization are state standards, the ESSA law, and holding all students accountable. Other external factors include local media coverage of students’ achievement scores and parent concerns.

Decision making in education is a political process so by proposing a policy change to include departmentalization, the context is affected.

When looking at the context in the study, there is no current exemplar model of departmentalization and 17 (33%) teachers and administrators, in this study, agree that one of the ways to improve the departmentalization program is by improving the schedule. This includes the district’s master schedule. Seventeen (33%) teachers and administrators also agree that compatibility among teachers will help with challenges that may occur in departmentalization and increase individual success in students. Wagner states that; “to work more proactively with parents and help teachers better understand and positively influence the world their students come from they need to listen and work more with each other” (Wagner, 2006, p. 106). Another seven (13%) of teachers and administrators felt that transitions and planning would help to improve departmentalization. One comment, by teachers was that if teachers were able to work together prior to the school year beginning they could get to know each other better and get a jump on planning for the year. This would help teachers get a better grasp on the larger organizational context and the demands for the upcoming school year.

**Culture.** An organizational culture discusses how things “are done” in a particular organization. In the urban district I researched, the organizational culture is to increase student achievement no matter what. The district has a defined mission and
vision that includes culture. In departmentalization, teachers specialize in one subject and contribute to student achievement. The district in question scrutinizes data, and holds administrators responsible for the outcome. Student achievement results show that the majority of the schools that departmentalized in my research study made academic learning gains. Another one of the four c’s is culture or shared values and beliefs, assumptions, expectations and behaviors as it relates to students and learning, teachers and teaching, leadership and the quality of the relationships in the school (Wagner, 2006, p. 102). My questions in the research that discuss what is working well and what is not working well in the departmentalization classrooms addresses the culture. Schools will need a mission and vision to address the behaviors as some of culture needs in the success of school as well as collaborative relationships with parents, teachers and students. Survey and interview data showed what administration, teachers and students feel are some ways that departmentalization is working well and ways that departmentalization can be improved are very similar. What is working well included: planning time, relationships, specialization and scheduling? Some of the things that are not working well included teaming, relationships, time, transitions, and scheduling.

When addressing the culture, I immediately think of the vision of the urban district, which is “To ensure every student has a promising and successful future, and with the support of families and the community, we create enriching and diverse pathways that lead our students to success” (Citation withheld to provide confidentiality). Wagner talks about culture of a district that can be one of isolation and competition (p. 103). By comparing the ten schools that departmentalize and the differences in data, programs, and teacher and administrator input, I was able to get some insight into the
culture of departmentalization. When looking at the culture of ABC school, and the survey and interview results, I know I will need to influence the culture of the building, specifically some of the beliefs and values, by sharing an awareness for teachers to look at the demographics and make connections.

**Conditions.** Conditions, which is one of the four c’s in Wagner’s book, Change Leadership, is defined as the ‘’external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space and resources’’ (Wagner, 2006, p. 101). The survey and interview questions in my dissertation that talk about the greatest challenges in departmentalization and ask for ways in which to improve departmentalization address some conditions communicated for departmentalization. There are conditions such as time, relationships, transitions, and expectations around roles and responsibilities that are important to consider when discussing departmentalization and its effects on the problem statement of teachers not adequately prepared for departmentalizing.

Teachers and administrators both picked relationships as a key condition in addressing the questions of greatest challenge and ways to improve in departmentalization. Relationships are important in not only teachers with their teams, but also relationships with students and parents. However, another condition that surfaced was planning and time. Time was important for teachers to allow teams to work together and communicate about students that they shared. Parent conferences with both teachers was another condition that teachers and administrators relayed as an important consideration. Teachers knowing the content of their specialized area is a key condition. Administrators also felt that time and flexibility were an important condition to consider when departmentalizing. Another condition that administrators and teachers both felt was
important is having knowledge of the subject area in which the teacher specializes.

Conditions address competencies namely, job-embedded and collaborative and geared toward specific subjects in which teachers departmentalize. Collaboration with colleagues encourages engagement and reflection of teaching practices.

**Competencies.** Competencies are the “repertoire of skills and knowledge that influence student learning” (Wagner, 2006, p. 99). For competencies to be effective, development with regularity is necessary. Professional development encompasses all subjects, and does not benefit individual subjects for teachers who departmentalize. I included research questions and answers from administration and teachers that address the challenges of conditions in departmentalization by looking at specific professional development, flexible scheduling, compatibility and planning among teachers on the same team, and communication.

Teachers and administrators had similar responses to what needs to meet the challenges of departmentalization when addressing competencies but were different in the urgency. Teachers felt that the most important challenge was scheduling and how it affected specialized teacher planning, however administrators felt that teacher relationships were the most challenging competency affecting departmentalization. Both teachers and administrators also felt that collaboration and planning were important considerations, but not as strong as scheduling and relationships. I was surprised that professional development, although mentioned by a few teachers and administrators, was not prevalent in affecting competencies, since teachers need knowledge of specific subject areas to be competent in teaching their specialization area.
When looking at the 4 C’s, contexts, culture, conditions and competencies, and the As Is chart, the results bear no significant difference in the mathematics or English Language arts scores in proficiency on the state assessment of fourth and fifth graders. However, learning gains on the state assessment increased for students in the departmentalized classrooms. The lack of difference does indicate that departmentalizing at this age did not prove to be negative in terms of student achievement. Some opponents of departmentalizing in elementary grades feel that students will not perform well because they do not have the security they need to grow. In this study, departmentalized classroom students perform comparable to their peers in self-contained classrooms.

**Interpretation**

The results from the departmentalization surveys and interviews from stakeholders show what is working well in departmentalization, some challenges and overall results of the findings. After analyzing the data, the majority of the surveys and interviews indicate a positive response toward departmentalization in the upper elementary grades, specifically 4th and 5th grades. Schools face challenges in determining what programs and structures to put in place to increase student achievement. Departmentalization is relatively new to the elementary schools and by analyzing the results from ten schools that departmentalize in a large urban district, I was able to think more critically about the departmentalization program and the results it has on student achievement.

The specific findings of the results I analyzed showed positive outcomes for departmentalizing in upper elementary grades. There are positive successes to report after looking at the results of the surveys and interviews. Teachers and administrators reported
that the teachers had more time to do lesson plans, their lesson delivery is better and that it is easier to differentiate instruction when departmentalizing. Another result from the findings indicates that the majority of schools interviewed and surveyed reported that the student achievement has either increased in departmentalized classrooms or stayed the same when looking at learning gains. Very few schools reported that student achievement data had diminished in departmentalized classrooms.

Findings related to what is not working well and some challenges in departmentalization were few, however, they were consistent in their likeness. One consistent idea that both administrators and teachers felt was not working well was the pairing of teachers. Teachers that collaborate that are not compatible or have different ideas of teamwork is a challenge. Both teachers and administrators felt that teacher pairings are important.

Teachers and administrators expressed a concern about professional development. Teachers expressed, professional development is not specific to their subject specialization, and administrators expressed a concern that it was difficult to find time school wide to target different areas of specialization due to these time constraints. The most concerning challenge was the transition time. This was a challenge for both teachers and administrators. Depending on the teacher team and the specific procedures and routines put in place, transition time differs. According to one fifth-grade teacher, last school year, she lost over an hour a week for transition time due mostly to traveling from a farther distance then in previous years, since she was in a portable that was a 5-minute walking distance from the building. She felt like this loss of time was a detriment to her student scores in both common assessments and the state assessment and if her classroom
would have been located closer to the main building, she would have had less of a transition time.

When analyzing these results, departmentalization has had more of a positive effect than a negative effect on student achievement. As with any classroom, there can be concerns with student and teacher relationships, this is not specific to departmentalization. In reviewing the research in elementary school however, the authors of the research said, “elementary school students need to bond with one teacher all year and not participate in a departmentalized program. Many would argue that departmentalizing is not developmentally appropriate for elementary aged students because young children need a stable and secure learning environment with the opportunity to develop a close personal relationship with their teacher” (Mulvahill, 2016). The surveys and interviews results from my sampling did not show that bonding with one teacher all year was an issue.

When looking at explanations as to why departmentalization, it was clear to me that the schools I surveyed and interviewed, wanted to departmentalize. According to Hood, some “educators say the benefits go beyond increasing test scores, giving teachers the opportunity to collaborate on curriculum and student progress and to share their passions for a subject” (Hood, 2010). This is also, what I found in my research when speaking with educators on departmentalization. The majority of teachers were very passionate about being able to specialize and hone their craft to concentrate on one subject area.
Judgments

Departmentalization and its effects on student achievement was my focus in this study. The main driving question was to find out if departmentalizing would benefit students by allowing teachers to focus on their craft in one subject area. If teachers are not teaching to the rigor of the standard, then State Standards Assessments (SSA) results and overall student achievement is affected. Departmentalization allows teachers to focus specifically on one subject content area; the purpose of this study has been to determine the impact of such departmentalization practices on student achievement.

Primary question 1 focused on what is working well in the departmentalization program. Both teachers and administrators were positive and agreed that lesson planning and lesson delivery were better in the departmentalized program. Teachers and administrators reported that students seemed to learn more in the departmentalized classroom, however, student achievement was not showing an excessive increase. The majority of the schools had learning gains, but several schools did not.

Primary question 2, what is not working well in the departmentalization program, did not have very definitive answers from teachers or administrators. Most administrators and teachers responses differed. Transition time, when moving from one classroom to another, was talked about by administrators as something that was not working well, however, teachers had only seven (17%) that felt this was an issue. Another difference between administrators and teachers related to the question about teachers connections to their students. Administrators were 50/50 on this question and the majority of the teachers reported that they connected to their students. Administrators and teachers also differed on their responses of whether grades were decreasing. Teachers
overwhelmingly disagreed that grades were decreasing but administrators were reluctant
to say if grades were decreasing at this point in the surveys and interviews since the state
results were not available at this point. It would be interesting to go back and ask now to
see administrator and teacher opinions after the state results arrived. Results from the
state assessment did show that the majority of the personnel in the schools that were
interviewed and surveyed, did show student achievement in learning gains in both
reading and math, but in overall proficiency, the majority of schools in both reading and
math went down.

When asked about challenges in the departmentalization program (primary
question 3), the majority of administrators responded, teacher has favored one class over
another; however, teachers did not feel that this was an issue. When interviewing
administrators, administrators responded that parent complaints received about students
feeling that their teachers “didn’t like them”, was the reason that they answered in this
manner and one teacher was favored over another. Other challenges, such as professional
development and making time for planning were not an issue with either the teachers or
administration. These results are positive toward departmentalization since the amount of
challenges are not significantly negative.

When asked about ways to improve departmentalization (primary question 4),
both teachers and administrators agree that teachers need to be qualified in their subject
area to be effective when departmentalizing. Another strong way to improve
departmentalization is to have teacher buy in, meaning, teachers need to want to teach in
a departmentalized program in order for the program to succeed. Administration and
teachers also agree that the class distribution needs consideration when
departmentalizing. Equally, distributed classes will enable teachers to differentiate within their classrooms under capacity with exceptional student education students or students that speak a different language.

I had two secondary exploratory questions that I investigated. Question 1 asked about the effects departmentalization has on students in subcategories such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education (ESE). Teachers felt that students in subcategories actually did better in a departmentalized program due to breaking up the monotony of the day. Different teachers and classroom environments can challenge students. Some students in subcategories need the movement of transition times to help with allowing students to move around without getting into trouble. Teams of teachers are able to work together to come up with strategies that work with certain students that may need more specialized instruction.

Several teachers and administrators expressed a concern about having subgroups in a classroom if they cluster, and the makeup if one class has a majority of subcategories, such as students in ESE or ELL. The teachers expressed this concern due to lack of professional development in this area adequately addressing the needs of a specialized subgroup of students. Teacher perceptions regarding professional development was another exploratory question that I investigated.

In question two, of my secondary research questions, teachers responded to perceptions regarding what type of professional development they need to make the departmentalization a success. Professional development (PD) was a concern by both teachers and administrators due mostly to time and communication. Administrators
expressed that time constraints were an issue. When planning for professional
development, administrators look for trends to deliver the PD needs of the school.
Teachers in specialized departmentalized classes may not be the target of the professional
development and some feel that they are wasting their time attending the PD, which is
frustrating for the teacher. Some administrators felt powerless due to some of the PD that
is also required by the district.

**Recommendations**

After analyzing the results of the study on departmentalizing in the upper
elementary grades, specifically 4th and 5th grades, I noticed a few organizational
challenges needed before a school decides to departmentalize. One recommendation that
I have is for administrators to do their due diligence to find compatible teachers to pair
together. When I talked to the administrator at ABC school, only 5th grade
departmentalized, and test scores were high. School ABC’s 4th grade teachers requested
to departmentalize, so the school went to a departmentalized model in both 4th and 5th
grades. Scores from the state test were good, but not as high as expected. Several of the
teachers in 4th grade left, and two new teams of teachers emerged. These teachers were
not as compatible, and the student achievement scores dropped. I asked other
administrators if they had similar results and five of the ten administrators expressed
similar drops in achievement. This is important for teachers to be similar in their teaching
style and discipline techniques. If teachers are consistent and in harmony, students,
teachers and administration are more on board with the idea of departmentalizing and the
program’s flow is smoother. This helps with communication, academics and behaviors.
Even though there are challenges in departmentalizing in the upper elementary school grades, the implementation of departmentalization showed an overall a positive result. One of the challenges expressed by both teachers and administration was professional development (PD) for specialized classrooms. A recommendation I would make would be for administrators to provide professional development based on specialized content instruction; Hood emphasizes this: “If you are going to pay attention to the requirements of success on a high-stakes exam then one of the things you might be doing is getting specialized content instruction” (2010, p. 15). When looking back at the results from my surveys and interviews, PD based on specialized content was a suggestion to help make departmentalization a success. Finding funds and time for specialized PD can be an issue, so a suggestion of using substitute funds; common planning days where teachers meet with their specialized teammate, and then the entire grade level team meets together as a grade level. Schools can also bring in specialists from the district to collaborate with specialized teams for professional development. Currently, ABC school’s district has implemented writing across the content, which has been instrumental in helping with specializing in departmentalization. School ABC, instituted an activity named, Wednesday seven minute writes across content areas. By including writing across all content areas, teachers in departmentalized classes expressed feelings of a connection to the school and PD and non-seclusion during professional development presentations.

When looking at student achievement, not all schools showed student achievement in proficiency, but almost all schools showed improvement in learning gains across the ten schools surveyed. When asked, all teachers with the exception of one said
that they would want to continue with departmentalizing and felt that student
achievement increased. I highly recommend that schools consider departmentalizing in
the upper elementary school grades based on the study and since the positives of
departmentalizing outweigh the challenges of departmentalizing.

**Conclusion**

Although the study of departmentalizing in the upper elementary school revealed
challenges, the positives that presented were more significant than the negatives. One
finding that I thought significant to the success of the departmentalization program was
allowing teachers to teach in their specialized area. Students in these teachers classroom
showed an increase in state assessment scores. One interesting observation that warrants
further research is to look at one-model verses another to see if the data would show
student achievement increases. State standards are increasing in rigor, and teachers in
elementary school are required to teach to these rigorous standards. By allowing teachers
to specialize in one or two subject areas instead of four or five, teachers are able to hone
their craft to a meet the more specific standards for each subject area.

Overall, according to teachers and administrators research that I conducted on
departmentalization in upper elementary grades has shown that teachers and
administrators are in favor of specializing in their specific content area. Teachers and
administrators also responded that professional development in their specialized content
area is necessary to continue to develop teachers’ ability to teach to the rigor of the
standards and increase student academic achievement. Communication with parents,
teachers, and students was another important element with departmentalization,
specifically making sure that teachers worked collectively together to achieve the same
goal for the student. As teachers and administrators choose departmentalization, it will be important to keep an open mind, collaborate as a team, and make sure that student achievement continues to be the top priority.
CHAPTER FIVE

To-Be Framework

In my program evaluation, there are needs for potential improvements. Results suggest a plan to help student achievement by having teachers specialize in content areas, which increases student academics. In order to achieve this plan, teachers will need to have professional development in their specialty area and have the support of the curriculum specialists and resources from district. The support of the district will be in the scheduling and providing an exemplar model to help teachers with planning, transitions, and proactively work with parents. Relationships between students and teachers, teachers and parents, and administrators and teachers, will be extremely important to establish a solid foundation to move the departmentalization model forward to increase student achievement. The previous chapter outlined the “As-Is” process by Wagner et al. (2006), and outlined the data collected in my research. This process gave me insight into departmentalization and the lack of some important considerations that to move forward to make departmentalization a success as it relates to student achievement. In considering next steps, the “To-Be” tool by Wagner et al. (2006) planned the connections and the benefits of departmentalization as it relates to the student achievement.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

After considering the research and analyzing results of the data, there were several areas of potential change evident in ensuring that the student goals stay addressed. The goal of departmentalization is to affect change in the area of student achievement by increasing academic achievement of students in the program. The steps to achieving
student gains identify by looking at the tools from Wagner et al. (2006). These tools are found in the “To-Be” chart (Appendix P) and outline the contexts, conditions, competencies, and culture of the plan that will hone my focus to enable the change when departmentalizing in the upper elementary grades.

**Context.** The context of the changes that are proposed would focus on teachers in upper elementary grades becoming skilled in all content areas that they teach and increasing student learning as a result. The district under study should support an organizational structure and policy that would require departmentalization in upper elementary grades with one or more traditional classrooms in the 4th and 5th grades. An exemplar model in the district would exist. The impact of the changes would occur in the district and would trickle down to the schools, specifically the teachers and students and focusing at the federal level, “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA), which is used to evaluate the achievement of subgroups of students. According to Schwartz (2020), “under the federal ESSA, districts face increased pressure to make sure that PD is evidence based” (p. 9). The district will need to have more options for professional development since schools will need to adhere to the change in the master schedule, which will include departmentalization to meet the requirements for subgroups of students as outlined in ESSA. The district under study mandates their master schedule follow their guidelines, which are limited to three schedules. These models would need to include departmentalization in the upper elementary grades.

It is vital to the success of the departmentalization program that each school have a traditional classroom as well as departmentalized programs in their upper elementary grades. This will create a choice for parents and students to decide whether a traditional
classroom setting or departmentalization is the best choice for them. Another factor for consideration will be the placement of students and how departmentalizing affects them, thereby; making sure it, the master schedule provides a traditional classroom option.

**Culture.** The ideal culture for departmentalization would include the implementation of teacher collaboration in the area of specialization. Teachers need to have an understanding of planning time as well as a change in staff mindset, as it relates to student achievement, if teachers specialize in their subject area. A district wide culture to include equal access to professional development for all schools and curriculum materials for departmentalization to be successful. The mission and vision of the district under study was just recently changed this school year and is more defined, but will need to be rolled out to all schools and specific expectations will need to be valued and recognized, as well as communicated and understood.

When looking at the cultural competences in the development of programs, curriculum and instructional practices, it is important to interact, understand and communicate the desired culture needed for departmentalization. Each school community has a different culture within their school. Dynamics of teacher teams play a role in the culture as well as cultural mindsets of all stakeholders.

Teacher mindsets are a crucial part of the potential change in policy especially those teachers who may not support departmentalization. In my research, I found that one of the factors that made departmentalization a success was teacher buy in as it relates to their beliefs and values. Therefore, for some, a new mindset will be required if a teacher wants to teach in the upper elementary school grades but does not value departmentalization. Even if the teacher teaches in a traditional setting in the upper
elementary grades, the teacher will need to collaborate with their departmentalized grade level teams.

Parents and students will also have a potential mindset change if students participate departmentalized classes and understand what the differences will be especially related to exposure to the concept of departmentalization. Change is difficult for most individuals but as Wagner stated, “isolation is the enemy of improvement” (2006, p. 113). Students will go from a traditional classroom setting where they are with the same teacher every day all day, to a classroom setting where they transition to two different teachers. Parents will also have a transition since they will have two different teachers to keep in contact with about their students’ academics. Therefore, in order for the policy change to be a success, all stakeholders must cooperate and communicate. Teams of teachers will need to communicate with parents before school starts to explain departmentalization and all it entails for students during the school day through meetings, virtual communication, verbal communication or an informational session.

**Conditions.** When looking at the ideal conditions as they relate to my plan, several items will need addressing. The first item will be relationships. Relationship building that occur with team teachers as well as relationships with students and parents will be a condition needed to have a successful program when departmentalizing. Parent and student conferences with both departmentalized teachers will build relationships with parents. Relationship building takes time, so it will be important to make this a priority right away. Team building with students within the classroom and with the teacher teams will help with the success of departmentalizing. Another way to build a community is to have class meetings together with their partner teacher so that students are aware that
teachers are working together and have similar expectations. Showing continuity by having partner teachers, in both ELA and math, and meeting with parents on their team together, will also build a sense of community and cohesiveness.

Another ideal condition will be time and planning, along with a block of 45 minutes for interventions built into the master schedule along with one traditional classroom that does not departmentalize in 4th and 5th grades. Time for teams to work together to communicate and collaboratively plan, will need to be a priority when departmentalizing. A suggestion will be to set aside time for coaches, or the administrative staff to collaborate with each team member daily, by conferring and debriefing. Another time issue is the transition time. Students will transition from one classroom to another during the day. As students’ transition, time is lost for academics therefore, consideration and implementation for a plan at each school site for procedures and routines to minimize transition time.

The last condition that I would propose to improve departmentalization would be to enhance the knowledge of the subject area in which the teacher specializes. Professional development, in breakout sessions, during faculty meetings and will provide teachers with a higher level of expertise in their subject area. Stakeholders that specialize in a specific subject area will lead the groups, coaching, and observations to check for understanding for teachers. Monitoring and adjusting specific teacher lessons, if needed, will be an opportunity for teachers to hone their craft. The district under study provides professional development district wide, which is specific to knowledge levels for a teacher’s specific subject area. All schools are required to send participants to the professional development and then deliver the professional development back at their
school. When teachers specialize in a subject area, they have the opportunity to teach in the area that they are most knowledgeable and interested. Since the teachers have buy in into the subject, they are more devoted.

**Competencies.** The ideal competencies related to my study include, knowledge level, expertise, flexible scheduling, collaboration among teachers and communication. Knowledge level and expertise is the first one of the ideal competencies needed for my study. Wagner states, “Competencies are most effectively built when professional development is focused, job-embedded, continuous, constructed and collaborative” (p. 99, 2006). Not all-professional development is specific to the content taught, so by developing this specific competency, teachers who departmentalize will be able to receive professional development for the subject they teach.

The ability to schedule in a flexible manner to provide greater access to meet the students ‘needs is another competency that will ensure the support needed for teachers that departmentalize. Departmentalization gives teachers different options such as the choice to teach in a traditional classroom or a departmentalized setting. The choice to teach a specific subject area will give teachers the alternative to specialize in one subject or teach all subjects. These options will allow teachers the flexibility to grow professionally in the subject area of their choice. Flexibility also allows teachers to have more time in specific subject areas when needed to increase differentiation.

Compatibility, collaboration and communication will be necessary to ensure that teachers will be competent in delivering instruction when departmentalizing. Compatibility among team teachers allows teachers to generate more ideas leading to more proficient student achievement. Collaboration and communication between
teachers will also help provide additional learning opportunities for students, which will increase student achievement.

**Conclusion**

By recommending the changes in the As-Is to the To-Be, the organizational change will be implemented. Based on the research and data collected, the changes for implementing departmentalization for a successful transition is required. To improve student achievement, I will address the areas of context, culture, conditions and competencies to provide a framework that will identify next steps for departmentalization to be a success. According to this process, there are changes needed that are addressed in the “To-Be” analysis. Changes will have action steps that will help all stakeholders implement the plan for a successful transition.
CHAPTER SIX

Strategies and Actions

The main areas addressed for my organizational change plan in Wagner’s book, Change Leadership (2006). By comparing the “As-Is” (Appendix O) diagnostic analysis to my vision of the “To-Be” (Appendix P) analysis, I was able to consider areas to address related to context, culture, conditions and competencies. I have identified six objectives that will address changes in the plan to transition upper elementary school to a successful departmentalization program at each elementary school. The plan of the objectives that I have outlined are in Appendix Q. Strategies and action steps to achieve these steps outlined in the chart. These strategies and action steps tied to student achievement will allow teachers to specialize in a subject area to target specific student deficits and enhance the learning experience for students that need the enrichment.

Objective 1: Planning for the Departmentalization Shift

A comprehensive description of the strategies that will be required for organizational change include six different objectives. Objective one addresses the context, culture, competencies and conditions goal, which is planning for the departmentalization initiative in a district and schools. There will be three strategies addressed for this goal. The first area is to establish the expectation of departmentalization in upper elementary schools across the district. Elementary administration will have flexibility with this departmentalization expectation, since they will be able to implement a split model or a complete departmentalization model. For example, administrators can choose to have one or more traditional classroom(s) with the departmentalization model. The action step is to collaborate a district-wide vision and mission that embraces departmentalization.
The next strategy to be established will be to work with the district to create a master schedule to include departmentalization in 4th and 5th grades as well as one or more standalone traditional classroom(s). When looking at departmentalization, “this structure is a major change from the traditional self-contained structure” (Chan and Jarman, 2004, p.7). Chan and Jarman further state, “suggest piloting the change with a portion of the teachers before implementing on a school level, as was the case with the school in this study”. Departmentalization has been an administrative choice in the district under study for a while, and since administrators also have traditional classrooms; the suggested policy implementation will have the choice of a traditional classroom on the grade level. The action step that addresses this area will be to have a committee of stakeholders give input into how departmentalization’s implementation best helps the community / school choose the best model of operation.

The final strategy for this objective will be to determine the competency of teachers in their specialty areas and to support the departmentalization with funding from the district. Support and funding could be in the form of professional development, experts in subject areas, or resources that support departmentalization. Teachers who would like to departmentalize should want to specialize in a particular subject area and be open to professional development to hone their craft and grow professionally to become more proficient. The action step for this strategy will be to collaborate with the district to find funding solutions and resources to support the specialized content that comes with departmentalization. Another action step for this strategy will be to survey teachers to determine their expertise on a specialty area or if they have any experience with departmentalization. School ABC has departmentalized for 5 years and in with
departmentalization, teachers who have previous expertise are more successful with student achievement than teachers in the traditional classroom are. However, school ABC also found that teachers with a passion for a certain subject also excel in increasing student achievement scores.

**Objective 2: Create a Communication Plan to Promote Departmentalization**

Objective two addresses the context and culture goal. There are two strategies in place for this objective. Creating a communication plan to promote departmentalization to ensure that the faculty and staff have a clear understanding of the purpose and relevance of departmentalization is one strategy. Another strategy is that families will also need to be given clear communication of the plan for departmentalizing so that they have knowledge of the concept of departmentalization and what it entails as it relates to their student switching classrooms, having different teachers, and the expectation for departmentalizing. An action step involved with this strategy is to communicate the purpose of departmentalization in a faculty meeting during post planning so that all stakeholders are aware and can support the initiative. Team teachers can then plan over the summer break and during common planning days, before the beginning of the school year, to roll out their plan to parents. Communication from the school before the school year begins will need specification about the upper elementary grades that will departmentalize so that parents have the opportunity to choose either departmentalization or a traditional classroom. Another action step is to collaborate with the district so that the district can provide support and professional development. Parents and families will receive information about departmentalizing communicated through their team of departmentalized teachers at meet the teacher. Communicating this professional
development plan before the school year starts, will ensure that teachers have the resources and information that they need before school starts and throughout the year.

**Objective 3: Develop a Built in Planning Time and Ensure Teacher Collaboration is Specialized**

Objective 3 addresses the culture goal. The strategy that addresses this objective is to foster a teacher culture of trust and cross-curricular collaboration. Three action steps will develop this goal. The first action step is to have teachers collaborate with their subject area grade level teammates to align specialized standards to their content area. Next, teachers collaborate and plan with grade level partners who teach different subject areas to ensure that they team together when communicating with stakeholders involved to assure that students, parents and staff work together to increase student achievements.

The last action step will be to ensure that the entire team is collaborating through professional learning communities. By doing this step, the grade level teams have the same vision. This vision ties into the district vision and mission, which is “To ensure every student has a promising and successful future and the mission which is with the support of families and the community, we create enriching and diverse pathways that lead our students to success” (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). This step will serve as a bridge from the school site to the district site, which also extends to other stakeholders such as parents and students.

**Objective 4: Develop a School Wide Professional Development Plan**

Objective 4 addresses the competencies goal. The professional development plan will include specialized subjects and integration with teacher partners in their subject area. Involving academic coaches, assistant principals and district support services will
collaboratively develop professional development to support the departmentalization in the classrooms will be the strategy for this goal. Action steps involved will be to have academic coaches train the teachers in professional learning communities so that each specialty has specific skills development training. Another action step will be to build capacity so that teachers improve and retain the skills from the professional development in their grade level learning community. To help with this process, resources and training require teachers to work competently and consistently. The last action step is for the schools to team up with the district for support for the specialty training and learning so that teachers develop a curriculum plan specific to their subject area.

**Objective 5: Create a Structural Change of Logistics**

Objective 5 addresses the conditions goal. This goal is to create a structural change of logistics to allow for teacher planning and collaboration. In creating an organized structural change, teachers will move through the process to allow for increased planning time. Positioning teachers for the grade level in the same hallway will enable teachers to be physically closer to each other to assist with planning and integrating curriculum. Creating closer distances when team teaching on a grade level enables collaboration to be more efficient and timelier. These process changes will improve efficiency for organization. The action step will be to create a schedule of dedicated common planning across content areas to foster collaboration with specialized teachers and team teachers. The schedule, if crafted well, according to Canody will “result in more effective use of time, space and resources”. He further states, “That it is more often the structure of an organization than the inadequacies of
the people who work within it that causes problems” (Canody, 1995, p. 4).

Scheduling is valuable and often results in a more efficient use of time.

**Objective 6 Goal: Assessment of the Effectiveness of Implementation of the Departmentalization**

Objective 6 addresses culture and competencies goals. In assessing the implementation of departmentalization, by enhancing the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) process to include assessment and teacher support for the departmentalization as compared to the traditional classroom, we will be able to see a breakdown of the effectiveness of departmentalization, specifically as we differentiate for a variety of student with disabilities. The action step will be to analyze student indicators such as common assessments, interventions, grades and standardized test results. Using pretests and posttests for comparison of the departmentalized classroom with the traditional classroom, we will be able to see the similarities and differences in specific assessments. By gathering and using student data to inform decision making for teaching, teachers will be able to monitor, review and adjust their teaching based on assessments and observations. Assessment of students, parents’ and teachers’ perceptions of the program will be another way to assess the departmentalization program by surveying these stakeholders.

**Conclusion**

The “As-Is” and the “To-Be” conceptualizations were developed based on research, strategies and action. The six objectives address the strategies and actions of specific issues identified in the four areas of change and aligned to the context, culture, conditions and competencies of my departmentalization program. By looking at planning
for departmentalization, a communication plan, collaboration, professional development, and assessment objectives to help implement the policy for departmentalization, I will be able to create a plan to implement a successful program based on the strategies and action steps. Using the “To-Be” analysis for evaluation of my departmentalization program also helped me to develop a vision to analyze the action steps and strategies for a successful program. All of the areas listed need consideration for the program implementation to affect student learning.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Implications and Policy Recommendations

A policy issue related to my findings on departmentalization in upper elementary school grades was important to look closely into since it affects many stakeholders. Master schedules need revision to accommodate departmentalization in the 4th and 5th grades as well as looking at having a traditional classroom in order to meet the needs of all students in the 4th and 5th grades. There will need to be clarity of the policy and its significance to influence the potential change in the master schedule. This change affects upper elementary school students, teachers, and parents. Students and parents decide if departmentalization would be the best learning opportunity for the students, and teachers will decide if they prefer to specialize in one subject or remain in the traditional classroom setting. Professional development is another important consideration with departmentalization that will need alteration, specifically for teachers who will be specializing in one area of the curriculum.

When looking at the organizational change plan, at this time in both in the state and the district under study, there is not a particular policy or practice that requires departmentalization in upper elementary school grades. Administrators at each elementary school are able to decide on departmentalization at their schools and if they want to also include a traditional classroom as well to accommodate students and parents. Some parents and students prefer the traditional classroom and others are interested in the more specialized departmentalized model. When incorporating change, the impacts for stakeholders involved and communicating the plan to the stakeholders and required to measure the change process.
My policy relates to my program evaluation by requiring the teachers to participate in professional development related to their specialty and require teachers to track student achievement to determine their learning style. Teachers will be able to work with their teams, such as during common planning, to collaborate and determine the best structure for individual student achievement. After implementing the change, an evaluation of its effectiveness will need to be determined to measure the benefits, monitor, and adjust to get the desired effect, which is student achievement.

**Policy Statement**

The policy that I will recommend would be to require that every elementary school would have a departmentalized and traditional classroom for every fourth and fifth grade classroom. This policy would allow for a departmentalized program in upper elementary school, specifically grades 4th and 5th. This program would also allow for a standalone, traditional classroom setting, in conjunction with the departmentalization classrooms to allow for the needs of all students since some students do not transition well. Our departmentalized classrooms will require students to gather their belongings, walk through the hall and be prepared to learn in a different classroom with a different teacher twice during the school day. Some exceptional education students will have to transition three times a day due to their program. Transitions can be difficult for students who are anxious and do not adapt to change well. This causes behaviors in some students, which is disruptive to the classroom, causing interruptions in their achievement. If these transitions, introduced slowly throughout the year, students will be able to adapt easier. Currently in the district and state, there is no clear policy, practice or bylaw in place promoting or requiring departmentalization. According to Wagner, “the culture of
responsiveness may have served us well in the past, the pressures on schools to react to
new societal demands have increased exponentially in the past several decades” (Wagner,
p. 65). Departmentalization would allow students and parents the opportunity to choose
student placement in a classroom with teachers that specialize in a particular area of
expertise or placed in a traditional classroom in upper elementary school. One reason for
this policy change would be to increase the student achievement scores on the
standardized tests by having teachers specialize and become experts in their subject area.
Another reason for this policy change would be to help students become better prepared
with the transition to middle school. Middle schools in the district have a seven period
day, which requires transitions to different classrooms seven times. When students in
upper elementary school grades departmentalize, they have the opportunity to participate
in a structure that is similar to the middle school setting. This departmentalizing will
allow students to receive a head start for their middle school years. Lastly, students would
benefit from the expertise of two different teachers when departmentalizing. Teacher
interactions with students in both the traditional and departmentalized classrooms exist
daily. These interchanges may look different; however, departmentalized classroom
teachers are able to give students two teacher’s correspondence instead of one. Although
when departmentalizing, interactions may take teachers and students a little longer to
build a relationship, students are able to build a connection with each teacher.

Analysis of Needs

The policy statement recommendations address educational analysis, economic
analysis, social analysis, political analysis, legal analysis and moral and ethical analysis.
By analyzing these disciplinary areas, the problems involved will help policy makers
make choices and trace implications. Each area provides an analysis that further defines the need to address this policy issue as it relates to departmentalizing in the upper elementary grades. All stakeholders involved must be included in order to elicit the support needed to implement the policy. All areas together provide the steps considered to implement the policy.

**Educational analysis.** The educational analysis the policy problem outlines was the need for students to be better prepared to achieve. Prior to this policy, administrators were able to choose whether classes departmentalize or if they were in a traditional setting. This new policy will require that the master schedule have the 4th and 5th grade students departmentalized with the possibility of at least one standalone classroom. Teachers are able to work toward their strengths and teaching styles by specializing in either English Language Arts (ELA) or Math or if there is a standalone classroom, that teacher will teach both ELA and Math. Another educational analysis supports preparing students for transitional skills needed for middle school. Since they have had the opportunity to departmentalize and change classes throughout the day like they will be required to do in middle school, transitioning will not be such a complete change, when they will be required to transition to seven periods in middle school.

The purpose of this policy is to prioritize student academics and the needs of the students. In implementing this policy, students receive specialized instruction in ELA and Math. According to one teacher who departmentalizes in a classroom, “when students stream into her room, it’s almost like they are more excited and rejuvenated. The entire room exudes what subject you’re teaching, and I think that’s really cool for kids, she says, adding, I feel the theme that ties us together is the thinking and
metacognitive strategies we are using to teach kids to be thinkers and to delve deep into units.” (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). When students are excited about learning, they are more engaged in the content and interested in learning. Students receive expertise from different teachers and many make connections academically due to a different teaching style and a teacher who is passionate about their subject.

**Economic analysis.** The economic analysis that traces the implications of the policy problem is that additional targeted professional development may be required for teachers in order to meet the requirements of having teachers highly qualified in their specialty area. This professional development would make teachers feel more confident in their specialty, which could result in teacher retention and less turnover in teacher jobs. The past decade has seen many shifts, which includes teacher evaluation. Student scores on the state assessment tests contribute to a teacher’s value-added model on their evaluation. Teachers are rated highly effective, effective, needs improvement or ineffective based on a combination of student scores and the teacher’s evaluations. This teacher-combined evaluation determines teacher bonuses. According to an article in Education Week by Madeline Will, “Once you make a person’s livelihood dependent on the success of someone she’s trying to help succeed, it changes the focus of what you are trying to do” (Will, 2019). Teachers have expressed that “teaching has become more focused on state scores and these scores are used in their evaluations, so teachers want more professional development that specifically focuses on their specialty area” (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). The policy that I am recommending has the possibility to have a positive result since teachers will have an opportunity to specialize in their subject area and increase a teacher’s proficiency in their instruction. Specialty
experts would provide professional development for the teachers in these grades to acquire the expertise and allow teachers to go deeper in concepts and content to increase student achievement.

**Social analysis.** The social analysis of my policy problem context traces the implications to having a plan and building supportive partnerships. This provides a case for collaborative planning and integration of content also allowing more time for differentiation for the diverse needs of students. According to Francis, “If you don’t change those core beliefs… then it won’t matter what resource or professional development plan is put in place” (Schwartz, 2020, p.8). Teachers in departmentalized programs will need to work together to use the resources from the professional development, analyze their beliefs and work together to commonly plan to build student capacity. Student capacity also looks at the different levels of students and assesses their individual differences to help them accomplish specific skills. Teachers and administrators both need to understand why change is necessary in order to make the policy work.

Departmentalization for students is another opportunity for certain students to have the socialization experiences that they may need. For some students the traditional classroom can be tedious by staying with one teacher all day. Departmentalization allows teachers to focus on a specific subject and this provides students different classroom environments and challenged by a variety of teaching styles.

**Political analysis.** The policy problem and its context needs addressing specifically by the stakeholders that may be in opposition to departmentalization. The policy includes a way for all stakeholders to benefit. By having both departmentalization
and a traditional classroom, all stakeholders will be able to have a preference to departmentalize or stay in a traditional setting.

The influence of laws like ESSA and the structure of the school affects stakeholders and helps shape the decision of schools to departmentalize. There are also constraints locally such as school size, staff specialty, staff buy in and resources needed. Although the district under study does not have a policy on whether or not elementary schools can departmentalize, principals are required to utilize their master schedule template. This template has three models to choose from and only one of the models involves departmentalization, principals must follow the actual scheduling of the model. I will need to solicit the support of the district stakeholders to consider a change in the master schedule template and requirements.

When thinking about the decision to departmentalize, critical stakeholders need consideration. “Allowing group participation in decision making increases productivity, broadens access to information and viewpoints, reflects the democratic values of our society, allows teachers and parents a voice in the operation of their schools, increases political acceptance, augments professional growth, and improves morale” (Kowalski, 2008, p. 128). The students that are the most affected by the decision to departmentalize but other stakeholders that are affected are the parents, teachers and the administrators. These stakeholders are also involved in making the decision.

**Legal analysis.** The legal analysis of my departmentalization policy problem involves creating a policy since we currently do not have a local policy requiring elementary schools to departmentalize. When deciding whether to departmentalize, the two policies or rules that schools need to consider are, Every Student Succeeds Act
(ESSA) and the most current teacher certification requirements for teachers in the state. The procedure that would need to be in place would require the master schedule to be altered and upper elementary grades fourth and fifth to departmentalize with the option of having one traditional classroom in both fourth and fifth grades. In addition to requiring the master schedules implementation to include departmentalization, elementary school teachers need professional development to give instruction to teachers in the area of their specialization in the upper elementary school grades.

**Moral and ethical analysis.** The policy that I have proposed supports all student learning by giving students an opportunity to learn from teachers who specialize in a particular subject or stay in a traditional classroom setting. Either choice will provide equal educational opportunities for students. According to Ravitch, “educated consumers want their children to have a full, balanced and rich curriculum” (Ravitch, p.236). This includes asking questions such as, how experienced are the teachers and are they qualified to teach the subjects? As in all professions there is a basic principle driving the profession. Medicine’s principle is ‘First, do no harm.’ The principle in law is that their clients have the right to ‘zealous representation.’ “In educational administration, we believe that if there is a moral imperative for the profession, it is to serve the ‘best interests of the student’ (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). My policy proposal will meet the moral and ethical responsibility of educators to develop the students’ potential as outlined in the Code of Ethics from the State Department of Education (2019).

**Implications for Staff and Community Relationships**

The policy implications for staff relationships would affect the upper elementary teachers in fourth and fifth grades, the master schedule and the differences in how
professional development impacts at the school level. Having teachers departmentalize in the upper elementary grades would require the teachers to specialize in a certain subject area such as math, ELA, or science. The teachers would also need to work together with their specialization partners on the team as well as their departmentalized teammate. The master schedule would require changes in how the schedule for the entire day affects the teachers as well as the students. Wagner stated in Change Leadership that, “each school, like each child, has its own unique learning challenges” (Wagner, p. 113).

The need for professional development presented in a different way in order to accommodate the specialization of the teachers involved in departmentalizing. This will need to presentation in small groups in order to meet the unique needs of each school’s professional development. The support of the district resource personnel will be imperative to focus specialization techniques and vital for teacher implementation of specific skills.

The policy implications for community relationships shared from the district as well as administration from at each school site is required. The policy change shared with the community allows the community to understand the potential students’ achievement gains that this policy will generate. Once the community is able to see the potential for growth in student achievement, they will realize that their property values and community buy in to support the school, will be a good investment and helpful to the community at large. By involving the community, teachers can also “develop partnerships with family members of their students, the community and other stakeholders” (Milner, 2015, p. 103). By including all stakeholders and developing
partnerships with the community, we can help them understand the policy change and its effect on stakeholders by building on the assets of the students and teachers.

The policy implications for other stakeholder relationships, such as parents, would be a positive change. With this policy, parents are able to choose whether their student is in a departmentalized classroom or in a traditional classroom. This choice would provide parents with involvement in the education process and allow parents to be an advocate for their students. This policy would build parent relationships with the teachers and school. Relationship building is necessary for change. According to Wagner, “respectful and trusting relationships are essential if stakeholders are expected to take the risks involved in change, to learn from each other, to remain deeply committed to their students and their community, and to share responsibility” (Wagner, p.135). Trust and relationship building is tied in closely with student achievement, which is the ultimate goal of education.

Conclusion

The policy change that I am suggesting based on the findings of my research, suggests that departmentalization is a way to increase student’s achievement in the upper elementary school grades, specifically fourth and fifth grades. Stakeholders involved are included in the implementation and support of the policy suggested. Each area of the analysis of needs section includes consideration of the six disciplinary areas for further understanding. When analyzing these areas, each will be a factor in implementing the policy and through this policy change, students will have more circumstances that are favorable. Therefore, my conclusion of my program evaluation will give all students that
departmentalize or choose the traditional model, the support they need to increase academic performance.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

Test requirements from the state and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) have educators viewing different, innovative ways to teach students so that they achieve to their highest potential. The issue that determined the underlying theme for my dissertation asked, if teachers were skilled in content areas that they taught, would this increase student learning gains. Departmentalization looked at ways to have teachers skilled in specific content areas. The focus of the study discussed differences in departmentalization to the traditional school classroom setting. The study also analyzed student, teacher and administrative perceptions of these differences.

Discussion

The purpose of my program evaluation was to evaluate departmentalization of upper elementary school grades, specifically 4th and 5th grade. In addition, the effects of accountability for teachers and schools discussed student achievement when departmentalizing. In my study, I was able to determine what was working well, not working well, challenges, and ways that the departmentalization program improvements. I also investigated the effects of departmentalization on sub-categories of students such as exceptional education students (ESE), English Language Learners (ELL), gifted students and students who receive free and reduced-price lunches.

Gathering data from stakeholders involved in departmentalization from ten different schools in the district under study helped me gain an understanding of the successes and challenges from these stakeholders at the different school sites. My purpose was to determine if departmentalization affected student achievement and helped
teachers sharpen their teaching craft by specializing in one subject area. I was able to use the surveys, interviews and student data to examine the effectiveness of departmentalization.

My goals for the departmentalization study were to determine the success and efficiency of departmentalization including teachers increasing student academics by specializing in a certain subject area. This process has addressed my goals by analyzing the findings of my surveys and interviews to acknowledge the findings that indicate what works well in departmentalization and what needs to be adjusted. Findings indicated that some things that are working well in departmentalization are allowing teachers to specialize in a subject where they are able to teach a subject that is in their strength area. Collaboration, relationships with peers, and student engagement in the subject matter, were other areas of strength for departmentalization. A few challenges mentioned included, specialized professional development for teachers, as well as transitions when moving from one class to another and the loss of time. Providing specialized professional development for the teachers and implementing procedures and routines at the beginning of the year as expectations will help with these challenges.

Specialized professional development from the district will be one of the organizational changes needed to address a challenge with departmentalization. I recommended that the district offered courses for specialized subjects training coaches to bring back the professional development to the school site. Another organizational change needed is to have specialized teacher planning for departmentalized teachers. Teacher planning occurs with a team of teachers for each grade level. In departmentalized teams, planning will need to occur with same subject teachers on the team as well as with
the entire team, to make sure that there is continuity across both the grade level as well as the specialty area. Taking these steps toward organizational change will help ensure a more successful program and improved student learning.

The policy that I am advocating will address departmentalization across the district for all upper elementary schools. This policy will involve the master schedule from the district. The policy will require all upper elementary schools to implement departmentalization in the master schedule but will also allow a traditional classroom in the grade level as well. Parents can choose whether their student enrolls in a departmentalized classroom or remains in the traditional setting. Educators who teach in the upper elementary grades will be required to specialize in a subject area or teach in a traditional setting. In addition, schools must offer professional development in a teacher’s specialization area. Districts can provide coaches and teachers with professional development to be delivered at the schools, or off site, or virtually.

**Leadership Lessons**

One leadership lesson that I have learned through this process includes utilizing research and making sure that I did not factor in my personal feelings and concentrated on the data and research that pertained to the study. As I worked on my research, I recognized that my leadership skills were very helpful in completing this process. Administrators shared their challenges, concerns and successes in the departmentalization program. This insight helped me learn from their perspectives through their surveys and interviews. Time management and juggling my responsibilities as a principal while writing my dissertation was another factor in my leadership lessons learned.
Another leadership lesson learned was that stakeholder input on programmatic topics that affect teaching conditions is critically important. Teachers were influential in the study. Teacher perspectives in their surveys and interviews helped in the research as I disaggregated the data and saw that the information from the data was similar to information gathered from administrators. Stakeholder input was valuable, and this process enabled me to look at this study as an observer while gathering beneficial information. While writing about departmentalization, and delving into the research, I was surprised to find that many of the stakeholders surveyed and interviewed, even though they were from ten different schools, were very similar in their responses and comments.

A third leadership lesson that I learned was that I needed to delve deeper and not take the information at surface level. There is not much research available about departmentalization, but as I looked deeper, the research that was available was similar to my data collected. Teachers and administrators still feel that lifelong learning is important. Professional development is necessary, especially if teachers are specializing in one subject area or are new to a subject area. Students need experienced, well-prepared professional teachers who are experts in their subject area. Professional development and learning from others as well as being able to collaborate with each other brings to mind the saying, “two heads are better than one”. Gone are the days when teachers would go in our classrooms and shut the doors to teach alone. Accountability and collaboration are more important than ever.

I will use the leadership lessons learned from conducting this program evaluation to provide specific professional development to teachers who not only departmentalize
but all teachers who would also benefit from it. Reaching out to the district to solicit help from the curriculum department as well as the experts in the specialty areas, will be another way to provide teachers with specific professional development. I will also continue to listen to teacher input and allow for teacher collaboration. Collaboration and vertical alignment across grade levels will be another way to help teachers to know what is important in every grade level.

**Conclusion**

Departmentalization in the elementary school setting is not new. The concept of departmentalization started decades ago but has not been popular due to oppositions, not understanding the concept, and fear of change. Going back to a 1976 quote from Lamme:

> The controversy as to which serves children better—the self-contained or departmentalized organization—is not likely to be settled by the evidence reported in one study; nor can it be assumed that what is true in one elementary school is true in another. (Lamme, p. 218, 1976)

Research, data, surveys and interviews revealed to me that if teachers specialize in a subject area that they are passionate about and willing to continue to hone their craft, then departmentalization in upper elementary grades will be successful. From my observations, leadership lessons learned, and interviewees’ comments, departmentalizing will also help students successfully progress to the middle school by preparing them with the experiences that replicate the transitions that will occur.

An important factor to consider when departmentalizing is to take into account the different ways in the implementation of departmentalization. After surveying and
interviewing participants from ten different schools in the district under study, teachers
and administrators revealed different needs as well as similar issues in their
departmentalized classes. It is important to have a policy that has a choice in delivery
models in order to address the needs of all students. This is why my suggestions about
collaboration and team planning will be most important when departmentalizing. Team
teachers as well as teams of specialized teachers, math or ELA, need support from each
other, by collaborating and planning together to make departmentalization a success.
This support, of professional development, collaboration, and team planning with their
grade levels, district personnel and coaches, will enable teachers to specialize in one
subject and increase their focus on a particular area of expertise while learning from
experts such as coaching resources and instructional techniques. Teachers will also be
able to increase their expertise of the subject since they will have the opportunity to teach
the same lesson numerous times and are only teaching one subject a day.

Results of this study did not definitively suggest that departmentalization was the
answer to increase student achievement, but the research, surveys and interviews do
suggest that departmentalization is effective pending several factors. These factors
include, professional development based on a teacher’s specialty area, collaboration
among teams of teachers who departmentalize and passionate teachers who want to
increase knowledge in their area of expertise. Other suggestions of this study as to
whether departmentalization is effective are not simple answers, but as Slavin states,
“previous research has also failed to show a clear impact of departmentalization on
student achievement” (Slavin, 1987, p. 111). Different models of departmentalization
could be one of the factors involved in the success of departmentalization since teachers
and students at different school sites have different needs. Teacher buy-in, communication and team planning are important factors if departmentalization will succeed. All stakeholders, parents, teachers, students, district and administration need to be on board if departmentalization is to be successful.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher Survey
Appendix B: Administrator Survey
Appendix C: 4th Grade Survey
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Appendix E: Teacher Interview
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Appendix I: Informed Consent for Participation Parental Consent for Child
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Appendix O: AS IS Analysis
Appendix P: TO BE Analysis
Appendix Q: Strategies and Action Chart
Appendix A

Teacher Survey

This questionnaire will be used as part of a research study to determine if departmentalization affects student outcomes on standardized tests. Your participation is completely voluntary and any data you provided will be kept confidential. Only the researcher and advisors will have access to your survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

1. ______ Click here to indicate you have read the above information explaining your voluntary participation and confidentiality rights.

2. How many years have you been a teacher? (Click one)

   ______ Less than 5 years

   ______ 5-10 years

   ______ 11-15 years

   ______ 16+ years

3. How long have you departmentalized?

   ______ One year

   ______ 2-3 years

   ______ 4-5 years

   ______ 5+ years
4. What grade do you teach?

________ 4th grade

________ 5th grade

5. My lesson delivery is better in a departmentalized setting.

________ Strongly agree

________ Agree

________ Neither agree or disagree

________ Disagree

________ Strongly disagree

6. It is easier for me to differentiate instruction in a departmentalized setting.

________ Strongly agree

________ Agree

________ Neither agree or disagree

________ Disagree

________ Strongly disagree

7. My students learn more in a departmentalized setting.

________ Strongly agree

________ Agree

________ Neither agree or disagree
8. What do you feel is working well in the departmentalization program?

*Teachers are able to specialize in one subject area

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree

9. Teachers have more time to do lesson plans

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree

10. Student grades are excelling

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree
11. What do you feel is not working well in the departmentalization program?

*Too much time is wasted in transition

________ Strongly agree

________ Agree

________ Neither agree or disagree

________ Disagree

________ Strongly disagree

12. Students aren’t as connected to their elementary school teacher

________ Strongly agree

________ Agree

________ Neither agree or disagree

________ Disagree

________ Strongly disagree

13. Student grades are decreasing

________ Strongly agree

________ Agree

________ Neither agree or disagree

________ Disagree

________ Strongly disagree
14. What do you feel like some challenges are for departmentalization?

*Professional Development is a challenge.

| _______ Strongly agree |
| _______ Agree |
| _______ Neither agree or disagree |
| _______ Disagree |
| _______ Strongly disagree |

15. Planning time for teachers is difficult for the entire team

| _______ Strongly agree |
| _______ Agree |
| _______ Neither agree or disagree |
| _______ Disagree |
| _______ Strongly disagree |

16. Teachers favor one class over another in their departmentalization classrooms

| _______ Strongly agree |
| _______ Agree |
| _______ Neither agree or disagree |
| _______ Disagree |
| _______ Strongly disagree |
17. What are some ways that departmentalization can be improved?

*Pick teachers that are qualified to teach the subject

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree or disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

18. Make sure that you have teacher buy in

[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree or disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

19. Class distribution needs to be considered:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
20. Any Other comments you would like to add (Please type in response below)

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

21. How long have you departmentalized at your school?

________ Less than one year

________ 1 to 2 years

________ 3+ years

22. What is your preference for the classroom organizational structure?

________ Traditional (one teacher who teaches all core subjects to a group of students for an entire school year)

________ Departmentalization (more than one teacher for core subjects where students change classes among teachers)

23. What is working well in the departmentalization program?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
24. What is not working well in the departmentalization program?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

25. What is the greatest challenge in departmentalization? What are ways to address any challenges?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

26. What are some ways to improve the departmentalization program?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

27. What are the effect of departmentalization on sub categories of students, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education students (ESE)?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
28. What type of professional development will teachers need to make the departmentalization a success?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Thank you so much for taking time to fill out this survey.
Appendix B

Administrator Survey

This questionnaire will be used as part of a research study to determine if departmentalization affects student outcomes on standardized tests. Your participation is completely voluntary and any data you provided will be kept confidential. Only the researcher and advisers will have access to your survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

1. _______ Click here to indicate you have read the above information explaining your voluntary participation and confidentiality rights.

2. How many years have you been an administrator? (Click one)

    _______ Less than 5 years

    _______ 5-10 years

    _______ 11-15 years

    _______ 16+ years

3. What do you think is working well in the departmentalization program?

    * Teachers are able to specialize in one subject area

    _______ Strongly agree

    _______ Agree

    _______ Neither agree or disagree

    _______ Disagree

    _______ Strongly disagree
4. Teachers have more time to do lesson plans

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree or disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

5. Student grades are excelling

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree or disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

6. What do you think is not working well in the departmentalization program?

*Too much time is wasted in transition

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree or disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree
7. Students aren’t as connected to their elementary school teacher

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree

8. Student grades are decreasing

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree

9. What do you feel like might be some challenges are for departmentalization?

Professional Development is a challenge

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree
10. Planning time for teachers is difficult for the entire team

________ Strongly agree
________ Agree
________ Neither agree or disagree
________ Disagree
________ Strongly disagree

11. Teachers favor one class over another in their departmentalization classrooms

________ Strongly agree
________ Agree
________ Neither agree or disagree
________ Disagree
________ Strongly disagree

12. What are some ways that departmentalization can be improved?

Pick teachers that are qualified to teach the subject

________ Strongly agree
________ Agree
________ Neither agree or disagree
________ Disagree
________ Strongly disagree
13. Make sure that you have teacher buy in

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree

14. Class distribution needs to be considered (explain if possible)

_______ Strongly agree
_______ Agree
_______ Neither agree or disagree
_______ Disagree
_______ Strongly disagree

15. What is the reason that you chose to departmentalize at your school?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

16. How long have you departmentalized at your school?

_______ Less than one year
_______ 1 to 2 years
_______ 3+ years
17. How has your student data changed since you have departmentalized?

_______ Improved (Please say how below)

_______ Declined (Please say how below)

_______ Neither improved or Declined

How has your student data changed since you have departmentalized?

Explain: ________________________________________________________________

18. What is working well in the departmentalization program?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

19. What is not working well in the departmentalization program?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

20. What is the greatest challenge in departmentalization? What are ways to address any challenges?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
21. What are some ways to improve the departmentalization program?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

22. What are the effect of departmentalization on sub categories of students, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education students (ESE)?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

23. What type of professional development will teachers need to make the departmentalization a success?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Thank you so much for taking time to fill out this survey.
Appendix C

4th Grade Survey

Look at the questions below and choose the answer that describes how you feel.

1. Next year, I will be going into 5th grade and I am looking forward to having more than one teacher.

   1       2       3       4       5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. Having one teacher in the grades below 4th grade was better than having more than one teacher.

   1       2       3       4       5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

3. I think by having more than one teacher, has been better for me.

   1       2       3       4       5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

4. I am excited to be changing classes again for 5th grade.

   1       2       3       4       5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. I would prefer to go back to having only one teacher and not switching for math and reading.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

6. By having 2 teachers, I think it is easier to keep up with the different homework, and assignments in class.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

Please read each question and write your answer in the space below the question.

7. How do you feel about having more than one teacher again next school year in 5th grade compared to other school years when you only had one teacher and didn’t switch for math and reading?

8. Do you think by having more than one teacher in the 4th grade and then again next year in 5th grade will help you or not help you with your learning?

9. (Circle either help or not help.)

10. Please explain why.

Circle the correct answer. I am a boy    girl

I have been at the ABC School for _____ years
Appendix D

5th Grade Survey

Look at the questions below and choose the answer that describes how you feel.

1. Next year, I will be going into 6th grade and I am looking forward to having more than one teacher again.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. Having one teacher in the grades below 5th grade was better than having more than one teacher.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

3. I think by having more than one teacher, has been better for me.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

4. I am excited to be changing classes again for 6th grade.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. I would prefer to go back to having only one teacher and not switching for math and reading.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

6. By having 2 teachers, I think it was easier to keep up with the different homework, and assignments in class.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

Please read each question and write your answer in the space below the question.

7. How do you feel about having more than one teacher again next school year in 6th grade compared to other school years when you only had one teacher and did not switch for math and reading?

8. Do you think by having more than one teacher in the 4th grade and then again, next year in 5th grade will help you or not help you with your learning?

   (Circle either help or not help.)

9. Please explain why.

Circle the correct answer. I am a boy girl

I have been at the ABC School for _____ years
Appendix E

Teacher Interview

1. According to your perceptions, what seems to be working well in the departmentalization program?

2. According to your perceptions, what is not working well in the departmentalization program?

3. According to your perceptions, what are the greatest challenges in departmentalization?

4. According to your perceptions, what are ways to address these challenges?

5. According to your perceptions, what are ways to improve in the departmentalization program?

6. According to your perceptions, what are the effects of departmentalization on sub categories, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education students (ESE)?

7. According to your perceptions, what type of professional development will teachers need to make the departmentalization a success?

8. According to SSA test scores, have you seen a difference in departmentalized student scores verses non-departmentalized scores?

9. According to common assessment test scores, have you seen a difference in departmentalized student scores verses non-departmentalized scores?
10. According to your perceptions, has departmentalization of curricular areas reduced stress in regards to preparing lessons?

11. According to your perceptions, has departmentalization enabled you to create more rigorous, engaging lessons to meet the standard?

12. According to your perception, would you want to departmentalize again next year in the same grade level or would you rather go back to a traditional setting? If so, would you want to see any changes made? If not, why not?

13. According to your perception, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with departmentalization?
Appendix F

Administrator Interview

1. According to your perceptions, what seems to be working well in the departmentalization program?

2. According to your perceptions, what is not working well in the departmentalization program?

3. According to your perceptions, what are the greatest challenges in departmentalization?

4. According to your perceptions, what are ways to address these challenges?

5. According to your perceptions, what are ways to improve in the departmentalization program?

6. According to your perceptions, what are the effects of departmentalization on sub categories, such as English Language Learners (ELL), gifted, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and Exceptional Student Education students (ESE)?

7. According to your perceptions, what type of professional development will teachers need to make the departmentalization a success?

8. According to SSA test scores, have you seen a difference in departmentalized student scores verses non-departmentalized scores?

9. According to common assessment test scores, have you seen a difference in departmentalized student scores verses non-departmentalized scores?
10. According to your perceptions, has departmentalization of curricular areas reduced stress in teachers in regards to preparing lessons?

11. According to your perceptions, has departmentalization enabled teachers to create more rigorous, engaging lessons to meet the standard?

12. According to your perception, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with departmentalization?
Appendix G

Email Invitation – Teacher Survey in Departmentalization

Dear Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at National-Louis University and am inviting you to fill out my survey on departmentalization at your Elementary School. The survey will collect information on departmentalization at your school regarding departmentalization in the past as well as the present. Participation is completely optional and you can choose not to participate at all or answer only the questions that you feel are pertinent to your situation. Your responses will remain confidential and completely anonymous. Risk are minimal if any. I will keep this data for my departmentalization research in a safe place and in my possession, locked up. This data will be reported collectively and not individually.

If you are in agreement and would like to participate in my research, click on the google link to give consent for the survey: _______________________. If you consent to the survey, the google link in the middle of the consent will take you to the survey which will take approximately 15 minutes or less and should not interfere with instructional time. Once you have finished with the survey please hit submit. Thank you for your assistance in this research survey. I appreciate you taking the time to fill out this survey. Your feedback is very important to this research.

Sincerely,

Pamela Crabb
Appendix H

Email Invitation – Administrative Survey in Departmentalization

Dear Administrator,

I am a doctoral student at National-Louis University and am inviting you to fill out my survey on departmentalization at your Elementary School. The survey will collect information on departmentalization at your school regarding departmentalization in the past as well as the present. Participation is completely optional, and you can choose not to participate at all or answer only the questions that you feel are pertinent to your situation. Your responses will remain confidential and completely anonymous. Risk are minimal if any. I will keep this data for my departmentalization research in a safe place and in my possession, locked up. This data will be reported collectively and not individually.

If you are in agreement and would like to participate in my research, click on the google link to give consent for the survey: ________________________. If you consent to the survey, the google link in the middle of the consent will take you to the survey which will take approximately 15 minutes or less and should not interfere with instructional time. Once you have finished with the survey please hit submit. Thank you for your assistance in this research survey. I appreciate you taking the time to fill out this survey. Your feedback is very important to this research.

Sincerely,

Pamela Crabb
Appendix I

Informed Consent for Participation Parental Consent for Child

Title of Research: Program Evaluation for Departmentalizing In Upper Grades

By: Pamela Crabb

You are being asked to participate in a research study on departmentalization. In order to help you decide if you would like to participate in this study, I would like for you to be informed on the research project and the benefits or any potential risks so that you can decide if you would like to participate. This process is known as informed consent. To explain the process, the form below will spell out the benefits, risks, procedures and purpose of the research study. The form also explains how your personal information will be used, secured and safeguarded. After reading the form and asking any questions about the study, your signature will be requested. By requesting and acquiring your signature, you will then be allowed to participate in the research study. A copy of the Informed Consent will be given to you to take.

**Explanation of Study**

This is a research study and is directed by Pamela Crabb who is a graduate student at National Louis University.

The purpose of this research project is to assess the academic and social results of Departmentalization and how it affects academics. Your child is being asked to participate in this research project about Departmentalization and its academic results as well as how your child feels about Departmentalization.
You and your child will be in the research study for approximately 10 to 15 minutes to fill out a survey.

The research study involves the following:

I will ask students, with parent consent, to fill out an online survey that will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. This survey will not impede any academic time out of the classroom and the survey is completely anonymous and no one will know that they are the student. By making the survey anonymous, I hope that student will be very honest with their responses.

You and your child will be asked to review this consent form, and if you choose for your child to participate in this study you will be asked to sign it.

**Risks and Discomforts**

By your child’s participation in this study, the study will not involve any physical or emotional risk and will be completely anonymous. I will be available should you have any questions, concerns, or problems.

**Benefits**

Direct benefits are not likely from participating in the research study except that this study may contribute to our better understanding Departmentalization at school ABC and if the program may need to experience a different direction.

The information learned from this research study may benefit other children who also departmentalize at their home schools.
Confidentiality and Records

Participation in this study is voluntary and any participant can decide at any point to stop participation without any repercussions. The identity of participants and the school will be kept confidential and any data used will not have the participants names attached. I will be the only person to have access to the data that is collected and I will keep this data in a safe locked place for up to 5 years after completing the research study. At the end of the 5 years, I will destroy the data.

The results of this research project might be published or reported to an educational journal, but the identity of any participants will not be reported. If you would like a copy of the research project once completed, you can contact me at my email address.

Contact Information

If you have any question about the research or want to ask me an questions, you may contact me at: phone: researchers phone and email ______________________. Any concerns that you may have about participation, before, during or after, you can contact my graduate advisor: NLU professors phone number and address.

By signing below, you agree that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks to you and your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you are 18 years of age or older
• your participation and your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary

• you and your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and he/she will not lose any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled.

Parent Printed Name__________________________________________

Signature_____________________________________________________

Date____________________

Child’s Name ______________________________________

Address: _________________________________

_________________________________________

Phone Number: _____________________________

Researcher’s name / signature _________________________________
Appendix J

Informed Consent for Participation Child Assent Form

Program Evaluation for Departmentalizing In Upper Grades

By: Pamela Crabb

You are being asked to participate in a research study on departmentalization. In order to help you decide if you would like to participate in this study, I would like for you to be informed on the research project and the benefits or any potential risks so that you can decide if you would like to participate. This process is known as informed consent. To explain the process, the form below will spell out the benefits, risks, procedures and purpose of the research study. The form also explains how your personal information will be used, secured and safeguarded. After reading the form and asking any questions about the study, your signature will be requested. By requesting and acquiring your signature, you will then be allowed to participate in the research study. A copy of the Informed Consent will be given to you to take.

I am inviting you to take part in this study being run by me, Mrs. Pamela Crabb.

In this research project, I will learn more information about Departmentalization and by your participation I will be able to find out how you feel about departmentalization. By participating in this study, you may do some activities with me such as: Participating in a survey about how you feel about Departmentalization in your grade level.

This study will not harm you in any way and if you participate you will help me figure out better interventions that will help other students like you in the future.
If you agree to be in this research study, you might help me improve your academic and performance in school. Also, the information learned from this research study may help other children with Departmentalization and how it affects students in their academics.

It is your choice to participate in this study. If you do decide to participate in the study, it is your choice to discontinue the study without any consequence. Since your parents will have to give their permission for you to participate in the study, you may discuss your participation with them to help you decide if you would like to participate.

I will gather information about you from our school records.

Although there are risks associated with sharing this information with me (such as others seeing it), I have extensive procedures in place to keep all of your information confidential. The names will be removed from all surveys and stored in locked files in locked rooms at my office at home. Five years after the study, approximately, I will shred all data I collect for this study.

The results of this research project might be published or reported to an educational journal, but the identity of any participants will not be reported. If you would like a copy of the research project once completed, you can contact me at pcrabb@my.nl.edu.

If you have any question about the research or want to ask me an questions, you may contact me at: phone: __________ email: _______________ or my address: ___________________. Any concerns that you may have about participation, before, during or after, you can contact my graduate advisor @NLU
By signing and printing your name on the form below, you have decided that you will participate in the research about departmentalization. By signing and printing you have also said that you have read the form in its entirety and you will be given a copy along with your parents of the form.

_________________________  ____________________________
Student Name (Printed)     Name of Researcher (Printed)

_________________________  ____________________________
Student Name (Signed)       Name of Researcher (Signed)

_________________________  ____________________________
Date                       Date
Appendix K

Email Invitation – Interview Participation

Dear Teacher or Administrator,

I am a doctoral student at National-Louis University and am inviting you to fill out my interview on departmentalization at your Elementary School. The interview will collect information on departmentalization at your school regarding departmentalization in the past as well as the present. Participation is completely optional and you can choose not to participate at all or answer only the questions that you feel are pertinent to your situation. Your responses will remain confidential and completely anonymous. Risk are minimal if any. I will keep this data for my departmentalization research in a safe place and in my possession, locked up. This data will be reported collectively and not individually.

If you are in agreement and would like to participate in my research, click on the google link to give consent for the interview: _______________________. If you consent to the interview, I will set up a time and date, at your convenience, which will take approximately 15 minutes or less and should not interfere with instructional time. Thank you for your assistance in this research survey. Your feedback is very important to this research.

Sincerely,

Pamela Crabb
Appendix L

Informed consent - Survey: Individual Adult Participant

My name is Pamela Crabb, I am in the doctoral program as a student at National Louis University. I am requesting your consent to participate in my dissertation project. The project is entitled: “Program Evaluation for Departmentalization in the upper Elementary Grades.” In this study, I will evaluate departmentalization at the elementary school level and understand how departmentalization might affect student achievement.

My research will discuss departmentalization and how it impacts those involved at your school. Data will be collected to help me understand the process and if there will need to be any changes made in my program as I look at departmentalization at select schools in the ________________ that departmentalize. I would like to ask you to fill out the survey as it relates to your thoughts on departmentalization at your school.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will click sign this form indicating that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate in an email survey that I will send to you. The survey should only take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete. The information that is asked in the survey reflects your experience and your opinion as teacher or administrator providing departmentalization in your school.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time without consequences. Your identity and the school’s identity and all stakeholders, will be kept confidential. I will be the only person to have access to the data and I will keep it safe and protected for up to 5 years after I complete the study. After the study is completed, I will dispose of the data. By choosing to participate in the study, you will not have any risks, either physical or emotional. A direct benefit to you is not likely, but by taking part in this research, you will contribute to a more precise understanding of departmentalization and what if any changes need to be made.

The results of this research may be published or reported in an educational journal, but your identity will not be revealed. A copy can be requested once the study is completed by contacting me at pcrabb@my.nl.edu.

Any concerns that you may have about participation, before, during or after, you can contact my graduate advisor: @NLU

Thank you for your consideration in the participation of this research study.
Please sign your name and scan the form back to me at my email.

_______________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)

_______________________________________    ______________
Participant Signature                                   Date

_____________________________________
Researcher Name (Please Print)

_____________________________________
Researcher Signature                                                Date
Appendix M

INFORMED CONSENT

Participant - Interview

My name is Pamela Crabb, I am in the doctoral program as a student at National Louis University. I am requesting your consent to participate in my dissertation project. The project is entitled: “Program Evaluation for Departmentalization in the upper Elementary Grades.” In this study, I will evaluate departmentalization at the elementary school level and understand how departmentalization might affect student achievement.

My research will discuss departmentalization and how it impacts those involved at your school. Data will be collected to help me understand the process and if there will need to be any changes made in my program as I look at departmentalization at select schools in the Learning Community that departmentalize. I would like to ask you to fill out the survey as it relates to your thoughts on departmentalization at your school.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will click sign this form indicating that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate in an email survey that I will send to you. The survey should only take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete. The information that is asked in the survey reflects your experience and your opinion as teacher or administrator providing departmentalization in your school.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time without consequences. Your identity and the school’s identity and all stakeholders, will be kept confidential. I will be the only person to have access to the data and I will keep it safe and protected for up to 5 years after I complete the study. After the study is completed, I will dispose of the data. By choosing to participate in the study, you will not have any risks, either physical or emotional. A direct benefit to you is not likely, but by taking part in this research, you will contribute to a more precise understanding of departmentalization and what if any changes need to be made.

The results of this research may be published or reported in an educational journal, but your identity will not be revealed. A copy can be requested once the study is completed by contacting me at pcrabb@my.nl.edu.

Any concerns that you may have about participation, before, during or after, you can contact my graduate advisor: @NLU

Thank you for your participation.

_______________________________________
Name (Please Print)

_______________________________________    ______________
Signature                                   Date

_______________________
Researcher Name (Please Print)

_______________________
Researcher Signature                                                Date
Appendix N

Informed consent – Administrator School Site Survey: Individual Adult Participant

My name is Pamela Crabb, I am in the doctoral program as a student at National Louis University. I am requesting your consent to participate in my dissertation project. The project is entitled: “Program Evaluation for Departmentalization in the upper Elementary Grades.” In this study, I will evaluate departmentalization at the elementary school level and understand how departmentalization might affect student achievement.

My research will discuss departmentalization and how it impacts those involved at your school. Data will be collected to help me understand the process and if there will need to be any changes made in my program as I look at departmentalization at select schools in the Learning Community that departmentalize. I would like to ask you to fill out the survey as it relates to your thoughts on departmentalization at your school.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will sign this form indicating that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate in an email survey that I will send to you. The survey should only take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete. The information that is asked in the survey reflects your experience and your opinion as teacher or administrator providing departmentalization in your school. I will survey and interview up to 15 principals and 15 assistant principals. 40 teachers will be asked to participate to ask for their opinion on the departmentalization at their schools.

Participation in this this survey is voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time without consequences. Your identity and the school’s identity and all stakeholders, will be kept confidential. I will be the only person to have access to the data and I will keep it safe and protected for up to 5 years after I complete the study. After the study is completed, I will dispose of the data. By choosing to participate in this study, you will not have any risks, either physical or emotional. A direct benefit to you is not likely, but by taking part in this research, you will contribute to a more precise understanding of departmentalization and what if any changes need to be made.

The results of this research may be published or reported in an educational journal, but your identity will not be revealed. A copy can be requested once the study is completed by contacting me at pcrabb@my.nl.edu.

Any concerns that you may have about participation, before, during or after, you can contact my graduate advisor: @nlu Thank you for your consideration in the participation of this research study.

Please sign your name and scan the form back to me at email address.

_______________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)

_______________________________________    ______________
Participant Signature                                   Date

_______________________________________    ______________
Researcher Name (Please Print)

_______________________________________    ______________
Researcher Signature                                                Date
Appendix O

AS IS 4 C’s Analysis for Departmentalization in Upper Elementary School Grades 4 and 5

Context
- No current exemplar model in district
- 4th and 5th grades that departmentalize
- State focus on Every Student Succeeds Act
- 10 schools in district that departmentalize in upper elementary school 4th and 5th grades

Culture
- Defined Mission and vision of district
- Teacher Collaboration to be specialized
- Planning Time needs to be specialized (PLC)

Teachers are not skilled in all content areas that they teach, and this is affecting academic gains

Conditions
- Time and planning
- 30 minute time block in master schedule for interventions
- Parent conferences with both departmentalized teachers
- Teachers know content of subject area
- Some departmentalized classes in the district

Competencies
- Lack of teacher knowledge of specific subject areas
- Limited teacher collaboration
- Specialized teacher planning needed
- Limited professional development that is specialized for departmentalized teachers

Teachers are not skilled in all content areas that they teach, and this is affecting academic gains
Appendix P

TO BE 4 C’s Analysis for Departmentalization in Upper Elementary School Grades 4 and 5

Context
- An exemplar model in district exists
- 4th and 5th grades that departmentalize
- State focus on Every Student Succeeds Act
- All schools in district departmentalize in 4th and 5th grades with one or more traditional classrooms

Culture
- Defined Mission and vision of district
- Teacher Collaboration is specialized
- Planning Time needs are specialized (PLC)

Competencies
- Teachers have knowledge of specific subject areas
- Total teacher collaboration
- Specialized teacher planning required
- Targeted professional development that is specialized for departmentalized teachers

Conditions
- Time and planning
- 45 minute time block in master schedule for interventions
- Parent and student conferences with both departmentalized teachers
- Teachers know content of subject area and standards for their specialty
- 4th and 5th grades have departmentalized classes with one or more traditional classroom(s) across the district

Teachers are skilled in all content areas that they teach, and this is increasing academic gains
# Appendix Q

## Strategies and Action Chart

### Six Objectives of Change Addressing Strategies and Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives and Goals</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Objective 1 Context, Culture, Competencies and Conditions** Goal: Planning for the departmentalization shift change initiative in district and schools. | - Establish expectation of departmentalization for district and schools including faculty and staff.  
- Create a master schedule to include departmentalization in 4th and 5th grades as well as one standalone traditional classroom.  
- Assess levels of competency with teacher specialization.  
- Enhance the departmentalization purpose for school-wide support and district funding. | - Collaboratively develop a departmentalization vision and mission.  
- Form a committee of all stakeholders for input.  
- Survey teachers on experience with departmentalization.  
- Collaborate with District for funding solutions to support professional development and materials. |
| **Objective 2 Context and Culture** Goal: Create a communication plan to promote departmentalization. | - Ensure that the faculty and staff have a clear understanding of the purpose and relevance of departmentalization.  
- Communicate the departmentalization program to district and schools and families. | - Communicate the purpose of the initiative in a whole group faculty meeting during preplanning.  
- Collaborate with the district and coordinate a district-wide articulation about departmentalization and its value. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objective 3 Culture</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a built in planning time and ensure teacher collaboration is specialized.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 4 Competencies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a school wide Professional Development plan to include specialized subjects and integration with partner teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 5 Conditions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a structural change of logistics to allow for teacher planning and collaboration.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 6 Culture and Competencies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment of the effectiveness of implementation of the departmentalization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>