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An Evaluation of Teacher Morale in Four Elementary Schools: The Difference a School Makes

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AN EVALUATION OF TEACHER MORALE IN FOUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:
THE DIFFERENCE A SCHOOL MAKES

Jennifer Blackburn

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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of the requirements of

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This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the Program Evaluation candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the Change Leadership Plan candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the Policy Advocacy Document candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

Works Cited


4.21.14
ABSTRACT

This Program Evaluation Plan (PEP) investigates teacher morale in several schools and explores how it may possibly relate to school grade. There are many factors that influence teacher morale, but I believe that school grade plays a major role; and this dissertation takes a closer look as to how some teachers and administrators feel about their schools and positions. By implementing a questionnaire, and conducting interviews with teachers and administrators, I was able to discover that school grade is weighing in teacher morale.

This study breaks down the findings from the questionnaire that was given and offers some recommendations on how to help improve teacher morale in schools. The literature review in this study reflects the importance of teacher morale and the impact that it has on student achievement. As a result of the examining factors contributing to teacher morale, we can see that it does have an influence on the academic achievement of the school.
PREFACE

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher morale at various schools, to see what issues might surface, and gain some insight on possible ways to boost teacher morale. As an administrator, I know how difficult it is to keep everyone happy. With the demanding deadlines, we have from the district and the state; it is often challenging to ask the teacher to do more, without taking from their plate. When all we do is beat down our teachers with more work, it becomes an impossible task to keep them motivated and willing to work.

This project was near and dear to my heart. I was able to see, first hand, how the morale can be demolished and the impact it has on student achievement. I started my career, as an Assistant Principal, in 2007 at XYZ Elementary school. What was unique about this school was that it opened in 2007 with an experienced principal who was able to bring the majority of his staff from a previous school. Therefore, 75% of the teaching staff was familiar with his leadership style and understood his temperament. The first year of existence, the teachers were excited about starting a new school, and the school earned an A grade. In 2008, the teachers were still happy, everyone working well together, and were ecstatic about earning an A the following year. Therefore, in 2008, the school earned another A. It was in 2009 when things started to change. This is the year that a fifth grade teacher was in a tragic motorcycle accident that almost left her for dead, and she was never able to return to her duties. Those circumstances put a lot of pressure on the remaining fifth grade teachers. They chose not to hire a new teacher and decided to take on the remaining students. In theory, this sounds like the logical answer, however, it caused major stress on the teachers, and they began to resent their decision. During this year, the school earned a grade of B. In 2010, the school dealt with turnover:
a teacher went out on maternity leave, another teacher left due to her daughter having cancer, two teachers retired, another teacher was married and moved, and two other teachers were moved into resource positions. When the new staff came aboard, there was never any staff building or team building activities to help the team members work as a unit. Therefore, the staff did not perform as a unit and that year the school earned a C grade.

As the school grade declined over the years, I witnessed the decline of morale as well. I wanted to see if this was occurring at other schools. My initial goal was to use two high performing schools, two schools that were in the middle, or raised their grades, and then a low performing school. I wanted to see what was happening differently at the higher performing schools than the lower performing. However, when working with volunteers, I had to use the schools that were willing to have me come in and impose on their staff. Although I had many trials with this study, I was able to get some data to investigate teacher morale in our school district.
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess teacher morale in selected schools in one school district and investigate the possibility of a relationship between teacher morale, school grade, and student achievement. Miller notes in his article that teacher morale can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning. Raising teacher morale level is not only making teaching more pleasant for teachers, but also learning more pleasant for the students. This creates an environment that is more conducive to learning (Miller, 1981, p. 485).

My impression was that higher performing schools were going to have higher teacher morale, and conversely, that lower performing schools would have lower teacher morale. My interest in this study derives from a deep curiosity I have in this topic, as a result of observations I have garnered from my 11 years as a teacher and my experiences as an assistant principal at a Title I school in Florida. If my investigation does indicate a relationship, I will certainly share my findings with my district leaders for their awareness.

Rationale

Bill Maxwell confirmed in his article, One more insult to teachers, that, “Morale is as low as it has ever been” (p. 1). I have spoken with many educators throughout my career, and noticed complaints regarding morale, specifically in relation to its possible impact on student achievement, and I feel that this is an important area that is worthy of investigating. I am a firm believer that if you respect your teachers and show them how much you appreciate their work, they will work even harder for you. I feel that this study
is important to all stakeholders involved, as well as the district and community at large. If I do find there is a relationship between teacher morale and student achievement, this will be one piece to the puzzle. Teacher morale is essentially important and potentially enhanced through the practices of strong and caring leaders. Once the morale is in the right place, positive morale is highly likely to influence student achievement increases, allowing the school to excel to higher student performance gains and school grades. The higher school performance is beneficial to the students, and can ultimately increase the value of the community.

**Goals**

For this investigation, I studied five elementary schools: one school that has been low performing for the past two years, two schools that have been high performing for the past two years, and one school that has maintained their grade, and one school that has improved their grade. My plan was to use five years’ worth of school and student achievement data and interview the staff members that have been at that particular school for five years or more. Because I was looking at five years’ worth of data, I felt that I needed staff that had been there for all five years. I felt that my results would be more accurate with staff that has been there for all five years, instead of new teachers coming in, not knowing the history of the school. I asked them to partake in the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire (Bentley & Rempel, 1967). My goal was to find out from the staff how they felt about their position at the school. Robert Coughlan (Coughlan, 1970, p. 221) defines morale as a “feeling of well-being”. Of interest to me were the schools that went up in school grade and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and maintained their grade status. I wanted to find out from the administration at these successful schools in our county what
strategies they used to support good teacher morale. Although the indicator of AYP will soon be phased out, due to Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO), I included this historical data in this report as further evidence of the declining student achievement at our school, and to support the rationale for this inquiry. As stated in a journal article from the US Journal of Instructional Psychology, “literature supports the premise that teachers’ moral directly affects students achievement” (Hunter-Boykin, 1996, p.2).

**Research Questions**

The primary question for this study was, what is the current status of teacher moral as reported by a sample of teachers from one school district, and is there a relationship between school grade and teacher morale? Secondary research questions that will be included are:

- What do teachers who have high morale report as some of the reasons why they feel like they have high morale?
- What do teachers who have low morale report as some of the reasons why they feel like they have low morale?
- For teachers who have high morale, what are some of the practices of the school administration they report as contributing to their high morale?
- For teachers who have low morale, what are some of the practices of the school administration they report as contributing to their low morale?
- What are some of the aspects of the school climate that teachers who have high morale report as contributing to their high morale?
- What are some of the aspects of the school climate that teachers who have low morale report as contributing to their low morale?
What are some suggestions on school climate and administrative practices that teachers feel could improve teacher morale?

**Conclusion**

In school year, 2010, I began to feel the morale of our school diminishing more and more. I began to read articles on teacher morale and ways in which I, as a leader, could help increase teachers’ feelings of self-worth. One of the articles I read was the one that I cited, “Staff Morale, School Climate, and Education Productivity”, by William Miller (1981). I felt confident that this was a relevant problem in schools, and with the information I obtained, I planned to present my findings to the superintendent. Not only did I plan to present the data that assesses current teacher morale and possibly correlates teacher morale and School Grade, AYP, and student achievement, it was also my hope that the data I gathered will suggest strategies that will help schools that are struggling with low teacher morale.
SECTION TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

I have been an educator for 10 years and have had the opportunity to experience three different school settings with three different leadership styles. During my time at the first two schools, the administration was new and therefore the staff was learning the style of the new leadership. For the past five years, however, I have been in administration. Our first year of opening our school (2007) was exciting, and the morale of the school was up and positive. That year our school earned an A but we did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), we were at 92% of AYP. In 2008, we earned an A and made AYP (100%). Something happened at the end of 2008, the morale began to drop and as you will see, so did our school grade and AYP. In 2009 we dropped to a B with 77% annual yearly progress; and, in 2010 we dropped to a C with another 77% in AYP. It is now 2012 and I feel that morale is at its lowest. According to the literature, it appears that teacher morale may be correlated to School Grade and student achievement.

There are some articles and dissertations that are relevant to my study on teacher morale and student achievement which seems to reflect in the school’s grade. As William C. Miller states, “there is evidence that the social climate of the school and the staff can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning” (Miller, 1981, p.483). As President Barak Obama in his Race to the Top initiative, emphasized that his focus was on our teachers, principals, and school leaders. In order to accomplish this goal we must “have a great teacher in every classroom and a great principal in every school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, pp.1-2). His vision goes on to describe aspects of teacher morale.
Teacher Morale

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines morale as the following:

Principles, teachings, or conduct, the mental and emotional condition (as of enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty) of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand, a sense of common purpose with respect to a group, or the level of individual psychological well-being based on such factors as a sense of purpose and confidence in the future (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2012).

When teachers feel that they are appreciated, when they feel that they have a voice, and when they feel that they are supported, the morale is often high. This is supported by Maehr, Midgley, and Urdan (1993), who report that “People are more personally invested in their work with an organization when (1) they have a voice in what happens to them; and (2) their work has meaning and significance in contributing to a higher purpose” (as reported in Lumsden, 2001, p.3). Also from Lumsden’s article, she states, “Where morale was high, schools showed an increase in student achievement” (Lumsden, 2001, p.2). Additionally, “When a healthy school environment exists and teacher morale is high, ‘teachers feel good about each other, at the same time, feel a sense of accomplishment from their jobs’” (Hoy and Miskel, 1987; Lumsden, 1998, p.1). The increased stresses places on teachers and the obstacles to self-sufficiency and creativity in the profession, may combine, to make teaching a strenuous task. Kim Black, the president for the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association, stated to the Tampa Bay Times that, “teachers have no voice...” (Maxwell, 2012, p.2). According to Black, this was contributing to the teachers having ill feelings when it came to scheduling, curriculum, professional development, and planning time. Teachers felt that they no
longer had a sense of professional worth. The decisions that were being made left the teachers with a feeling of being, “disregarded and unimportant.” (Maxwell, 2012, p.2.) According to the MetLife Survey that was conducted in 2012, teacher satisfaction has declined to its lowest point and stress among teachers has amplified since 1985. In 1985, 36% of teachers felt they were under great stress, which number has increased to 51%.

As represented in Table 1 teacher job satisfaction continues to decline according to the 2011 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher; satisfaction has dropped 23 percentage points since 2008. The percentage of teachers who report job satisfaction has declined through the years to its lowest point in 25 years, having dropped 5 percentage points from 2011 to 2012 alone, from 44% to 39% very satisfied.

![Figure 1. Teacher job satisfaction through the years by percentage who are very satisfied. Source: The Met Life Survey of New Teachers: Challenges of School Leadership, page 45.](image)

School Culture

School culture is usually defined as traditions and beliefs that schools partake in each year. School culture can adversely affect morale and student achievement. From the Center for Improving School Culture, Gary Phillips describes school climate as, “beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that characterize a school in terms of how people treat and feel about each other; the extent to which people feel included and appreciated; and
rituals and traditions reflecting collaboration and collegiality” (Deal & Peterson, 1993, p.1). Wagner (2000) intellectualizes school culture as common experiences, a sense of community, and an atmosphere of family. He also states that communication is encouraged and that it should be open and truthful. In addition, from the Center for Improving School Culture, they conducted research in over 8200 schools. They found an overwhelming correlation between school culture and student achievement. They go on to say that there is no “fix all” for schools; however, they have identified three items (Wagner, 2002, p. 1) to strengthen school culture:

   Professional collaboration, which is characterized as the degree to which people work together, share information, and instructional strategies, and are encouraged to have constructive discussions and debates. Affiliation and Collegiality, which is a sense of belonging, emotional support, and inclusion as a valued member of the organization. Efficacy tends to focus on how stakeholders view themselves.

Other components that have an influence over schools are: (a) an engaging and optimistic learning environment focused on student achievement; (b) a sympathetic, compassionate, and supportive principal that ensured student learning as top priority (Keefe, Kelley, & Miller, 1985, p.71).

Administrative Support

I believe that the administration has a great deal of impact on the teacher morale. The administrators are the leaders; they can either make a positive difference, or bring others down. Rapport with the principal refers to the connection between the teacher and the principal, including leadership practices that affect morale and the level of communication, professionalism, and human relation skills engaged by the principal.
Principals are expected to encourage collaboration, enrich interpersonal skills, and establish a tone of excellence for high expectations and academic achievement and performance for all. Miller (1981) states, “administrative behavior is a highly important factor in facilitating good staff morale” (p. 483). He also goes on to say that the power of the leader’s behavior is the key in creating good staff morale. Lumsden (2001) tells us that, “a principal’s ability to create a positive school climate and culture can affect teacher morale” (p. 1). I feel that administration is a key component to this study. In an article written by Roosevelt Washington, Jr. and Hoyt F. Watson titled “Positive Teacher Morale-The Principal’s Responsibility”, they state that the principal is significant in cultivating and sustaining affirmative teacher morale (1976, p. 4). In that same article, they stress that, “teachers whose basic needs are satisfied tend to constantly strive for fulfillment of higher goals, and their efforts and attitudes ultimately will overflow to the student body, resulting in more productive students” (p. 4). Their last emphasis is that the leader must show bravery, self-control, passion, and a readiness to share (p. 5).

Conclusion

In the 10 years in which I have been employed in education, I have seen leadership styles that work and some that were not as effective. In my research, there are factors that play a role in school grade and student achievement. These include teacher morale, school culture, and administrative support. Again, it is my anticipation that the information that I collect will help schools that are struggling with teacher morale.
SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

All of my readings suggest that teacher morale is related to student achievement. I collected my own data to investigate the relationship and possible effects of teacher morale and student achievement in a school district. I did this by conducting interviews with teachers and administrators. I gave the teachers and administrators a survey on staff morale, I felt that these two methods would give me the information that I am seeking.

Participants

The key participants in this study were teachers and the administrators. Due to the fact that I was looking at five years’ worth of data, I needed schools with administrators who had been consistent at that school for five years, and teachers who had been at the school for five years and who had worked for the same administrators. Here are the following schools (with pseudonyms) that participated in this study:

Charity Elementary is one of the middle performing schools, averaging a school letter grade of B for the past five years. Lucky Elementary is the lowest performing school with an average of C for the past five years. Success Elementary is the other middle performing school with a B average for the past five years, leaving Victory Elementary as the top performing school, earning a school grade of an A for the past five years. Charity and Success Elementary actually have the exact same average of a 3.4, which is equivalent to a B.
Table 1

*School Accountability Report for 2007-2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity Elementary</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Elementary</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*School Accountability Report for 2008-2009*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Elementary</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

*School Accountability Report for 2009-2010*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity Elementary</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Elementary</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

School Accountability Report for 2010-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Elementary</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Elementary</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
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Table 5

School Accountability Report for 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity Elementary</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Elementary</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Elementary</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory Elementary</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of this project, there was no need to survey or interview students. However, I used 5 schools, interviewing 2 administrators at each school; surveying as many teachers as would participate, up to 285 teachers total; and interviewing up to 10 teachers per school, equaling up to 50 teacher interviews.
Data Gathering Techniques

Survey

Using a quantitative methodology, I used a survey to obtain information from my participants. I conducted a survey with the participants that agreed to participate in this study. I chose this method for the following reasons: 1. Surveys are unbiased and therefore, preferred for a quantitative study (Wysong, 2000). 2. Surveys allow for more general findings (Hartford, 2000). 3. Surveys provide quantitative data. 4. I must be able to complete this project in a time efficient fashion, therefore, data collecting and analyzing must be quick. Surveys seem to be a logical solution. The survey will be the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (Bentley & Rempel, 1967) Please see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.

With the use of this form of inquiry, my goal was to see how teachers feel about their job and about their relationship with their administrators. A common tool to measure factors that affect teacher morale is the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (PTO), which was prepared by Ralph R. Bentley and Averno M. Rempel (1968). The PTO is designed to breakdown down teacher morale into 10 specific dimensions. The instrument is comprised of 100 questions that can be divided up into 10 different measurements. The dimensions included teacher relationship with principal, gratification with teaching, relationship among teachers, teacher salary, teacher burden, curriculum concerns, teacher rank, community support, school facilities and services, and community pressures (Houchard, 2005). I planned to meet with all participants, after school, and explain the questionnaire to them. The participants who volunteered to participate will fill the survey out and return to me before they leave.
Interviews

To keep my data collection strategy valid, I felt that I needed to be fair and only interview those teachers that have been teaching at the school for five or more years. For a copy of the Teacher Interview Protocol, please see Appendix B. Additionally, I felt that looking back five years would reveal any trends in the data. For the interviews, I meet with the volunteer participants (individually) during their block time. I interviewed up to 10 administrators, before or after school. The interviews took no longer than 30 minutes and I recorded the interview with a tape recorder and transcribed the tapes so that I could easily locate relevant samples of the qualitative data (quotes from the participants) in order to illuminate and illustrate themes that emerge from that data.

The administrators’ interview questions assisted in gathering data on some of the demographics of the school setting (Appendix C). I used semi-structured questions that provided a chance to discuss the teacher’s perceptions concerning their job and the leadership in the school. Face to face interviews have the discrete benefit of allowing the investigator to create a relationship with the participants and provide more in-depth and nuanced understandings of the teachers’ perceptions (Leedy & Ormond, 2001). Patton also states in his book, Utilization-Focused Evaluation, that an interview is to collect data and the purpose is not to alter the participants thoughts (2008, p.169). The job of the interviewer is to stay as neutral as possible.
Data

I used the Florida Department of Education website to find the School Accountability Reports. It is from this website that I determined which schools would be used. I needed one school that was high performing, two low performing, one that has maintained, and one that has improved.

Data Analysis Techniques

I tabulated and analyzed the survey data using appropriate descriptive statistical functions. I analyzed the qualitative interview data by identifying meaningful themes, assigning descriptive labels or codes, and sorting and grouping emergent themes and patterns within and across the interview data (Creswell, 2002; Dana, 2009). If my findings are relevant to my district, I will certainly share the data and recommendations with the appropriate people. I am hoping that through with speaking with the teachers and administrators that I may come away with some strategies on how to keep morale up in a school.

Ethical Considerations

When selecting the volunteers for the interview, I tried to choose someone from each ethnic group and kept a representative ratio of females and males from each school, if possible. The participants were given a consent form for the teacher survey (Appendix D) and the teacher and administrator interview (Appendix E) that informs them of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their data. I also obtained informed consent form from the principal at each school in order to conduct the study (Appendix F). I did not include the name of the participants or the name of the school in which they work for. Administrators were not informed as to who participated in the questionnaire or interview.
process. Any information obtained from the participants remained stringently confidential. Confidentiality for the participants was my main concern for this project. I did not use any of the participant’s information outside of this project. After I extracted the interview data from the interview tapes, and the study was concluded, I erased the interview tapes. I also used a pseudonym when taping the interview, and selectively transcribed the relevant data quotes myself. All participation in this study was voluntary; all data I collected was anonymous and kept confidential.

Conclusion

As emphasized previously, I purposed that this study would assess teacher morale and investigate any possible relationship between school grade, achievement data, and teacher morale. In the high performing schools, there may be a positive relationship between school grade and higher teacher morale. I had also hope to be able to collect strategies and practices these administrators have used with their staff that may promote good staff morale and that can be shared with other schools in the district.
SECTION FOUR – FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Findings

Setback

During my original study, I was to use 5 schools, 2 high performing, 2 low performing, and one that increased their letter grade. However, I had a few minor setbacks along the way. Due to the fact that this was a voluntary study, I was only able to use the schools that were willing to participate. Therefore, I had four A schools and one school that went from a C to a B. Additionally, I had another obstacle. I was asked to move from my position as assistant principal at one school to another school, in the hopes of helping the school with its situation. The school that I was moved to was a school that was participating in my study. Consequently, I dropped that school, which was the school that moved from a C to a B, which left me with four high performing schools. I then dropped one high performing school and picked up a lower performing school; leaving me with three A schools, and one C school.

I met with all four of the schools to explain my research and to seek volunteers. I gave out a total of 131 teacher surveys of which 65 were returned to me, for a response rate of 50%. I was only able to interview one administrator from each school, for a total of 4 interviews.

Interviews of Teachers

I was able to get all five interviews from 2 schools, four from another school, and only two from one school. At the conclusion of my interviews, it was obvious to see that there was at least one negative teacher from each school.
In response to Teacher Interview Question number one, which asked “Do you feel that your current administrator empowers you and involves you with decisions about policies and procedures and if so, how?” Sixty-three percent of the participants felt that they were empowered by their administration. It was said by one participant that if there were any reason as to why they were not allowed to try something, they were always given an explanation or suggestions on how to make it work better. Three participants (who are all from the lower performing school) felt that they were not supported, that the leadership makes all the decisions, suggestions fall on deaf ears, and one participant felt that it was not even an option to offer suggestions for policies and procedures that come from the district office and there is no changing their minds. This data demonstrates that the teachers at the low performing school do not feel supported or involved. The teachers at Lucky Elementary feel as if they are not being heard and their opinions and ideas are not important. Therefore, the teachers do not have the buy in it takes to be successful.

The second question asked the participants if they felt their administration had an open door policy. Out of all the participants all but one agreed that their administrators had an open door policy. Ninety-two percent also said that their administrators give them their schedule so that they know when they are available. The one who did not agree explained, “The door may be open, but the ears are deaf.” This participant was from the lowering performing school. In my opinion, as an administrator and based on my experiences and observations as an educator and administrator, if you are going to have an open door policy, this means that your eyes and ears need to be open as well. When a teacher comes in with a suggestion or a concern, the administrator should take the opportunity to make the individual feel empowered. If the suggestion that is being given
by the teacher will not work, we should take the time to explain why so that the teacher
does not feel that they wasted their time or that the information was ignored. After time,
when teachers are not being heard, they tend to ask themselves, why bother? A writer for
Forbes magazine, Lisa Quast, stated that there were four reasons for exhibiting an open
door policy; to show employees that you are accessible, to have an open line of
communication, it’s a faster way to get accurate information, and provides for a closer
working relationship (Quast, p. 1-2). The participant from Lucky Elementary has
experienced this and does not go to the administration any more for suggestions or
concerns.

The third question asked if the participants felt that their opinions and suggestions
were accepted. Fifty-seven percent felt that they were heard and that makes them feel as
if they have somewhat of a voice. One participant (from Charity Elementary) clarified by
saying, “they listen, but they have a lot to balance and weigh with so many policies; their
hands are simply tied sometimes.” Moreover, from Lucky Elementary, the participant
simply stated, “They don’t listen.” In my opinion, we as administrators need to keep our
staff informed. There are many times when the administration is asked to follow through
on a policy that we don’t necessarily agree with; however, we must show our staff that
we agree with the policy and that we are going to implement the policy with fidelity. If
we talk about how bad the policy is, the staff will do the same, and will not follow
through on the task due to the lack of expectations. In a post that I read by Harvey
Duetschendorf, he explains that we should be open and consistent in our communication.
He goes on to say that when we keep people informed, it lifts their spirits; if we keep
people in the dark, then they begin to make up their own version of the truth (p. 1). From
the data we can see that at the low performing school there is no communication with their staff. For if there were, the participant would have answered like the middle performing school and know that sometimes administrators do not have a choice in what is implemented at their organization.

In the fourth question, the participants were asked if they felt that they are supported with instruction and discipline. Fifteen out of the sixteen teachers that answered this question felt that they are supported with instruction. The one volunteer that answered no was a Science resource teacher who was new to her position that year. As for discipline, all the participants agreed that they were supported when issues arose. The lower performing school even has a dean on campus, as well as, a Student Resource Officer (SRO). What I found interesting with this data was that the lower performing school was the only school that has a dean and a Student Resource Officer (SRO). In my judgment, the lower performing school is challenged with more discipline issues than the higher performing schools.

The additional question, Question number five, asked how many days the participants were absent during this current school year and last year. The number of days absent plays into the overall assessment of teacher morale as a corollary to job satisfaction and more directly to an argument of possible effect on student achievement and school grade to be discussed further as the data is analyzed.
Table 6

Absences, in Days, for the 2011 and 2012 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity Elementary</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Elementary</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Elementary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory Elementary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By looking at Table 6 above, the data clearly defines that the lower performing school has an attendance issue. The teachers at Lucky Elementary were absent twice as much as the teachers at the higher performing schools. This raises more questions for me: are the teachers not happy, are they tired of the discipline issues, or are they legitimately ill or have been constrained by other issues to take time away from the classroom? Regardless of what the reasons for a teacher’s absence may be, it could be argued that teacher attendance has an effect on school grade as well. If the teacher is not there to teach, the students are less likely to have the required continuity of instruction to learn at their highest capacity.

Question number six asked the participants if they felt they had opportunities for professional development (PD) at their school. Eighty-two percent of the volunteers felt that they were provided with numerous opportunities for PD and that their professional library was equipped with many useful resources. A participant from the lower performing school expounded that, “no, it’s more about meetings and there is not any learning taking place.” Teachers must be on top of their game and equipped with the
latest and best strategies to motivate their students. Teachers must feel that the professional development is meaningful and has a purpose in order for them to implement the new knowledge in their classrooms. It is obvious that the PD given at the lower performing school is not effective, and therefore may not be implemented with fidelity.

Question number seven asked how many years they had been assigned to their current school. The reason the question was asked in this manner is because sometimes a teacher becomes displaced due to student enrollment. Therefore, sometimes a situation arises where a teacher is placed at a school and was not required to go through the interview process. In this situation however, the teachers who participated were teachers who interviewed for their position, they were not displaced teachers. As you can see from the Figure 2, the percent of teachers who have been at their current school for less than 5 years was 25%. Of the four principals, 38% have been at their current school more than five years, but less than 10 years; and 38% have also been at their current school for more than 10 years. When the data is broken down by school, the numbers were consistent across the board; there was not a significant difference.

Figure 2. Principal tenure in years at current school.
Question eight asked the volunteers to explain their reasoning for returning to their current school each year. This was not a multiple-choice question and therefore, I looked for common themes among the teacher responses. I was able to pull three common themes from the responses that were as follows: great school, convenience, and teachers love their principal.

![Figure 3. Reasons for returning to their current school](image)

The four participants who felt that it was convenience that brought them back to the school each year were from the lower performing school. This might seem to indicate that even if a teacher feels unhappy at their school overall, they will return to the school for convenience. Some of the teachers who think their school is great and love their principal drive over 30 miles (one way) to get to work each day.

**Interviews with the Administration**

Due to busy schedules and unforeseen circumstances, I was only able to interview the principal at each school. This resulted in a total of 4 principal interviews. The resulting data sheds light on the issues under consideration.

Question number one asked the administrators if they felt they empowered their staff and involved them in the decision making process. Four out four administrators felt that they try to include them as much as they can. One administrator even said, “I always
try to remember that the teachers are the ones that make a difference,” this principal over sees a high performing school. The principal from the low performing school stated, “We try to include them as much as we can. Sometimes are hands are tied, but they are aware of that.” The answer received by the principal at Lucky Elementary, the lower performing school, was quite interesting to me. If you recall, the teachers’ answer to this was that everything falls on deaf ears. This tells me that the principal feels that she is expressing herself well, while the staff interprets it differently. What I think is happening is that the leadership team at Lucky Elementary make the decisions, then take them to the staff, and ask them what they think. However, when the staff offers suggestions or states concerns, the team states that their hands are tied.

Question number two was asking the administrators if they felt they had an open door policy. All four principals felt that their doors were open and that staff could come in anytime they needed. The principal from the high performing school shared, “Certainly, the only way to know and help your staff is to listen to them.” A pattern that I am seeing is that the teachers at the higher performing schools do feel that they are being heard. It is clear that at the higher performing school the principal has taken an interest in their staff, by accepting them into their office and listening to them.

Question number three asked if the principals felt they honored the opinions and suggestions from their staff. Seventy-five percent of the administrators felt they did listen to their staff. The administrator from the low performing school stated that her staff knew that she couldn’t make everyone happy. If you recall from the teacher interviews, it was the teacher from the lower performing school that stated, “Everything
fell on deaf ears.” Therefore, in my opinion, the lower performing principal doesn’t honor opinions and suggestions from her staff.

The administrators were asked, in question number four, if they felt they supported their teachers with instruction and discipline. Three out of the four principals agreed that they support their staff, instructionally. One principal, from the high performing school, stated that they supported their staff 110%. As for discipline, the principal from the high performing school stated they are fortunate and they don’t have issues. Another principal, from a middle performing school, felt that they did a fair job with their support with discipline. The final two principals (one from a middle performing school and the other from the low performing school), follow the Code of Conduct that is provided by the district and the principal from the low performing school even went as far as stating, “I am not sure how much more we can do.” Again, I see discipline being an issue in the lower performing school.

Question number five asked the principals if they felt their teachers had attendance issues. All four administrators felt that their attendance was good, with the few exceptions of the health issues. This is concerning to me that the principal at the lower performing school feels that her teachers attendance is not an issue. When compared to other schools, her teachers were absent from school twice as much. This tells me that attendance at her school is not a high priority and not monitored on a regular basis.

Question number six asked if the administrators offered opportunities for professional development (PD) at their schools. All principals agreed that they offer lots of opportunities for learning and growing. They use such items as Personal Learning
Communities, and the district provided a database with many teaching videos called PD360, and the principals even bring facilitators to the school for PD. The principal at the high performing school stated that, “I need my teachers at the school, so I bring the training to them”. The principal at the high performing school seems to have his priorities in line. He realizes the importance of professional development; however, he knows that his students need their teacher as well.

Question number seven asked the principals how many years they have served their current school. The findings are depicted in Figure 4. The principal from Victory has been there 25 years and it’s a high performing school. The principal from Success has been there 8 years and there school middle performing, as well as, Charity where the principal has lead for thirteen years. The lower performing school, Lucky elementary, the principal has been there for six years. It is obvious to see that the principal with the least amount of experience is leading a low performing school.

Figure 4. The number of years the principals have served their schools.
Question number eight asked the principals what they felt they could do to improve their school. The three principals from the high and middle performing schools said to, “Continue to bring them (meaning the teachers) authentic professional development, continue to appreciate the teachers and show them that they are cared for, and hold them accountable while showing them that they are appreciated.” The principal from the low performing school simple stated, “Hold the teachers accountable.” It is clear to see that the lower performing principal has low expectations for their teachers. The principal is willing to hold the teachers accountable, but it appears they have no intentions on making the teachers feel appreciated for what they do.

Question nine asked the principals if they enjoyed their job. Three out of the four principals (all from the high and middle performing schools) said that they love their jobs, but they do not like the lack of accountability from the parents. The principal from the low performing school commented, “I enjoy the kids and really like it when teachers get it; when they are here for the students and not for the pay check.” Again, the principal from the low performing school is exhibiting low expectations. She claims that she enjoys the students, what about the teachers? Maybe if the principal showed more interest in her teachers, told them what they did right, appreciated them more, and held them accountable; they might be there for more than just a paycheck.

Question number ten asked the principals to describe their strengths. Their answers varied from getting the teachers what they need, to being a good listener, and the principal from the high performing school smiled and said, “I have a way with words that always gets me what I want.” The principal from the low performing school stated that they grew up very poor, so they feel their background is their strength. I am not sure how
to analyze this answer: the principal from the lower performing school feels that their background is their strength. One could take that to mean that she came from nothing and now has a respectable job. Alternatively, due to her being at the lower performing school, maybe her background is holding her back. She exhibited a negative attitude and has low expectations for her school and staff.

Question number eleven asked the administrators to describe their weakness. The principal from the high performing school stated that they were demanding. One principal, from a middle performing school, tends to expect people to be more like themselves; meaning they should be responsible, take their job seriously, and expect that all students can and will learn. They have to step back, often, and realize that not all people have the same goals. Another principal, from a middle performing school, admits that they have a follow through issue and the principal from the low performing school admits, “I have a temper and the fact that I am demanding. I want it my way. I like things done a certain way.” It is clear to see that the principal from the low performing school wants things done her way or no way, making it clear that her teachers do not have a voice and are not heard. The principal from the high performing school is demanding, however, his teachers are aware that they have a voice and that they will be heard.

Interpretation from Interview Questions

According to the teachers interviewed, there does not seem to be any discrepancies between the high performing schools and the lower performing school, as far as the principals being accessible in the eyes of the employees. However, there are discrepancies on whether or not the teachers feel they are being heard. The teachers from the lower performing schools do not feel supported or appreciated by their administrator.
As for discipline, most teachers feel that they are competent enough to take care of the misbehaving on their own and for instructional support, most feel that they are well equipped. If not, they are not afraid to ask.

As for the interviews with the administration, these five interviews are strikingly similar. I did notice that the principal of the lower performing school has less years of experience, is very demanding, has a temper, and does not show any appreciation towards what the teachers do well. The three principals from the high performing schools were very open and positive. The principal from the low performing school was negative and rolled their eyes to many of the questions that were asked.

**Interpretation of the Teacher Survey**

I distributed 147 surveys to teachers at 4 schools; 67 teachers filled out the questionnaire, for a response rate of 46%. I received 27 surveys from Charity Elementary, 10 from Lucky Elementary, 21 from Success Elementary, and nine from Victory Elementary. According to Bentley and Rempel (1967) morale is multidimensional. Through their development of the teacher opinionnaire instrument, they identified and validated 10 sub-scales for teacher morale using a representative sample of 3,023 teachers in Indiana and Oregon:

1. Teacher rapport with principal, deals with how the teacher feels about their principal, their professional ability, their ability to communicate, and their interest in teachers and their work.
2. Satisfaction with teaching, relates to the teachers relationship with their students.
3. Rapport among teachers pertains to the relationships with other teachers.
4. Teacher Salary, how the teacher feels about their salary and the salary policies.

5. Teacher load, deals with record keeping, parent conferences, collaborative planning, and keeping up professionally.

6. Curriculum Issues focuses on the teachers’ proficiency in the curriculum and the ability to meet the needs of all students.

7. Teacher Status, teachers feeling wanted and secure in their job.

8. Community Support of Education, simply the support that teachers receive from their community.

9. School Facilities and Services, refers to the campus being clean and teachers receiving the adequate supplies that they need.

10. Community Pressures, to be a respected citizen in the community.

As a result of their factor analysis, Bentley and Rempel developed a stanine scale that reliably indicates low, medium, or high scores on the 10 teacher morale sub-scales. In order to determine each school’s rating on each of the 10 sub-scales, I averaged all the responses from the teachers at each school to determine if they fell in the low, medium or high range on the stanine scale for each of the 10 sub-scales.

There are nine stanine scores ranging from 1-9. One being very low, two being low, three being below average, four being little below average, five being average, six, being little above average, seven being above average, eight being high, and nine being very high. The data shows that all school averages, according to their stanine score of four for morale were little below average, except for Lucky Elementary with a stanine score of a two, which is low. The first teacher morale sub-scale, Teacher rapport with principal, was little below average at every school except for Victory, which is a high
performing school, where it was below average.” This is interesting because I would
think that at the higher performing school the teachers would feel that they had more of a
relationship with their principal. However, the data is showing that the middle and lower
performing schools feel they have a better rapport with their principal.

The second teacher morale sub-scale, “Satisfaction with Teaching,” was below
average at Success and Charity Elementary, low at Lucky, and little below average at
Victory. Teaching at any school is difficult with the amount of demands that a teacher is
faced with. However, at Lucky Elementary, the teacher satisfaction is low, meaning they
are not happy with their job and feel a lack of connection with their students.

For the third teacher morale sub-scale, Rapport among teachers, Lucky was
below average, Success was little below average, Charity was average, and Victory was
above average. The significance here is the difference between the low and high
performing schools. The low performing school teachers have a below average rapport
with one another, while the high performing school teachers have an above average
rapport with one another; confirming that the teachers at the higher performing schools
respect one another and have the ability to collaborate with one another.

Regarding the fourth teacher morale sub-scale, Teacher Salary was below
average in all schools but little below average at Success Elementary. Regardless of what
school a teachers works at, they do not make any more money for working in a higher
performing school or a lower performing school. Teacher salary is an issue at any level.
Teachers are under paid for the amount of work they are responsible for and the shaping
of a student’s future. Teachers teach the doctors and the lawyers, but are nearly at the
bottom of the pay scale.
The fifth teacher morale sub-scale, Teacher load was below average in all schools, but was low at Charity Elementary. Teachers at all schools have a high demand on documentation. Lesson plans and grade books become legal documents and must be accurate at all times. Teachers have the responsibility of meeting with parents to discuss grades, progress, and/or any concerns that they may have. Teachers are encouraged to document the conversation in case the parent is not satisfied with the teacher’s response and takes matters to the administration.

The sixth teacher morale sub-scale, Curriculum Issues, an example of this would include an understanding of the standards and students, and being able to meet the needs of their students. At Lucky Elementary and Success Elementary, the scores were little below average, and average at Charity and Victory Elementary. Therefore, the teachers at both the low performing and high performing schools feel that they could do a better job with learning the standards to better serve their students.

The seventh teacher morale sub-scale, Teacher Status, which is described as the respect that colleagues give; was little below average in all schools except for Lucky Elementary which was below average. It is not surprising to find that the teachers in the lower performing school do not respect one another.

The eighth teacher morale sub-scale, Community Support of Education Status, which is simply the communities support; was below average at Success and Lucky, average at Victory, and little above average at Charity. This data shows us that parental involvement at the low performing school is below average, however, it is also below average at a middle performing school and they are still being successful.
The ninth teacher morale sub-scale, Facilities and Services, were average at Charity Elementary and little above average at the remaining schools. This simply shows that the schools do a good job with keeping their facilities cleaned and free from harm. It also proves that the schools are efficient in getting the teachers the supplies that they need.

In addition, the tenth item on the teacher morale sub-scale, Community Pressures, which is the ability to be an upstanding citizen: Success and Charity were below average and average at Lucky and Victory. I find it intriguing that the teachers at the low performing school and the teachers at the high performing school both feel they are ethical and trust-worthy people.

Table 7

Survey Results for Success Elementary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Stanine</th>
<th>Description of Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher rapport with principal.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction with teaching.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rapport among teachers.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher salary.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher load.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Curriculum issues.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teacher status.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Community support of education.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School facilities and services.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Little Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Community pressures.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Average</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

*Survey results for Charity Elementary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Stanine</th>
<th>Description of Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher rapport with principal.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction with teaching.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rapport among teachers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher salary.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher load.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Curriculum issues.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teacher status.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Community support of education.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Little Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School facilities and services.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Community pressures.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Average</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9

*Survey results for Lucky Elementary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Stanine</th>
<th>Description of Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher rapport with principal.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction with teaching.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rapport among teachers.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher salary.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher load.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Curriculum issues.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teacher status.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Community support of education.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School facilities and services.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Little Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Community pressures.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Average</td>
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<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

*Survey results for Victory Elementary*

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<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Stanine</th>
<th>Description of Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher rapport with principal.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction with teaching.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rapport among teachers.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher salary.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher load.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Curriculum issues.</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teacher status.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Community support of education.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School facilities and services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Community pressures.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Average</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Below Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was interesting to find that the C school had 3 Low scores in the areas of satisfaction with teaching, teacher load, and community pressure, whereas only 1 A school had a Low score in teacher load, and the other two A schools did not have any Low scores. I also found it heart breaking that all school averages were low; however, the C school was significantly lower. Then again, this does seem to support my initial idea, that school grade has a relationship with teacher morale.
SECTION FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS

I feel that there are many factors contributing to the variables and outcomes of this study that I did not take into adequate consideration. For instance, I think some additional factors causing stress to teachers at this present time are: pay for performance, the new evaluation system, transitioning to Common Core, and the seeming increase in student behavior issues/disabilities. I think that this study has potential for other studies, such as investigating these issues. For example, why is teacher morale low?

As I read articles from major business companies like Google, we cannot give our employees free haircuts, gym memberships, childcare, or shuttle service to and from work. However, we can inspire, challenge, and give our employees a voice. According to Marissa Brassfield, a writer for the the PayScale Career News, she explains that the secret to Google’s success is depositing the same quantity of effort and time into keeping personnel happy as it does into its inventive products (p.1). We as administrators need to do the same. Our teachers are the farmers plowing our fields. We need to listen to our teachers for they know our crops, we need to give them regular and consistent feedback in a timely manner, and we need to praise them for their accomplishments.

Judgment

The goal of this study was to evaluate the current status of teacher morale at selected elementary schools in one Florida school district. I was curious to find out if there might be a connection between school grade and teacher morale. The primary question for this study was, what is the current status of teacher morale as reported by a sample of teachers from one school district, and is there any indication of a possible relationship between school grade and teacher morale? In reviewing the interviews with
the teachers and the administrators, it is apparent that those serving the lower performing school are negative and unhappy. The administrator at the low performing school does nothing to motivate the staff, in fact, they admit that they are demanding and display their temper frequently. This principal even goes so far to say that they appreciate teachers who are there not just for a paycheck.

Turning to the secondary research questions, here is what I glean from that data. The first secondary research question asked. What do teachers who have high morale report as some of the reasons why they feel like they have high morale? In looking at the data that has been provided teachers with high morale have a sense of voice. They feel that their administration hear them and supports them in the suggestions that they offer. They also feel that all their needs are met at the school. They receive the support they need from the school and also receive any professional development they need at the school as well.

What do teachers who have low morale report as some of the reasons why they feel like they have low morale? What I can see in the data is that they are not being supported by their administration. The teachers at the low performing schools feel as if they have no voice, that their suggestions and concerns fall upon deaf ears.

For teachers who have high morale, what are some of the practices of the school administration they report as contributing to their high morale? My interpretation I draw form the data is that at the high performing schools, morale is high because the administration cares and they listen to their staff. The teachers feel as if they are wanted and appreciated for the job that they do every day.
For teachers who have low morale, what are some of the practices of the school administration of which are reported as contributing to their low morale? From the data, it appears that at the schools with low morale, teachers feel as if they are not appreciated. They feel that they are never told what they are doing well, they are always being told the negative. They feel that there is no purpose to their professional development; they feel as if the meetings are just for compliance.

What are some of the aspects of the school climate that teachers who have high morale report as contributing to their high morale? From my analysis of the data, it appears that teachers at the high performing schools work well with one another. The teachers are able to collaboratively plan with one another, sharing the best practices that have worked well in their room, and learning from one another.

What are some of the aspects of the school climate that teachers who have low morale report as contributing to their low morale? The data leads me to conclude that teachers at low performing schools do not work well with one another. Teachers are forced to plan with one another, which consists of one teacher writing the reading plans, one teacher writing the math plans, etc. and then emailing them to one another. Teachers are not able or willing to collaborate with one another.

Are any of the school climate and administrative practices suggestions attributed by teachers as potential contributions to improving teacher morale? Suggestions that I gathered through the data include trying to uphold accountability while showing the staff that you care and that they are appreciated. Listen to the staff and implement their suggestions, if the recommendation is not appropriate, then administration need to communicate the reason(s) why.
Recommendation

I think that this study has potential for other studies. For example, what factors contribute to low morale? What can schools do to help with teacher morale? In my search on the internet, I have found things such as candy grams, where you give teacher a piece of paper that says, “I appreciate you to PIECES”, and then give them a bag of Reese’s Pieces. I have also found team building activities for the staff to participate in. However, none of these suggestions are research-based. They are merely suggestions on how to pull a staff together.

Every organization has a unique culture. Most have shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which influence people and dictate how they perform their job. I feel that it would be beneficial for all schools to follow these five simple steps to help improve teacher morale. The first is to substitute an attitude of accountability with a tone of innovation. Low performing schools often fixate on what is being done wrong and from those create, non-negotiables; which cause teachers to simply comply. What we should be doing is encouraging them to be creative.

The second is to find model classrooms at your own school site. We all want our teachers to be successful and to observe teachers who are effective. Often times, we send teachers to neighboring schools to observe what they are doing right. We need to find teachers at our own schools that are being effective and start promoting success from within. The third is to find reasons for collaboration instead of forcing collaboration. In low performing schools, teachers do not see the benefits of collaboration. It is up to the administration to find creative reasons on why teachers should collaborate so that the teachers may witness first hand that collaborating is valuable.
The forth, is to Celebrate! At low performing schools teacher feel as if the administration only concentrates on what teachers are doing wrong. Therefore, administrators must find reasons to celebrate, whether it is teacher of the month, attendance for the month, or consistently turning paperwork in on time; we must find reasons to celebrate with our staff.

The fifth is finding the evidence of success. Administrators ask their teachers to make student work visible and to offer the student effective feedback; we as administrators should be doing the same. As we are making our way through the classrooms, if we see something that went well in the classroom, we should jot it down on a little note and give it to the teacher. Knowing that your administration took the extra time to write a little encouraging word means the world to a teacher, just as it does to a student.

**Conclusion**

I feel that there are many factors pertinent to the study that I did not take into consideration. For instance, I think some items that are stressing teachers at this present time include pay for performance, the new evaluation system, transitioning to Common Core, and the seemingly increase in student behavior issues/disabilities.

The school that I currently work for earned 322 points last year, which in the state of Florida is considered a F. However, we did benefit from the one letter grade drop, and therefore, we are a D. However, I have witnessed the significant drop in teacher morale. It is at an all-time low. The school climate is toxic, and if I do not find some way to change it, I do believe that our school grade will remain the same. The time is now to intentionally inspire, challenge, and listen to my staff. I need to listen to our teachers for
they know our children. As an administrator, I understand the imperative of providing my teachers with regular and consistent feedback in a timely manner, and provide opportunities to celebrate little successes, praise teachers for their accomplishments, and listen to their frustrations and anxieties with compassion in an awareness of the stress and challenges they face in their profession.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire
Prepared by Ralph R. Bentley and Averno M. Rempel

This instrument is designed to provide you the opportunity to express your opinions about your work as a teacher and various school problems in your particular school situation. There are no right or wrong responses, so do not hesitate to mark they statements frankly. Please do not record your name on this document.

Read each statement carefully. Then indicate whether you (1) disagree. (2) probably disagree. (3) probably agree. (4) agree with each statement. Circle your answers using the following scale:

1=Disagree  2=Probably Disagree  3=Probably Agree  4=Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Details, &quot;red tape,&quot; and requires reports absorb too much of my time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>The work of individual faculty members is appreciated and commended by our principal.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers feel free to criticize administrative policy at faculty meetings called by our principal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The faculty feels that their suggestions pertaining to salaries are adequately transmitted by the administration to the board of education.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Our principal shows favoritism in his relations with the teachers in our school.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Teachers in this school are expected to do an unreasonable amount of record keeping and clerical work.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>My principal makes a real effort to maintain close contact.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Community demands upon the teacher’s time are unreasonable.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>I am satisfied with the policies under which pay raises are granted.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>My teaching load is greater than that of most of the other teachers in our school.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>The extra-curricular load of the teachers in our school is unreasonable.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Our principal’s leadership in faculty meetings challenges and stimulates our professional growth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>My teaching position gives me the social status in the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The number of hours a teacher must work is unreasonable.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Teaching enables me to enjoy many of the material and cultural things I like.</td>
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<td>Statement</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>My school provides me with adequate classroom supplies and equipment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Our school has a well-balanced curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>There is a great deal of griping, arguing, taking sides, and feuding among our teachers.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Teaching gives me a great deal of personal satisfaction.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>The curriculum of our school makes reasonable provision for student individual differences.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>The procedures for obtaining materials and services are well defined and efficient.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Generally, teachers in our school do not take advantage of one another.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>The teachers in our school cooperate with each other to achieve common, personal, and professional objectives.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Teaching enables me to make my greatest contribution to society.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>The curriculum of our school is in need of major revisions.</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>I love to teach.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>If I could plan my career again, I would choose teaching.</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Experienced faculty members accept new and younger members as colleagues.</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>I would recommend teaching as an occupation to students of high scholastic ability.</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>If I could earn as much money in another occupation, I would stop teaching.</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>The school schedule places my classes at a disadvantage.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Within the limits of financial resources, the school tries to follow a generous policy regarding fringe benefits, professional travel, professional study, etc.</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>My principal makes my work easier and more pleasant.</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Keeping up professionally is too much of a burden.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Our community makes its teachers feel as though they are a real part of the community.</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Salary policies are administered with fairness and justice.</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>Teaching affords me the security I want in an occupation.</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>My school principal understands and recognizes good teaching procedures.</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>Teachers clearly understand the policies governing salary increases.</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>My classes are used as &quot;dumping grounds&quot; for problem students.</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>The lines and methods of communication between teachers and the principal in our school are well developed and maintained.</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>My teaching load at this school is unreasonable.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>My principal shows a real interest in my department.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>Our principal promotes a sense of belonging among the teachers in our school.</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>My teaching load unduly restricts my nonprofessional activities.</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>I find my contacts with students, for the most part, highly satisfying and</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>I feel that I am an important part of this school system.</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>The competency of the teachers in our school compares favorably with that of teachers in other schools with which I am familiar.</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>My school provides the teachers with adequate audio-visual aids and projection equipment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>I feel successful and competent in my present position.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>I enjoy working with student organizations, clubs, and societies.</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>Our teaching staff is congenial to work with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>My teaching associates are well prepared for their jobs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Our school faculty has a tendency to form into cliques.</td>
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<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>The teachers in our school work well together.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>I am at a disadvantage professionally because other teachers are better prepared to teach than I am.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Our school provides adequate clerical services for the teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>As far as I know, the other teachers think I am a good teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Library facilities and resources are adequate for the grade or subject area which I teach.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>The &quot;stress and strain&quot; resulting from teaching makes teaching undesirable for me.</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>My principal is concerned with the problems of the faculty and handles these problems sympathetically.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>I do not hesitate to discuss any school problem with my principal.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Teaching gives me the prestige I desire.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>My teaching job enables me to provide a satisfactory standard of living for my family.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>The salary schedule in our school adequately recognizes teacher competency.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Most of the people in this community understand and appreciate good education.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>In my judgment, this community is a good place to raise a family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>This community respects its teachers and treats them like professional persons.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>My principal acts interested in me and my problems.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>My school principal supervises rather than &quot;snoopervises&quot; the teachers in our school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>It is difficult for teachers to gain acceptance by the people in this community.</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>Teachers' meetings as now conducted by our principal waste the time and energy of the staff.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>My principal has a reasonable understanding of the problems connected with my teaching assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>I feel that my work is judged fairly by my principal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Salaries paid in this school system compare favorably with salaries in other systems with which I am familiar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Most of the actions of students irritate me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>The cooperativeness of teachers in our school helps make our work more</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>My students regard me with respect and seem to have confidence in my professional ability.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>The purposes and objectives of the school cannot be achieved by the present</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>The teachers in our school have a desirable influence on the values and attitudes of their students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>This community expects its teachers to meet unreasonable personal</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>My students appreciate the help I give them with their schoolwork.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>To me there is no more challenging work than teaching.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Other teachers in our school are appreciative of my work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>As a teacher in this community, my nonprofessional activities outside of school are unduly restricted.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>As a teacher, I think I am as competent as most other teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>The teachers with whom I work have high professional ethics.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Our school curriculum does a good job of preparing students to become enlightened and competent citizens.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>I really enjoy working with my students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>The teachers in our school show a great deal of initiative and creativity in their teaching assignments.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Teachers in our community feel free to discuss controversial issues in their</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>My principal tries to make me feel comfortable when visiting my classes.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>My principal makes effective use of the individual teacher's capacity and interest in the school system.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>The people in this community, generally, have a sincere and wholehearted interest in the school system.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Teachers feel free to go to the principal about problems of personal and group welfare.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>This community supports ethical procedures regarding the appointment and reappointment of members of the teaching staff.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>This community is willing to support a good program of education.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Our community expects the teachers to participate in too many social</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Community pressures prevent me from doing my best as a teacher.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>I am well satisfied with my present teaching position.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B
TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Do you feel that your current administrator empowers you and involves you with decisions about policies and procedures? If so, how?

2. Do you feel that your current principal fosters a true open door policy? If so, how?

3. Do you feel that your opinions and suggestions accepted? If so, how?

4. Do you feel that you are supported with instruction and discipline? If so, how?

5. How many days have you been absent this school year? How many last year?

6. Do you feel that there are opportunities for professional development at your school? Please describe.

7. How many years have you been assigned to your current school?

8. What is your reason for returning to teach at this school? Please describe.
APPENDIX C
ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Do you feel that you empower your staff and involve them with decisions about policies and procedures? If so, how?

2. Do you feel that you foster a true open door policy? If so, how?

3. Do you feel that you honor the opinions and suggestions of your staff? If so, how?

4. Do you feel that you support teachers with instruction and discipline? If so, how?

5. Do you feel that your school has an attendance problem with teachers? If so, how?

6. Do you offer opportunities for professional development, here at your school? If so, how?

7. How many years have you been assigned to this school?

8. What do you feel that you could do to improve your school?

9. Do you feel that you enjoy your job? If so, please describe what you enjoy about it.

10. What do you feel is your strength as a leader? Please describe.

11. What do you feel is your weakness as a leader? Please describe.
APPENDIX D
Teacher Survey Informed Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Blackburn

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: An Evaluation of Teacher Morale at Four Elementary Schools: The difference a School Makes

This consent will explain your voluntary involvement in a research project. It is imperative that you read about this project and then choose if you wish to be a volunteer.

NO students or minors are participating in this study.

PURPOSE:
The purposes of this study are: (1) to examine teacher morale (2) to investigate teacher morale and determine if there is a relationship with student achievement.

DURATION:
The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire survey should take fifteen to twenty minutes to complete.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS:
Volunteers will not be reimbursed for their time but could possibly profit from taking a survey of this level by simply taking the time to internalize own morale and what possibly inspires them individually.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions or concerns, you may call Jennifer Blackburn at (863-651-6183) my personal cellphone or (863)-651-6183 my work phone number. You may call Dr. Carol A. Burg, National Louis University, and Dissertation Committee Chair at (813) 491-6109 or cburg@nl.edu; or the chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Christine Quinn, Provost’s Office, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; phone, 312-261-3135; email: Christine.quinn@nl.edu.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Confidentiality for the contributors will be a crucial component for this investigation. These assessments will remain “anonymous” through the project, guaranteeing the obscurity of any and all who contestant. All data from this study will be maintained in a locked safe at my home, and shredded after the completion of the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
The level and benefits of this project have been clarified to me, as well are recognized and accessible. I understand what my involvement includes. Additionally, I realize that I am welcome to ask questions and extract from the project at any time. I have read and copiously comprehend the consent form. I sign freely and willingly.

Print Name: ________________________________
Signature: ________________________________ Date: __________
Investigator’s Name: Jennifer Blackburn
Investigator’s Signature: ____________________ Date: __________
APPENDIX E

Teacher and Administrator Interview Informed Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Blackburn

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: An Evaluation of Teacher Morale at Four Elementary Schools: The difference a School Makes

This consent will explain your voluntary involvement in a research project. It is imperative that you read about this project and then choose if you wish to be a volunteer.

NO students or minors are participating in this study.

PURPOSE:
The purposes of this study are: (1) to examine teacher morale (2) to investigate teacher morale and determine if there is a relationship with student achievement.

DURATION:
The Teacher Interview or Administrator Interview should take thirty minutes to complete.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS:
Volunteers will not be reimbursed for their time but could possibly profit from taking a survey of this level by simply taking the time to internalize own morale and what possibly inspires them individually.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions or concerns, you may call Jennifer Blackburn at (863-651-6183) my personal cellphone or (863)-651-6183 my work phone number. You may call Dr. Carol A. Burg, National Louis University, and Dissertation Committee Chair at (813) 491-6109 or cburg@nl.edu; or the chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Christine Quinn, Provost’s Office, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; phone, 312-261-3135; email: Christine.quinn@nl.edu.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
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VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
The level and benefits of this project have been clarified to me, as well are recognized and accessible. I understand what my involvement includes. Additionally, I realize that I am welcome to ask questions and extract from the project at any time. I have read and copiously comprehend the consent form. I sign freely and willingly.

Print Name: ______________________________________
Signature:________________________________________           Date:_____________
Investigator’s Name: Jennifer Blackburn
Investigator’s Signature:____________________________           Date:_____________
APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Document for PRINCIPALS to Conduct Research at the School Site

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Blackburn

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: An Evaluation of Teacher Morale at Four Elementary Schools: The difference a School Makes

This consent will explain your voluntary involvement in a research project. It is imperative that you read about this project and then choose if you wish to be a volunteer.

NO students or minors are participating in this study.

PURPOSE:
The purposes of this study are: (1) to examine teacher morale (2) to investigate teacher morale and determine if there is a relationship with student achievement.

DURATION:
I will interview up to 2 administrators at the school site, for up 20-30 minutes, I will also need two sessions with the teachers to complete this inquiry. One session is to explain the project to your staff and have them fill out the consent form and take part in the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire. This session should take fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. The second session will be to interview those teachers who are willing to be interviewed. This should take approximately 30 minutes per teacher. I plan to conduct this before or after schools, or during the teachers’ block time.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS:
Volunteers will not be reimbursed for their time but could possibly profit from taking a survey of this level by simply taking the time to internalize own morale and what possibly inspires them individually.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions or concerns, you may call Jennifer Blackburn at (863-651-6183) my personal cellphone or (863)-651-6183 my work phone number. You may call Dr. Carol A. Burg, National Louis University, and Dissertation Committee Chair at (813) 491-6109 or cburg@nl.edu; or the chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Christine Quinn, Provost’s Office, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; phone, 312-261-3135; email: Christine.quinn@nl.edu.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Confidentiality for the contributors will be a crucial component for this investigation. These assessments will remain “anonymous” through the project, guaranteeing the obscurity of any and all who contestant. All data from this study will be maintained in a locked safe at my home, and shredded after the completion of the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
The level and benefits of this project have been clarified to me, as well are recognized and accessible. I understand what my involvement includes. Additionally, I realize that I am welcome to ask questions and extract from the project at any time. I have read and copiously comprehend the consent form. I sign freely and willingly.

Print Name: ________________________________
Signature: _________________________________ Date:____________
Investigator’s Name: Jennifer Blackburn
Investigator’s Signature: ______________________________ Date:________
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:  
A CHANGE LEADERSHIP DISSERTATION

Jennifer D. Blackburn
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education
National Louis University
June 2015
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this change leadership project was to provide teachers with a true understanding of what differentiated instruction (DI) is and how it is used, effectively, in the classroom; this was done through a book study. The project also included the participants to take a pre and post survey, along with a pre and post (non-evaluative) observation. The teachers who participated in this book study realized that their conception of what differentiated instruction was had been construed by their perception.

The surveys and observations were conducted to find out what the teachers knew about differentiated instruction. It was found that many teachers knew the word and what it meant; however, they were not implementing it correctly in their classrooms. Most teachers see DI as providing centers for their students, however it is much more than that. As teacher discussed with their colleagues and reflected on their behaviors in the classrooms, they discovered their own misconceptions.
PREFACE

My name is Jennifer Blackburn and I started my career as an educator in December of 2001. As the years progressed, I found an interest in administration. I went back to school to earn a Master’s of Science in Educational Leadership and I graduated in 2006. In 2007, I was fortunate enough to receive my first administrative position where I have grown as an individual and as a leader. In 2012, I decided to go back to school to earn a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. My goal in receiving this degree is to work at the college to help mold individuals in becoming effective teachers.

Through the years, one of the things I have realized about myself is the passion I have for teachers. I want my teachers to be successful and I want them to have the confidence in knowing how great they are; this is where I believe teacher morale plays a role. I have always believed that a school’s grade was affected by teacher morale. This is where my motivation came for my first dissertation piece. By the end of the study I was pleased to find that teacher morale and school grade did seem to relate to each other. However, what I have also come to realize as an administrator at a low performing school, is that it is not easy to improve morale when it appears there is no morale to begin with.

For my second dissertation project, I wanted my teachers to have a true understanding of what differentiated instruction was and how to implement this strategy, effectively in the classroom. Therefore, I conducted a book study for those teachers who volunteered to participate. The teachers that participated were elated with the knowledge they obtained from the book.
My third dissertation project was a work advocating for a coach for all schools. Some schools – the ones that can afford coaches or are the lowest performing in the district – receive reading coaches, math coaches, and sometimes writing, coaches. However, the coach that I advocated for would be an added coach who is there to support teachers in any manner necessary. Administrators want their teachers to be successful, but due to their other duties, they do not always have the time to invest in teachers properly. Therefore, they need support staff to step in and lighten the load. With the added coach in place, teachers would be able to receive the individualized professional development or modeling needs they need.
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

I just moved to my new school, XYZ Elementary, less than two months ago, however, I have already noticed that Differentiated Instruction (DI) is an issue. As I read Wagner’s book, “Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools,” He refers to looking at change in a systematic way, by using “the 4-C’s – competency, conditions, culture, and context (p.98). Wagner also emphasizes that the objective of this change is to enhance learning and instruction. As I observe, and reflect on what I see in my school, it seems that teachers have a difficult time with providing various assignments within each lesson, personalized for students of different levels of achievement. This is one of the highlights of DI, as described by Susan Allan (2013).

Statement of the Problem

The problem that calls for change in my system is lack of teachers understanding what Differentiated Instruction is and therefore, not using the instruction effectively. The Competencies would be the teacher’s lack of knowledge and the administration’s lack of skill for quality professional development. The Conditions that hold us back from changing is the intense planning that it takes, the time, and the lack of effort from the teachers. The Culture is that there is no clear understanding as to methods for the effective use of DI, and the Context is high remediation and below level students.

Rationale

The reason for selecting Differentiated Instruction as the focus for my change plan is to improve student achievement and my school. The personal connection that I have for this plan is to provide the teachers with the professional development that they deserve. This skill is very important to me. Too many times we allow children to sit in
our classroom and fail due to the lack of understanding. How difficult is it to help those students be successful? Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. Teachers do not have the resources, or the time to be as effective as they could be. I am a strong believer that if our school could help every student be successful, that our scores and learning gains will increase. This is why it is so important to support teachers with good PD training, etc. The students are the stakeholders that will be directly impacted by this style of teaching. By meeting each child’s individual needs, the students will be more successful in the classroom, as well as in society as an adult. Other stakeholders that benefit from this type of instruction are the parents for they will appreciate the fact that their child’s educational needs are being met. When students are successful, they make gains, which cause school grades to go up. When school grades improve, so does the district grade.

Goals

The intended goal for this change plan is to provide appropriate professional development for the staff. The goal is to help educate teachers in what differentiated instruction truly is and how to implement this strategy effectively in the classroom. Teachers believe that if they put their students in groups that they have differentiated. However, teachers need to learn how to read their data to group students more appropriately. Teachers need a better understanding that even the centers that they provide for their students should be differentiated as well. The Plan is to have the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) come and deliver a book study on, “Differentiated Instruction in a mixed ability classroom,” by Carol Ann Tomlinson (2011). This organization can provide the teachers a stipend for the work that they will be responsible
for, outside, their contractual hours. This organization will also lead the discussions and provide the follow up needed for the study. With this new found knowledge, the teachers will have a better understanding on how to meet the needs of every student.

This book has a multitude of valuable information. It spells out clearly what differentiation is, and is not. For example, differentiated instruction is not instruction of the 1970’s, DI is not hectic, it is not another way to group students, and it is not the same for all. What differentiation is, it’s practical, it’s more qualitative, more assessing, multiple approaches, student based, a blend of whole group and individualized instruction, and it is on-going (2011, pp. 3-5).

**Demographics**

The school that I currently lead is XYZ Elementary, under the direct supervision of Jennifer Allen (pseudonym). The school was organized in 2007; however, there were no physical building, just portable classrooms. After being open for one year and serving the community, buildings were being built one at a time. The school was finally completed the spring of last year, 2012. The school consists of 533 students; 10.7% white, 26.3% black, 56.7% Hispanic, 2.3% Asian, .8% Indian, .2% Pacific Islander, 3.2% multicultural. The students that are receiving free and reduced lunch are 91%. The Exceptional Student Education (ESE) involves 11% of our population and the English Language Learners (ELL) encompasses 35% of our student body.

As for school and student data, indicators have dropped dramatically in the past two years. The school grades have drastically varied over the years, in part due to changing state school grade calculations and changes in state testing instruments. Our school grade has ranged from a D in 2008, an A in 2009, an A in 2010, a C in 2011, a B
in 2012, and a C in 2013. Our school’s point value was 416, which is technically a D, however, we benefitted from the one letter grade drop that was put into place before the grades were released.

Table 1

*XYZ Elementary School Grades 2008-2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>School Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When an analysis of the percent of student’s meeting high standards, the data variability becomes better understood by variation in student performance indicators.

Table 2

*XYZ Elementary School Percentage of Students Meeting High Standards 2008-2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>% Meeting High Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>% Meeting High Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>% Meeting High Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note the consistent increases in Reading from 2008, 57%, to 2009, 69%, to 2010, 75%; but then the decline in 2011, 70%, to a dramatic drop in 2012, 47%, and in 2013, 48%. In Math in 2008, 53% were meeting high standards, in 2009, 70%, in 2010, 75%, in 2011, 66%, in 2012, 54%, and in 2013, 39%. In writing the percent of student’s meeting high standards were, in 2008, 46%, in 2009, 58%, in 2010, 87%, in 2011, 61%, in 2012, 73%, and in 2013 it dropped to 38%. In Science in 2008 were 31%, in 2009, 36%, in 2010, 49%, in 2011, 46%, in 2012, 45%, and in 2013, the scores increased to 49%.

As a possible contributing factor to the marked changes in the assessment data, the state of Florida has transitioned from the use of the previous assessment instrument, FCAT, to the FCAT 2.0 platform considered to be of higher academic rigor and challenge for students. This may serve as a partial explanation of the trends. Florida rolled out the standardized FCAT assessment in 1998. By 2010 the assessment was used to rate student performance levels on math, reading, writing and science. School and district grades are based on both student scores and student improvement on the test (gains) from previous years. The updated version of the test, known as FCAT 2.0, was gradually introduced with the final phasing out the original version completed in 2010.

Regardless of the transitions and changes in the assessment instrument, the school performance levels are low. The data listed above clearly demonstrate that no matter what changes were made to the test, and no matter what other variables are considered, we did not do a sufficient job in meeting the needs of our students. In reading from 2011 to 2012, our scores dropped 23%. In math from 2011 to 2012, our scores dropped 12%, and in science our score dropped 1%. These student results are not attributable to increased
numbers of migrant students or ESE students, those demographics will vary from year to year. The student scores are a reflection of our teachers not meeting the learning needs of all students. These scores are ultimately the result of poor instruction.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I feel that our teachers are struggling with Differentiated Instruction. There are many components of DI. I feel that most of our teachers are attempting to address many of them. For example, they demonstrate proficiency in the use of ability grouping and small group instruction. However, they lack the skills, knowledge, and planning time to master and implement differentiated assignments, small group or collaborative pair activities, and DI instructional centers. My goal is to bridge these deficits by sharing some practical instructional DI ideas with the teachers and equipping them with an informational book about DI along with some professional development to assist them to effectively implement their DI endeavors. The ultimate goal is to raise student’s achievement as a result of the increased use of DI best practices in the classroom. With this important piece, DI, I don’t see how we can fail to advance student learning performance measures.
SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 C’S (AS IS)

To map out the current learning environment, I designed an As Is figure as an analysis tool (Appendix A) and developed my vision for what was To Be in a similar comparative figure (Appendix B). This exercise established in my mind the gap between these two states and helped me to begin to identify the specific needs to address in order to move the school from the As Is to the To Be state of effectiveness. To determine what the teachers already know about Differentiated Instruction, I gave them a Pre-survey before the book study that we are going to take. After the study I gave the teachers the same survey to see if any new found knowledge was gained after the book study. For a copy of the pre / post survey, please see Appendix C.

Context

Teachers are always complaining that students just do not get it. However, a big problem is that the teachers are not getting it, either. Teaching whole group is a concept from the past. Students need hands on, one-on-one instruction to be able to understand and produce quality work. Many students are able to conduct themselves in a whole group setting, but some lack the skills needed to be successful and need an extra push. This is where the DI comes into play. The teachers must have the ability to look at their data, read it, understand it, and apply it. Teachers should first start with a mini assessment on the skill or benchmark that is going to be taught. If 80% or more students pass that assessment, then there is no need for whole group instruction. The teacher may simply meet with the students that did not pass the assessment in a small group setting, while the remaining students work on enrichment activities using the skill that they were assessed on.
Many of the students that come to us come with all they have to offer. Unfortunately, they come being at least one year below grade level. Students must see what on grade level material looks like; however, they will not be successful unless the teacher meets them at their level. This is where differentiation comes to play.

**Culture**

John McLaughlin (2003) explains that every organization has a unique culture. Most organizations have common expectations, values, and beliefs, which influence people and dictate how they perform their jobs (p.1). In other words, culture is the reality; it is the patterns, shared assumptions, and interpretations that shape behavior within an organization. The culture at XYZ Elementary is not at its greatest. The students that we serve are from high poverty and the majority of the students come with many street smarts. The students to say the least are a challenge, however, like all students, they can learn. It is up to the teacher to take an interest to find out how the student learns. This is where differentiated instruction comes into action. Not all students learn at the same pace. Some students are naturally good in some skills, where they struggle in others. If a student is proficient in a skill, why would we make that student sit through a whole group lesson? This is where the discipline issues start to occur. Students become bored and disruptive. Most teachers do not have the knowledge to look at data, analyze it, and apply it to their instruction. The other issue is the fact that they do not have a clear understanding of what DI is or what it looks like. Teachers see DI as just being another “buzz word” that will be gone with the next curriculum adoption. DI takes much planning; teachers do not want to invest their time and efforts into something that is going to go away.
**Conditions**

Differentiated instruction, in the beginning, takes an intense amount of planning. Once the teacher knows the needs of each of her students, she will need to make different centers for each of the groups in order for the students to be able to work independently. Even though this task may take time and some effort, the students and the teacher will reap the benefits. While the teacher is working with a small group, the remaining students are working independently or with collaborative pairs on tasks that have been assigned. If the teacher doesn’t take the time to differentiate the assignments, then the students will constantly interrupt her small group to ask questions, therefore, no instruction is being given.

The problem at XYZ Elementary is getting the teachers to understand that differentiation is not just having centers and a small group. In many of our classrooms, I see students working in centers that are not skills based, have no purpose, and struggling students are made to do the same task as the enriched student. Also, in the teacher lead group, the teacher is teaching the same skill to all the groups, the same way. This is not differentiation. When teachers do not take the time and effort to meet their student’s needs, the students suffer.

**Competencies**

Most teachers believe they have the knowledge to group their students appropriately for better responsiveness to their needs. However, what they are missing is the fact that it’s not just about small group instruction; DI is also about centers and assignments. DI is about maximizing the instruction to better serve the students where they are, not where we want them to be.
Administrators also have difficulties with differentiated instruction. Finding the time to have meaningful professional development is a challenge. There is not enough time to have effective professional development during a block, which consists of 50 minutes. By the time the teachers drop off their students and use the restroom, the time remaining for PD is about 40 minutes. The other issue is being able to find a person qualified to provide teachers the necessary training on differentiation. In our district, we must get permission to hire a consultant, most of our PD must be provided by our district coaches, and none of them feel as if they are qualified enough to conduct professional development.

**Conclusion**

Most teachers want to do their best for their students; however, they don’t know that they are not working effectively. My job, as the instructional leader, is to teach them and guide them in the appropriate direction. My objective with this book study is to help the teacher better understand both the meaning of DI and the practice of DI in their classroom.
SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

At XYZ Elementary, for the 2013-2014 school year, our school earned 322 points which is an equivalent to a F. The data collected by the FCAT, indicates that our students are not making the necessary learning gains to improve our school grade. Due to the evident core problem with instruction at XYZ Elementary, it was clear that a plan of action had to occur. Therefore, I felt it was beneficial for our teachers to learn more about differentiated instruction. With the declining school grade, it was obvious that our students’ needs were not being met. Teachers were complaining that the students just did not care and that they did not want to learn, when in fact, the teachers didn’t want to take the time nor the effort to differentiate their centers and tasks to help the students become more successful.

The purpose of this study was to provide teachers with a better understanding of what differentiated is and what it looks like. In order to achieve this objective, baseline data was a prerequisite (Patton, 2008). This data determined the teachers’ current knowledge of DI. I was hoping to increase the teachers’ knowledge and comfort with DI, with their participation in this project.

Participants

The teachers who volunteered for this study were two Pre-K teachers; their combined teaching experience equaled 45 years. I had a new teacher volunteer who was teaching K, and ESE teacher with five years of experience, a 1st grade teacher with 8 years of experience and who had her master’s in Educational Leadership, three 2nd grade
teachers whose combined experience was 35 years, and a 4th grade teacher with four years of experience. The 4th grade teacher was also certified in Math, K-12.

**Data Collection Techniques**

For data collection purposes, I used Google Apps to develop a survey (Appendix C) of differentiated instruction. The survey was emailed to the teachers on August 16, 2013. They had one week to complete the survey. The survey was used to find out exactly what they knew, and did not know about differentiated instruction. I used this data to determine what guiding questions I was going to use during our group discussions. Two observations were conducted; one prior to the book study (August 19-23) and the other was after the book study (September 30-October 4). For a copy of the observation rubric, see Appendix E. The first observation was used to see if the teachers were actually using DI in their classrooms. The second observation was to see if they implemented anything they learned from the book study in their classrooms.

The book study met four times; an agenda can be found in Appendix D. Due to the varying grade levels, teachers met after school. Teachers were guided in a discussion, led by me, using various questions that went along with the book. A copy of the book study questions can be found in Appendix F. Teachers filled out a consent form and was notified that this research will not be a part of their evaluation. I also kept journal notes from each session. The notes do not consist of any names, just comments and thoughts from the participants and me.

**Ethical Considerations**

The major ethical issue with this changed leadership plan was the observation piece. All participants signed an Informed Consent Document for the teacher
observation, Appendix H. It was stressed to the teachers who volunteered, that the observation was in no way, an evaluation. This was extremely important for them to realize, due to the fact that the observation had to be conducted during instructional time. The teachers were also reassured that whatever was discussed in our group was not being recorded, nor shared with the principal. They were also reassured that they would not be looked upon differently for their lack of knowledge. It was stressed to the participants that this study was to enhance their understanding of DI and to help them grow as an educator, we were all learning together from each other. The teachers also signed an Informed Consent Document for the teacher survey, Appendix G and the principal signed an Informed Consent Document to conduct research at the school site, Appendix I.

**Conclusion**

After this study, teachers had a better understanding of what DI is and how to effectively apply the strategy in their classrooms. The teachers were able to form a network with those that served in this book study. The teachers were able to collaborate and share ideas with those in different grades levels.
SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to help teacher better understand what differentiated instruction looks like and how to use it effectively in their classrooms. Most teachers have the best of intentions and believing that they are doing what’s best for their students. Classrooms are becoming more culturally diverse and therefore, differentiation becomes imperative. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2000, 3.9 million students in kindergarten through grade 12 were diagnosed with a learning disability (2005 p. 35). This breaks down to 9 out of 10 teachers, teaching at least three students with Individual Education Plans (IEP’s) (Rock, 2008 p.32).

Differentiated Instruction

Laura Robb states it perfectly when she says, “Differentiation is a way of teaching; it’s not a program or package of worksheets” (2014, p. 1). She goes on to say that DI means that we must know our students and understand the similarities and differences between them to plan appropriately (2014, p. 1). Although most teachers will tell you they know what DI is, typically their idea of DI is ability grouping. This concept is not true differentiated instruction. There are many definitions for DI; however, something that they all have in common is that DI must be flexible and responsive to the student’s needs. Differentiated instruction is a healthy balance of whole-class, small group, and individual instruction. The students are given a variety of methods to produce a product. (Tomlinson, 2001). A great quote comes from Carol Ann Tomlinson in her book, How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms:
Differentiation doesn’t suggest that a teacher can be all things to all individuals all the time. It does, however, mandate that a teacher create a reasonable range of approaches to learning much of the time, so that most students find learning a fit much of the time (Tomlinson, 2001, p.17).

In Tomlinson’s book, “Leadership for Differentiating Schools and Classrooms”, she defines differentiation as a teacher’s responsiveness to a student’s needs (Tomlinson, 2000, p.4). Carol Tomlinson also goes on to say that a differentiated classroom maximizes student growth and individual success (Tomlinson, 2000). We are so busy trying to get students on grade level that we are not meeting their needs, and we are forced to watch them struggle. A great point that was made in an article, “Reach: A Framework for Differentiating Classroom Instruction”, was that a major weakness of traditional instruction is that too many teachers teach to the majority, which is usually, the middle. This leaves students who are struggling, due to their needs not being met (Rock, 2008,). Differentiated Instruction (DI), means to start where the student is, instead of where they should be (Cox, 2008).

Differentiation is a modification of teaching. A teacher must have a strong comprehension of how teaching and learning occur. There are four principles that relate to a DI classroom: (a) a focus on the standards, key ideas, and specific skills in each content area, (b) the receptiveness and ability to respond to the student’s individual needs, (c) integrating pre-test, formative assessments to direct the instruction, (d) the ability to form groups, based on the data from the assessments. These groups will be flexible for they are not based on ability, but the misconceptions that a particular student is missing or lacking (Scott, 2012, p. 2).
During my research, I found an article titled, "Differentiating Instruction: Meeting the Student Where They Are," in which the author shares a few misconceptions that many teachers have on differentiated instruction. One is that with using DI teachers provide students with numerous learning options which assist students in making sense of the skills and concepts; teachers DO NOT write a separate lesson for each student they teach. Another misconception is that teachers do provide the appropriate level of challenge for all students; the teacher does NOT water down the curriculum (2013, p. 1). If teachers would stop teaching to the middle and start meeting the students where they are, our schools would see tremendous learning gains.

**Professional Development**

Differentiated instruction is needed in our classrooms, more than ever before, due to the learning gaps that are occurring. As Koeze states in her dissertation, “Educators who view classrooms as whole entities and do not account for the variances on the levels of readiness with which students enter the room may either over-challenge or under-challenge the learners (2007, p. 3). Teachers need guidance in how this looks and works in the classroom. To serve better the teachers in this area, effective professional development is needed. Just as we should differentiate our instruction for students, we should do also for our teachers. We should analyze what they already know and support what they need (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

During my research, I found a design for teachers to follow; it is not a model for differentiating, however, it could be used as a guide to help teachers. It is based on research-based methods and practices that have been demonstrated to improve student achievement. The writers highlighted this plan in an acronym, REACH; “(a) reflect on
will and skill, (b) evaluate the curriculum, (c) analyze the learners, (d) craft research-based lessons, and (e) hone in on the data” (Rock, 2008, p. 34). Figure 1 represents the steps in the REACH process.

**Figure 1.** REACH model as an adaptable model for differentiated instruction classroom practices change process, based on the work of Rock, 2008, p. 34.

Step One, consists of going through the metacognitive exercise of reflection; as depicted in Figure 1, the exercise consists of reflecting on both a teacher’s will and skill (Rock, 2008, p.34). Teachers should ask themselves some guiding questions, “Do I know the standards? What practices do I tend to rely on? What are my strengths and weaknesses as the instructional leader in my classroom?” After thinking, teachers need to set obtainable goals for themselves and develop a schedule for introducing DI into their classroom.

Step Two is to evaluate. In this step, teachers will be asked to take a deep look at the standards and the test item specifications. They should concentrate on what is being tested and decide how the standard fits. However, in a DI classroom, not all students are on the same level. Therefore, teachers will need to conduct assessments, to find out
where their students are. Examples would be a pretest, formative assessments, and student surveys.

Step Three is to analyze. Teachers should analyze their group of learners and determine their interests, preferences, strengths, needs, and readiness. Teachers must realize that grouping will not be on ability, but on the specific skill that a student is lacking. Groups should be fluent and ever changing.

Step Four is to craft. During this step teachers are going to have to juggle between instruction, remediation, and enrichment. We have to be sure that we are meeting the needs of our struggling students, at the same time, we must ensure that our advanced students are being challenged. Every lesson should consist of an activating strategy, guided practice, and a summary (beginning, middle, and end). Teachers should always have the students participate in whole-group, small-group, and independent work. This means that while students are in small-groups, teachers will need to provide the students with activities to do; this practice is called learning centers. The centers could be done independently, with a partner, or a small group. However, teachers need to remember that each center must also be differentiated.

The Fifth and final step is to hone in on what the data is telling us. Teachers need to be sure they know what they need to assess. It is a waste of instructional time if we are assessing students on information we are not able to use. Effective assessments need to be planned. In addition, teachers need to realize that our curriculum does not always do the best job of hitting all that needs to be assessed; therefore, teachers may need to create their own assessments.
Conclusion

Differentiating instruction is not going to go away in five years as some of our curriculum does. Differentiation is not a passing trend; differentiation is here to stay. It is a unique way to teach students with various learning and behavioral needs. Incorporating DI into a classroom poses a tremendous challenge; however, the practice results in substantive student learning gains. These outcomes are extremely rewarding to see as the students meet their individual goals and become successful.
SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Findings

This project did not go, entirely, as planned. Many obstacles presented themselves along the way. Originally, the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) was scheduled to come in and present the book to the participating teachers and they were going facilitate the book study. However, funds were taken from our school to purchase textbooks and other things needed for the district, which left us no money. In addition, we were instructed that absolutely no professional development was going to be approved, if it consisted of people coming in from outside our district. Therefore, FIN was denied from coming.

Due to the fact that FIN was not coming, we were not able to make it a mandatory training and I only ended up with 10 participants. Two teachers from Pre-K, one teacher from Kindergarten, one 1st grade teacher, three 2nd grade teachers, one 3rd grade teacher, one 4th grade teacher, and one teacher from Exceptional Education (ESE). Although my numbers were low, the teachers were excellent participants and we all had a good time learning from one another. I was the one that conducted the study and I was able to get the district to purchase the books for us.

Surveys

I surveyed 10 participating teachers (Appendix C), asking them a variety of questions pertaining to differentiated instruction. I used Google Docs to upload my survey. The teachers were asked to take the survey prior to the study and then asked to take the same survey at the conclusion of the study.
Out of the 10 surveys that I sent out, I only received 8 back, for a response rate of 80% and a total n of 8. The results of the pre-survey are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Pre-Survey Responses by Question (n=8)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Differentiated instruction is chaotic.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Differentiated instruction is a different way to provide homogeneous grouping.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Differentiated instruction is proactive.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. DI is more quantitative than qualitative.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. DI is managed through assessment.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. DI only allows for one approach to content, process, and product.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. DI is teacher driven.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. DI is a blend of whole group, small group, and individual instruction.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In a differentiated classroom, all assignments should be student selected.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. DI lessons should emphasize critical and creative thinking.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you feel uncomfortable using DI?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you feel that DI improves student achievement?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Have you seen positive results using DI?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you feel that DI is too much work?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Would you continue to use DI, if it was not mandated?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 3, question number one asked the participants if they felt DI was chaotic. Six out of the eight participants said no. Question number two asked if DI was to be grouped homogenously. Homogenous grouping is a grouping of students with similar data. When differentiating groups, we want to focus on students that have similar weaknesses. Eight out of the eight participants said no. It is clear, with this question, that the teachers do not have a true understanding of differentiation.
Question number three asked if DI was proactive and all eight participants agreed that it was. This tells me that the teachers see DI as a strategy that will help improve their students. Question number four asked if DI was more quantitative than qualitative; all eight participants said no. Some people could argue this statement and say that they are equal; teachers use test data and formative assessments, as well as, observations.

Question number five asked if DI was managed through assessments. Four out of the eight participants said no. This is a clear indication that teachers need a better understanding of what DI truly is. Question number six asked if DI only offers one approach to content, process, and product. All eight participants agreed that DI does not offer just one approach. This shows that the teachers understand that DI does require some planning.

Question number seven asked if DI was teacher driven, seven out of the eight participants said no. Teachers have some prior knowledge of knowing that instruction should be student driven by using their data. Question number eight asked if DI was a blend of whole group, small group, and individual instruction. Seven out of the eight participants said yes. This seems to indicate that teachers know the basic structure of teaching in a classroom.

Question number nine asked if all assignments should be student selected and seven out of the eight participants said no. This question verifies that the teachers need more training on students selected assignments. Question number ten asked if DI lessons should emphasize critical and creative thinking. All eight participants agreed that lessons should include critical and creative thinking. This question, at least indicates that teachers do want their students being creative and thinking critically.
Question number eleven asked the participants if they felt comfortable using DI. Six out of the eight participants felt comfortable using DI. This is helpful in knowing that the teachers are not afraid to try something new in their classroom, to help students improve. Question number twelve asked the participants if they felt that DI improves student achievement. All eight participants agreed that DI does improve achievement. This is great to know that the teachers are already aware that DI does work; now I just need to get them to use it correctly. Question number thirteen asked if the participants had seen positive results from using DI and seven out of the eight participants said yes, they had witnessed positive results from using DI. This is hopeful in knowing that the teachers have seen some positive results.

Question number fourteen asked the participants if they thought using DI was too much work. Three out of the eight participants said yes. Teachers realize that DI does work, but they lack the effort that it takes to be consistent with it. Question number fifteen asked the participants if they would continue to use DI even if it wasn’t mandated and all eight participants say yes, that they would continue to use DI. I find this a bit confusing. Teachers previously said that it is too much work, however, with this question they are saying they would use it even if it was not mandated.

Results from the Post-Survey

The results from the post survey, found in Table 4, seem to demonstrate a more positive and knowledgeable teacher perspective on DI than did the responses to the pre-survey.
Table 4

Post-Survey Results by Question (n=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Differentiated instruction is chaotic.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Differentiated instruction is a different way to provide homogenous grouping.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Differentiated instruction is proactive.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. DI is more quantitative than qualitative.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. DI is managed through assessment.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. DI only allows for one approach to content, process, and product.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. DI is teacher driven.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. DI is a blend of whole group, small group, and individual instruction.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In a differentiated classroom, all assignments should be student selected.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. DI lessons should emphasize critical and creative thinking.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you feel comfortable using DI?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you feel that DI improves student achievement?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Have you seen positive results using DI?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you feel that DI is too much work?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Would you continue to use DI, if it was not mandated?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every area improved to 100% of the teachers agreeing, except for question number 14. This question asked if the teachers felt that DI took too much work to prepare. For the pre-survey three out of the eight teachers said yes, that DI took too much work. In the post-survey, that number increased to four out of eight. Teachers know what DI consists of, however, many times teacher do not always use DI with fidelity. I am thrilled to know that all participants now see that DI is driven by the data. Another positive that came from this study was that all ten participants are now
comfortable utilizing DI. Previously one participant did not feel they got the results they wanted from using DI in their classroom; however, after utilizing the strategies we discussed in the study, all ten participants are now seeing the positive results from using DI.

I did not include interviews in this study; however, I wish I had. The discussions that we had during the study were productive, and it was exciting to see such collaboration across the grade levels.

**Observations**

I conducted two observations on each of the eight participating teachers, one prior to the study and then another one after the study. The purpose of the observation after the study was to see if the centers that the teacher had set up for the students prior to the study had changed. In an analysis of the data from the survey and the observations, it appears that the teachers believed they knew more about differentiation than what they were displaying in their classrooms. Table 5 shows the results from the pre and post observations that I conducted.

If we take a close look at the observations, 3 out of the 10 were meeting with their small groups as they were asked, however, the instruction was the same for every group; differentiation did not exist. Two out of the 10 teachers met with me on a weekly basis to discuss struggling students and what new strategies they could use to meet their individual needs. Only half of the participants really knew their students’ strengths and weaknesses or their backgrounds.
Table 5

*First and Second Observation Comparisons by Observation Standard*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Statement</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher analyzes their performance and assessment data and uses that as a basis for providing specific levels of DI.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher uses anchor activities, such as learning centers and research based computer programs, to reinforce the standards and/or extended learning.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher simultaneously provides intense, maintenance, and enrichment instruction to rotating groups of students during individual or group activities.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher has met with me on a weekly basis to redirect the instructional focus and to ensure that the interventions and strategies, implemented, are to provide remediation for those students that are deficient and enrichment for the proficient students.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The instructional practices demonstrate consistent knowledge of students’ learning levels.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The instructional plans are aligned with the Common Core Standards, instructional outcomes reflect rigor and offer frequent opportunities for application.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Scaffolding, prompting, and probing techniques are used when questioning. Students are provided activities in which they must show, tell, and explain.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lesson delivery includes collaborative pairs, distributive practice, and summarizing.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The teacher uses a variety of methods to check for understanding, gives the appropriate feedback, or uses scoring rubrics to establish student expectations.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Observation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The instructional time is well managed and not wasted.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Observation</td>
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<td>Second Observation</td>
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At the first observation, three out of the 10 teachers were aligned with the Common Core standards. At the second observation, the number increased to 7 teachers. Two of the teachers that fell under the needs improvement range were the 2 Pre-K teachers; they have standards and a strict curriculum that they must follow from a federal mandate, which is a circumstance that is beyond my control. The third teacher that obtained a rating of “needs improvement” is a 1st year teacher who is trying to survive her first year of teaching and is struggling to understand the Common Core standards herself.

**Interpretation**

As I analyzed the data that I collected, it was evident to me that teachers were simply doing things that we expected of them for compliance and not for fidelity. Prior to the study, teachers were just creating their lessons by following the curriculum maps that are provided by the district; the teachers never took into consideration their students learning needs. In short, teachers were covering the curriculum, instead of teaching to mastery. Another indication of compliance, was with the activities that the teachers would have the students complete. The tasks were not purposeful, skills based, or even close to being aligned with the Common Core Standards; the task were simply given to the students to keep them busy and quiet.
SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

In order for true change to take place in our organization, I had to find a way to help teachers understand that a students’ level of development was not their fault. Meaning, that the student is not in control of how fast or slow they are able to learn a particular skill or task. We have to stop the complaining, for it changes nothing and we must stop making excuses because complaining and excuse making is just prolonging the failure, it’s not solving the problem. Under my direction, teachers have learned how to pull data reports and how to group their students according to that data to drive their instruction. The culture at XYZ Elementary lacks a sense of expectations; therefore, I have modeled, for the teachers, high expectations; I feel that if I expect more from them then they will in turn expect more from their students. All teachers are now aware of what differentiated instruction is, and what that looks like in the classroom. The reading coach and myself, presented data to each grade level and asked them to form groups according to the data. When then assisted each grade level in coming up with activities for each group to participate in, as well as, differentiated center activities. My reading coach then modeled, for each grade level, what a reading block should look like utilizing DI. Unfortunately, I have teachers on staff that has the knowledge to do what is asked, however, they lack the ability to put that knowledge into practice.

All teachers, PreK through 4th grade, will utilize centers and small groups in their daily instructions during Reading and Math. It will be expected that the teacher give a pre-test before each new skill is taught, and those students who pass that skill with an 80% or higher will be asked to complete an acceleration piece for that skill, while the rest of the class is taught the skill.
Teachers will take advantage of their planning time by planning collaboratively with one another. All of our classrooms have similar demographics, and therefore, teachers can plan activities together, that will benefit their students. Planning effectively together and using differentiated instruction with fidelity will increase student’s achievement.
SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

As part of my “TO BE”, teachers will be asked to meet with me to discuss their small group data every nine weeks. This will allow us to meet in a non-threatening environment where the teacher will feel free to express him or herself. This time will give me a better understanding as to why the teacher made the decisions that she or he did. It will also give me the opportunity to coach or guide the teachers as needed.

Teachers will also meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) to discuss strategies and other ideas that are working on in their classrooms. Teachers will be asked to observe model classrooms. During this time, they will be asked to take notes, come up with ideas that they can use in their classrooms, create a deadline as to when they will have the strategy set into practice, and lastly they will be asked to complete a reflection piece. In the reflection, the teacher should ask themselves what they could do to be a better instructional leader for their students.

Once a month, the Reading Coach will meet with each grade level. According to the needs of the grade level, she will model for the teachers, help teachers with their data, or help teachers group their students appropriately. The Reading Coach will also observe a struggling teacher and give them effective feedback.

The administration will uphold their high expectations; they will do daily walk throughs to ensure that differentiation is taking place in every classroom. As the administration is going through classrooms they will ask students what they are learning for that day, four out of the five students that are asked, should be able to answer the question. If not, the teacher will receive a Needs Improvement on their evaluation for communicating with students.
Conclusion

I feel very certain that differentiated instruction is the key piece to a student’s educational success. I feel that if teachers take the time to learn their students and meet their individual needs, that not only will the students flourish, but so will their scores. A baby does not learn to walk over night, nor does a student learn how to read or write. Everyone learns at a different pace and in a different style. Fortunately, some of our students have parents who are capable of helping their children at home, while other parents are unable to read; and that is okay. The higher students should not be criticized for their experiences, they should be challenged; while the lower students should not be punished for their ignorance, they should be taught!
References


APPENDIX A
The 4-C’s (As-Is Analysis) Chart

- Context
  - High remediation and below level students

- Culture
  - No clear understanding as to how to effectively use differentiated instruction

- Conditions
  - Intense planning
  - Time
  - Management
  - Lack of effort

- Competencies
  - Teachers lack of knowledge of DI
  - Administration lacks skills & time required to present quality PD

Teachers are not using Differentiated Instruction effectively
APPENDIX B
The To-Be (Vision of Success) Chart

- Teachers will have a clear understanding of ALL the components pertaining to DI
- Teachers using their common planning time effectively and efficiently
- Teachers will gain more knowledge on DI
- Admin will find quality PD for teacher enhancement
- Increase in student achievement

Context
- Increase in student achievement

Culture
- Teachers will have a clear understanding of ALL the components pertaining to DI

Conditions
- Teachers using their common planning time effectively and efficiently

Competencies
- Teachers will gain more knowledge on DI
- Admin will find quality PD for teacher enhancement

Teachers understand and effectively implement Diversified Instruction
APPENDIX C
Differentiated Instruction in One Elementary School: A Change Leadership Dissertation
Pre and Post Teacher Survey (Will be posted in Google Docs)

1. Differentiated instruction is chaotic.
   Yes or No

2. Differentiated instruction is a different way to provide homogenous grouping.
   Yes or No

3. Differentiated instruction is proactive.
   Yes or No

4. Differentiated instruction is more quantitative than qualitative.
   Yes or No

5. Differentiated instruction is managed through assessment.
   Yes or No

6. Differentiated instruction only allows for one approach to content, process, and product.
   Yes or No

7. Differentiated instruction is teacher driven.
   Yes or No

8. Differentiated instruction is a blend of whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction.
   Yes or No

9. In a differentiated classroom, all assignments should be student-selected.
   Yes or No

10. Differentiated instruction lessons should emphasize critical and creative thinking.
    Yes or No

11. Do you feel comfortable using DI?
    Yes or No

12. Do you feel that DI improves student achievement?
    Yes or No

13. Have you seen positive results using DI?
    Yes or No

14. Do you feel that DI is too much work?
    Yes or No

15. Would you continue to use DI, if it wasn’t mandated?
    Yes or No
APPENDIX D
Book Study Agenda

February 13th – Teachers will participate in the survey
February 13th & February 14th – Observation 1
February 19th – Discuss the Intro-Chapters 3
February 26th – Discuss Chapters 4-7
March 5th – Discuss Chapters 8-11
March 12th – Discuss Chapters 12-The Final Thought
March 17th & 18th – Observation 2
March 18th – Take survey again to see what was gained

Teachers: Please note that due to the different grade levels that are represented, we will have to meet after school. Thank you for assisting me in this study and I am excited about learning from you!!!
### APPENDIX E

#### Observation Rubric

Teacher ____________________ Date ___________

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<th>Effective</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Teacher analyzes his/her performance and assessment data and uses that as a basis for providing specific levels of DI.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Teacher uses anchor activities, such as learning centers and research based computer programs, to reinforce the standards and/or extended learning.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Teacher simultaneously provides intensive, maintenance, and enrichment instruction to rotating groups of students during individual or group activities.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Teacher has met with me on a weekly basis to redirect the instructional focus and to ensure that the interventions and strategies, implemented, are to provide remediation for those students that are deficient and enrichment for the proficient students.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>The instructional practices demonstrate consistent knowledge of students' learning levels.</td>
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6. The instructional plans are aligned with the Common Core Standards, instructional outcomes reflect rigor and offer frequent opportunities for application.

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7. Scaffolding, prompting, and probing techniques are used when questioning. Students are provided activities in which they must show, tell, and explain.

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8. Lesson delivery includes collaborative pairs, distributive practice, and summarizing.

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9. The teacher uses a variety of methods to check for understanding, gives the appropriate feedback, or uses scoring rubrics to establish student expectations.

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10. The instructional time is well managed and not wasted.

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APPENDIX F

Differentiation Book Study Group – 2/26/2014

Chapter 4

1. How do you know the degree to which students feel respected, safe, and welcomed in your classroom?
2. What indicators do you see in your classroom that “gotcha” teaching is alive and well? That teaching for success is a valued goal?
3. How would you help students move from defining “fair” as treating everyone alike to defining it as making sure everyone gets what he or she needs to grow and succeed? What challenges might you face along the way? How would you address them?

Chapter 5

1. What do you see as the pros and cons of the classroom sketched out in this chapter for the full range of learners? For the teacher as a professional?
2. Based on your ideas and experiences, what would be a logical and feasible next step for you to take in crafting your classroom to be more effective in addressing the needs of academically diverse learners?

Chapter 6

1. What do you see as the most important “next steps” for you to take in making your classroom more academically responsive? What support would be helpful to you in that process?
2. Review the 17 guidelines for managing a differentiated classroom suggested in the chapter. What can you add to each in the way of concrete suggestions based on your experiences? What other guidelines would you add to the list?

Chapter 7

1. What are the key questions you believe students would ask you about differentiation? What specific responses and steps might you take to help them join you in establishing and maintaining an effectively differentiated classroom?
2. What key questions do you believe parents would pose about differentiation? What responses and steps would you need to take to help them understand your goals initially? As the year progresses?
3. What might you do to rebuild the trust of parents who feel their students have frequently been ineffectively served in school?
4. What might you do to establish the trust and partnerships of parents who stay away from school because they themselves have not felt welcomed or accepted in school?
Differentiation Focus Group – 3/5/2014

Chapter 8

1. What indicators do varied students give when tasks are not appropriate for their readiness?
2. Make a list of approaches you can think of to help learners who struggle succeed with materials, tasks, and products so that they experience more success and less frustration.

Chapter 9

1. What approaches do you currently use to learn about students interests? Do you use this information in your teaching?
2. Take a look at the 8 instructional strategies suggested in the chapter to invite students to link their interests with the requirements of curriculum. In what specific ways might your use of one or more of these strategies to draw on student interest in your classroom?

Chapter 10

1. Think about the student you teach. In what ways do you see gender influencing how students respond in the classroom? In what ways do you see culture influencing learning? (Be sure to think about both majority and minority cultures.)
2. Give examples of students of a given gender or particular culture who generally do not respond in the classroom as do peers of the same gender and/or culture.

Chapter 10

1. What approached do you currently use to understand students’ learning preferences? Do you use them in your teaching?
2. Take a look at the instructional strategies suggested in this chapter to encourage students to work in preferred learning modes. In what specific ways might you use one or more of the strategies to help students learn more effectively?
Chapter 11

1. What is the potential difference between an “activity” and a “sense making activity?” Why is it important to make sure you’re differentiating a sense making activity rather than just an activity?

2. The chapter offers several instructional strategies for differentiating content. Which of these might you use (and when) to enhance learning for some of your students? What other strategies for differentiating content might you add to the list?

Chapter 12

1. How do you decide which instructional strategy is best suited to particular learning goals in your classroom?

2. Share a scenario from your classroom which, like examples in the chapter, shows how you differentiate based on student readiness, interest, and/or learning profile.

Chapter 13

1. Explain the difference between process and product as this book uses the terms.

2. Look at Figure 13.1 and the explanation that accompanies it. What modifications would you make to the figure as you think about how you plan for powerful student products?

Chapter 13

1. Which of the suggestions for helping struggling learners develop effective products have you successfully used? What other suggestions would you add to the list based on your experience?

2. Which of the suggestions for helping advanced learners develop meaningful and challenging products have you successfully used? What other suggestions would you add to the list based on your experience?
Chapter 14

1. If someone from a “parallel universe” who knew nothing about our traditional approaches to grading, but did understand learners and learning, were to visit our schools, what do you think he/she would find logical and helpful about the way we grade?

2. Think about how grades work for a student who has a learning disability, who speaks little English, who finds many school subjects very difficult. Now, think about that student over a period of years. What positive and negative roles do grades play in that student’s development as a learner and a person?

Chapter 15

1. Think about a student who is advanced in your class. Now think about that student over a period of years. What positive and negative roles do grades play in that student’s development as a learner and a person?

2. Generate a list of descriptors for how you feel grades should be used. How can you get closer to that in your classroom? What do you feel the effects would be if you were able to achieve your idea?
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Blackburn

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: Differentiated Instruction in One Elementary School: A Change Leadership Dissertation

This consent will explain your voluntary involvement in a research project. It is imperative that you read about this project and then choose if you wish to be a volunteer.

NO students or minors are participating in this study.

PURPOSE:
The purposes of this study are: (1) What are the teachers perceptions of DI at one elementary school? What is their current level of understanding of DI?

Duration:
The survey is located in Google Docs and will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS:
Volunteers will not be reimbursed for their time but could possibly profit from taking a survey of this level by simply taking the time to internalize their understanding of differentiated instruction and how they could improve their instruction.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions or concerns, you may call Jennifer Blackburn at (863-651-6183) my personal cellphone. You may call Dr. Carol A. Burg, National Louis University, and Dissertation Committee Chair at (813) 491-6109 or cburg@nl.edu; or the chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Generosa Lopez-Molina, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Faculty Development, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; phone, 312-261-3135; email: glopezmolina@nl.edu

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Confidentiality for the contributors will be a crucial component for this investigation. These assessments will remain “anonymous” through the project, guaranteeing the obscurity of any and all who contest. All data from this study will be maintained in a locked safe at my home, and shredded after the completion of the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
The level and benefits of this project have been clarified to me, as well are recognized and accessible. I understand what my involvement includes. Additionally, I realize that I am welcome to ask questions and extract from the project at any time. I have read and copiously comprehend the consent form. I sign freely and willingly.

Print Name: ____________________________________
Signature: _____________________________ Date: ____________
Investigator’s Name: __Jennifer Blackburn___________
Investigator’s Signature: __________________________ Date: ____________
APPENDIX H

Teacher observation: Individual Participant

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT – TEACHER OBSERVATION

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Blackburn

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: Differentiated Instruction in One Elementary School: A Change Leadership Dissertation

This consent will explain your voluntary involvement in a research project. It is imperative that you read about this project and then choose if you wish to be a volunteer.

NO students or minors are participating in this study.

PURPOSE:
The purposes of this study are: (1) What are the teachers perceptions of DI at one elementary school? What is their current level of understanding of DI?

Duration:
The observation will take 45 minutes. Feedback will be giving during you block time that should take approximately 5 minutes.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS:
Volunteers will not be reimbursed for their time but could possibly profit from taking a survey of this level by simply taking the time to internalize their understanding of differentiated instruction and how they could improve their instruction.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions or concerns, you may call Jennifer Blackburn at (863-651-6183) my personal cellphone. You may call Dr. Carol A. Burg, National Louis University, and Dissertation Committee Chair at (813) 491-6109 or cburg@nl.edu; or the chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Generosa Lopez-Molina, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Faculty Development, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; phone, 312-261-3135; email: glopezmolina@nl.edu

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Print Name: ______________________________
Signature: _______________________________ Date: ____________

Investigator’s Name: __________________________
Investigator’s Signature: ____________________ Date: ____________
APPENDIX I

Informed Consent Document for PRINCIPALS to Conduct Research at the School Site

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Blackburn, Doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa Florida, and Assistant Principal at Laurel Elementary School.

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: Differentiated Instruction in One Elementary School: A Change Leadership Dissertation

This consent will explain your voluntary involvement in a research project. It is imperative that you read about this project and then choose if you wish for your school participate.

NO students or minors are participating in this study.

PURPOSE: The purposes of this study are: (1) What are the teachers perceptions of DI at one elementary school? What is their current level of understanding of DI? (1) to examine teacher morale (2) to explore teacher morale and investigate if there is a correlation with school grade.

DURATION: The survey is located on Survey Monkey and will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The observation feedback will take approximately 5 minutes as well.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS: Volunteers will not be reimbursed for their time but could possibly profit from taking a survey of this level by simply taking the time to internalize their understanding of differentiated instruction and how they could improve their instruction.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions or concerns, you may call Jennifer Blackburn at (863-651-6183) my personal cellphone. You may call Dr. Carol A. Burg, National Louis University, and Dissertation Committee Chair at (813) 491-6109 or cburg@nl.edu; or the chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Generosa Lopez-Molina, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Faculty Development, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; phone, 312-261-3135; email: glopezmolina@nl.edu

CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality for the contributors will be a crucial component for this investigation. These assessments will remain “anonymous” through the project, guaranteeing the obscurity of any and all who contest. All data from this study will be maintained in a locked safe at my home, and shredded after the completion of the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: The level and benefits of this project have been clarified to me, as well are recognized and accessible. I understand what my involvement includes. Additionally, I realize that I am welcome to ask questions and extract from the project at any time. I have read and copiously comprehend the consent form. I sign freely and willingly.

Print Name: __________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________

Investigator’s Name: _____ Jennifer Blackburn______________

Investigator’s Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________
PROVIDING ON-SITE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS FOR TEACHERS: A POLICY ADVOCACY DISSERTATION

Jennifer Blackburn
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education
National Louis University
March, 2014
ABSTRACT

This Policy Advocacy Dissertation (PAD) addresses the need for on-site professional development with the help of a coach at every school site. Much of the training that goes on at a school falls on the administrations, however, with the everyday demands of running the facility it is difficult to meet the needs of the teachers. The most important people on our campus, the people who most directly impact our students and student achievement are the teachers and they deserve to be supported.

This policy seeks to support teachers with another person on campus who can offer them guidance in a non-evaluative way. This person would be offer them help in classroom management, direct instruction, or ideas for centers. The coach would also conduct trainings, on-site, to meet the needs of the teachers.

It is my goal that with a coach on every school campus, that will able to conduct, on-site, professional development that the teachers will feel supported. I feel that when the teachers needs are being met, we will see a rise in student achievement.
PREFACE

I decided to advocate for a coach for the purpose of this policy advocacy paper. Being an administrator is a demanding job, and being able to do every aspect of my job effectively is a formidable challenge. The people who suffer the most from any inadequacies are the teachers. The most important people on our campus, the people who most directly impact our students and student achievement are the teachers, consequently, their support is a priority as crucial components of student success. Unfortunately, I spend most of my day dealing with discipline, unhappy parents, and many unplanned urgent duties. Teachers merit more attention and professional support, especially in consideration of the fact that they are held increasingly accountable for exacting student performance expectations and increasingly higher learning gains on the part of all students. In order for classroom teachers to obtain the crucial support they deserve and require, my vision is that a teacher trainer is provided as a full time staff person on every school campus to function as an accessible coach and deliverer of professional development. These professionals will be available to observe instruction and other classroom practices, identify individual teacher strengths and deficits to target specific professional development needs, teach model lessons and support integration of highly effective pedagogical practices, coach teachers to higher and higher levels of performance and provide appropriately targeted professional training and other support as deemed necessary.
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science over a consecutive 6-year period .........................................................................12
SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

I have been an assistant principal for 7 years. Every year we are faced with multiple faculty position openings for which highly qualified teachers are sought. However, due to our location and the demographics of the school, there is a limited pool of applicants, and it is difficult to find quality teachers willing to take on the challenges associated with our student population. Therefore, we must hire new and inexperienced teachers who are in need of great support. The Florida School Indicators Report (the most recent data available is for the 2008-2009 school year) reports that the average number of years of experience for our staff is 6.70 years as compared to the county school district’s average of 11.62 and the state level average of 12.13 years of experience. The principal and I have great intentions of supporting inexperienced teachers, providing them with a mentor and holding monthly training sessions for them; however, this plan is rarely followed through upon, due to the unscheduled interruptions and other urgent matters occurring throughout the day. Some examples of these disruptions to our good intentions include the following typical events: leaving campus to follow the ambulance to the hospital because we are unable to reach the parent, attending to angry parents who want answers right away, covering classrooms because there is no qualified substitute to take responsibility for the class for a staff member who has taken leave for the day, and addressing student disciplinary issues, just to name a few. Due to the unexpected events that take place during the day, we the administrators, find it difficult to get into the classrooms to provide the crucial support that we feel professionally obligated to supply to our teachers.
The large school district under consideration in this study has implemented a new, rigorous teacher evaluation system. If a teacher receives a rating of Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory on their evaluation, the professional development system is automatically designed to provide the teacher with access to pertinent professional training videos to watch in order to address the areas in which they need improvement. This systematic response has been a tremendous help, and as an initial response to performance deficits has given the administration some time back that we can effectively use elsewhere. However, this does not sufficiently supply all the support that a new teacher needs or desires. A faculty member who is new to the teaching profession has need of comprehensive support; this support requires staff time, responsiveness, and coaching which includes assistance in meeting higher and higher levels of pedagogical performance. New teachers need to observe master teachers; they need to be observed in order that their areas of need may be identified and addressed; they require training in the systems that we use at our school; they need trainings on instructional and student behavior management strategies that they can use effectively in their classrooms, as well as training on best practices instructional strategies such as collaborative pairs, team building, and higher order thinking questioning. This is the depth and breadth of support that the administration feels obligated to provide, but unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances and the limitations of the school day, we are unable to provide the necessary, extensive support that new teachers require and deserve. I see this as a contributing factor in new teacher performance failures resulting in diminished student performance learning gains and the failure to meet gains that are expected for the year.
In the Florida Leadership Standards, standard 4 focuses on faculty development. It is up to the leader to generate the professional learning for the school, to evaluate the staff and to serve their instructional needs, and to provide them with the necessary resources to help them be successful (FLDOE, 2014). It is the leader’s role and purpose to ensure that their staff is supported and effective. However, time and resources are an issue. Therefore, my recommendation is to provide every school with a coach. This person’s sole job is to be sure that the teachers have the necessary training and support they need to be effective and thereby help their students show learning gains. The coach will function as a teacher trainer and coach. They would be trained in every area identified as needed by the school and faculty. As a specified professional development and teacher performance support staff member, this resource person would set up as a leader of professional performance advancement and conduct all necessary trainings.

**Introduction to the Problem**

As an administrator trying to do the best job I can to support my teachers, I find myself struggling. Teachers work diligently for our students, and their administrative leaders should consistently support them responsively and effectively. However, due to circumstances that arise, an administrator is pulled in many different directions. We have the best of intentions; however, the actual follow through leaves much to be desired. In the past 7 years, our school grade has gone from an A to a F. Our demographics have not changed; however, our staff turnover rate is extremely high. Last year alone, we were faced with the need to hire 15 teachers for a staff of 50, a 30% staff turnover. In addition, last year, one of the 3rd grade classrooms had an unacceptable progression of five different teachers as the classroom instructor throughout the year. The original teacher
for the class had neck surgery and was not released from care as soon as she had thought she would be, therefore, we had to put a substitute in that position. What followed was in part a result of our difficulty in locating qualified staff and partially the result of our county school systems procedures and standards. In order to secure a long-term substitute position, a sub must have a bachelor’s degree. If our school system is unable to find a person of that quality, then the substitute may not stay in a substitute position longer than 10 days. Our system was unable to find a qualified sub, and so we had to pull our Science Resource teacher to fill the position. Due to our school location and the demographics of the school (which will be clarified later), experienced teachers are not willing do drive this far. Therefore, the teachers who are available tend to represent those who have poor performance records who are often transfers or new and inexperienced teachers. In both instances, the transfer and the new teachers are in need of a great deal of professional support.

My vision is to have a full-time staff member who is devoted full time to teacher support. This person would not be an evaluator; their job would be to identify and support the needs of the teachers. This would include setting up and conducting all trainings, setting up observations, identifying individual teacher professional performance needs, providing coaching, modeling lessons, and working closely with the administration.

**Critical Issues**

**Environment of Accountability**

School accountability is a high priority concern for schools. Within the current high stakes testing environment, we have to be sure that we are well informed and using
our resources strategically. Our challenge is to demonstrate that each student subgroup is making gains. In order to be responsive to this school accountability environment, the entire faculty must be cognizant of the indicators involved in the formulation of school grades. Teachers must be aware of the unprecedented impact within the high stakes-testing environment that certain student population groups will have on the school grade. This information is useful for the strategic alignment of resources and effort to effect the greatest over all educational outcomes. The teachers are expected to know which of their students are going to count for FCAT in terms of the school grade; the number of testing cells into which each student will fall; and they are responsible of making sure that the students demonstrate learning gains in light of the number of cells into which they fall.

For instance, a 5th grade student who has limited English, but has been in the country for more than two years, will fall into six cells overall for Reading, Math, and Science, and then the ELL subgroup for Reading, Math, and Science. If this one student does not make gains, this student's scores will affect six different cells. Although we aspire to provide the best instructional environment possible for all students, these highly weighted student scores are of special concern for administrators both in terms of the high needs of the students and in terms of the allocation of resources. If a class of 22 students who fall into the category of highly weighted are being taught by a new and inexperienced teacher who is performing inadequately, imagine what a drastic effect this could have on these high needs students learning gains and overall on our school’s grade. Although teachers are the ones who are ultimately held accountable for the work they do in the classroom each day, we are obligated to provide support that adequately improves their instructional performance and the subsequent student learning gains.
School History and Demographics

The school that I currently lead is Lake Elementary (pseudonym), under the direct supervision of Jennifer Allen (pseudonym). The school was organized in 2007; however, there were no physical buildings, just portable classrooms. After being open for one year and serving the community, buildings were being built one at a time. The school was finally completed the spring of last year, 2012. This drawn out process of establishing the physical plant of the school may have a bearing on the foundational establishment of the school community identity and morale. Between uncomfortable portable classrooms and construction distractions, faculty and students both had additional environmental stresses of potential detriment to performance.

The school enrolls 812 students; 10.7% white, 26.3% black, 56.7% Hispanic, 2.3% Asian, .8% Indian, .2% Pacific Islander, 3.2% multicultural (2013). The percentages are presented in Figure 1.

![Pie Chart](http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/)

Figure 1. Demographic Population Percentages (n=812). Data source Florida Department of Education, School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/
The percentages of students who are receiving free and reduced lunch according to the 2013-2014 School Accountability Reports published by the Florida Department of Education are 53%. The minority rate of the school student population is 90%.

![Minority Students](image)

*Figure 2. Percentage of minority student population. Data source Florida Department of Education, School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/*

The Exceptional Student Education (ESE) involves 11% of our population, and the English Language Learners (ELL) population encompasses 35% of our student body.

![English Language Learners](image)

*Figure 3. Percentage of English Language Learners enrolled in the school. Data source Florida Department of Education, School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/*
School Performance Data

As for school and student data, these have dropped dramatically in the past two years. As presented in Table 1, our school grade has ranged from a D in 2008, an A in 2009, an A in 2010, a C in 2011, a B in 2012, and a C in 2013. This school year our school’s point value was 416 out of 800, which is technically a D; however, we benefitted from the revised regulation that a school may drop no more than one letter grade increment from one school year to the next; this modification to the school grading process was adopted soon before the grades were released. The state department of education calls this the “one-letter-grade-drop protection”.

When we analyzed the percent of the students meeting high standards, a better understanding of the school grade ratings became clear.

Table 1

School Grades and Students Meeting High Standards by Content Area by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Grade</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C (D)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>Math</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *The school benefitted from the “one-letter-grade-drop” protection implemented by the state department of education. Data source is the Florida Department of Education’s School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/
Figure 4 demonstrates the erratic nature of these percentages of students meeting high standards by content area for the school.

Figure 4. Line chart of the percentages of students meeting high standards by content area by year over a consecutive 6-year period. Data source is the Florida Department of Education’s School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/

In reading in 2008, 57% were meeting high standards; in 2009, 69% of our students met high standards; in 2010, 75% met high standards; in 2011, 70% met high standards; in 2012, 47% met high standards; and in 2013, 48% of our students met high standards. The downward trend of these percentages can be seen using a linear trend line function as presented in Figure 5.
Figure 5. Linear trend line for the percentage of students meeting high standards in reading over a consecutive 6-year period. Data source is the Florida Department of Education’s School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/

In the math performance scores, there is a similar downward trend though just as erratic. In 2008, 53% of our students were meeting high standards; in 2009, 70% met high standards; in 2010 75% met high standards; in 2011, 66% met high standards; in 2012, 54% met high standards; and in 2013, 39% of our students met high standards. Again, as in reading, the math trend toward lower performance can be observed using a linear trend line as depicted in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Linear trend line for the percentage of students meeting high standards in math over a consecutive 6-year period. Data source is the Florida Department of Education’s School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/

For the writing test results, the percentages show an even more erratic progression over the six sequential years. The percentage of our students meeting high standards in
2008 was 46%; students who met high standards in 2009 were 58%; 87% met high standards in 2010; 61% met high standards in 2011; 74% met high standards in 2012; and then in 2013 the percentage of our students meeting high standards dropped to 38%.

Figure 7. Linear trend line for the percentage of students meeting high standards in writing over a consecutive 6-year period. Data source is the Florida Department of Education’s School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/

In Science, the percentage of our students who met high standards in 2008 was 31%; in 2009, 36% of our students met high standards; in 2010, 49% met high standards; in 2011, 46% met high standards; in 2012, 45% met high standards; and in 2013, the percentage of our students meeting high standards increased to 49%. Although the linear trend is not steep, the student performance at 49% is dismal and not acceptable.
Figure 8. Line chart of the percentages of the students meeting high standards in science by year over a consecutive 6-year period. Data source is the Florida Department of Education’s School Accountability Reports, accessed through http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/

In the 2013-2014 school year’s Lowest 300 Performing Elementary Schools school grades report, the state has identified the school as one of the lowest 300 elementary schools based on the reading achievement and learning gains points earned in the school grades model. Specifically, preliminary points for reading achievement and for reading learning gains were summed for each elementary school, and the schools were ranked from lowest to highest based on the summed points value for the two components.

**Recommended Policy and Envisioned Effect**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 brought many obstacles to our school system. With the demand for performance and accountability at an all-time high, many schools were unable to keep their high standards. As the accountability process becomes more demanding each year for our schools, it is imperative that we support our teachers and help them to be effective and successful in their classrooms. I feel that by schools adding a Teacher Trainer position to their staff, teachers will be able to be more successful and productive. This teacher trainer person will be able to support the teachers in their areas of their specific need. The professional development will be more effective
because it will be differentiated to meet the needs of each individual teacher. I believe that with this support, schools will see an increase in student achievement, which in turn might cause their school grades, teacher morale, and community support to increase.

From my experience, in the school district that I am currently working, if a school does not perform well, the administration is moved; and, in some cases, even demoted. To me, this is unfair. The school I currently work for is “technically” an F school with only 322 points out of 800 possible points; however, this is only thanks to the restriction to one letter grade drop, and therefore, because of this restriction, in 2013 we are for the 1st time rated as a D school. If our school had been designated as an F school, additional assistance would have been provided by the district, however, as a D school, our district gives us no extra support. Additional staffing is provided, coaches, both reading and math, for schools that are second time D’s or first time F’s. Interventionists, teachers who work strictly with at risk students, are also funded for these schools. My school was promised a coach; however, for multiple reasons, the district decided that they were unable to provide this position for us at this time. With the little amount of Title I funds we had left, we were able to hire a coach in November.

With the new demands of the Florida Standards, and teachers not being comfortable with them yet, this 2014-2015 school year has been a challenge. It’s not easy finding the time to unpack all the standards, allow teachers the time to make phone calls, use the restroom, check agendas, adjust their groups according to the data, and be sure they have time for their families at home. Teachers are under paid, underappreciated, and over worked. It is time that we get the support that we need and deserve! With a teacher trainer in every school, this person will be able to take the
feedback they receive from administration to develop trainings that will benefit the staff or individuals in need. Training will be more meaningful, and not just another “sit and get” that wastes teachers time.
SECTION TWO: NEEDS ANALYSIS

Administrators have a tough job. We have to be the instructional leaders of our organization, when most often we ourselves have not taught the content expected of the teachers. For example, my principal and I are expected to show our teachers how to unpack the new Florida Standards; we should be knowledgeable enough to answer any question that the teachers may have. This becomes extremely difficult, when we are trained the day before we are asked to train our teachers. Not to seem immodest, but I consider myself a smart and educated young woman, but even I am not confident enough to present training on these new standards to our teachers, simply because I have not taught them. I feel that I have to fake it, and that is not good enough in my book. Neither I, nor any other administrator that I know, wake up in the morning expecting to fail. We all strive to do our best; however, life in an elementary school happens. We have a challenging population of students who require more than usual guidance and care. For example, I am responsible for kindergarten children that do not like being in class, so they walk out. I do not have sufficient personnel available to go and chase them; therefore, it is my job. I have students that habitually throw tables and chairs when they do not get their way, again, not enough personnel, so I have to go and calm the child down and get him or her to clean up the room so that the rest of the students can return to class. I have students who are being bullied; in response, part of my responsibility is to complete a 10-page investigation form, along with the procedure of interviewing all named witnesses. These investigations can take up to 10 days, depending upon the severity, and I average about one a month to pursue. On top of this, when an angry parent comes to the office, demanding to speak to someone, that person is me. I have to
stop what I am doing to attend to the person in need, which I am happy to do; however, these urgent matters absorb major chunks of time away from the obligation I have to support my teachers who are in need. In all honesty, with all that happens on campus throughout the day, there are many days that I do not even get into classrooms. This is not fair to my teachers; I am setting them up for failure. I cannot do this alone; I need help!

I feel that a coach can give me the help and support that I need. This person would be strictly there to work as a support for the professional needs of the teacher. Whether the need involves classroom management, differentiated instruction, or even setting up the classroom environment to support student success—whatever the need, the coach would be available, accessible, and able to provide teacher support.

**Education Analysis**

This policy is a passion of mine. It is my belief that if teachers are not supported and happy, they will not produce in the classroom. In her article, Dara Barlin states, “For more than a decade, clear and consistent research has shown that the quality of teachers is the most powerful school-related determinant of student success” (2010, p.1). When administrators support good teachers with high quality strategies, they can become great teachers and this will ultimately raise student achievement. Furthermore, Florida administrators are held to ten leadership standards (FLDOE, 2014) for which we are held accountable. Standard 2 focuses on student learning. The leader is to build a support system that makes student learning a priority. Standard 4 is focused on faculty development. It is the administrator’s duty to ensure that the faculty that is employed is equipped with the instructional strategies needed for the population they serve.
Lower performing schools should receive more support, in order to increase student achievement. With FCAT being a test of the past, and now schools are being assessed on a new test that we know nothing about, the only thing we can do is to teach the standards. Teachers need support with unpacking the standards and truly understanding what each one is asking of them. Habegger and Hodanbosi mention in their article that professional development should be job-embedded, addressing the daily issues they face in their classroom and should be aligned with standards, curriculum, and assessments (2011). A coach would be able to assist with this task.

Social Analysis

This policy will allow teachers to work with another person on staff that is not an evaluator. Teachers would be able to confide in this person, as a mentor. This coach would be safe, a person in which they could rely on for instructional strategies and not be worried about being judged or criticized. The coach would work closely with the administration. The administrator would know the data of the school and each individual teacher, so that the administrator can better serve the teacher. As Michael Fullan and Jim Knight state, “Next to the principal, coaches are the most crucial change agent in a school” (2011, p. 50).

The district and the schools should work collaboratively on needs. Instead of the school board sitting around a table and disbursing the money, it would be nice to be asked what it is that we need. Data is important, however, so is support. If we could get a teacher trainer for each school, this would lead to increases the data results.

The coach will facilitate trainings that the teachers have voiced that they need, or trainings for areas where it has been observed they are in need of a particular service.
This trainer will not just be working with new teachers, but experienced teachers as well. Sometimes, our teachers that have been in the system for many years have a more difficult time with change; a teacher trainer can help with this. Concerning the need for coaches in an accountability-laden educational environment, Fullan and Knight state,

When a system is heavily laden with accountability-driven reforms, it’s difficult for an effective education system to evolve. Schools need less blatant accountability and testing and more capacity building, team learning, learning across schools, and transparency of results and pedagogical practice—the very things that coaches are good at (2011, p.53).

Fullan and Knight reiterate, in this quote, the need for more support in our schools. They have stated that coaches have the time and the ability to provide the training that our systems need to be more successful.

**Political Analysis**

A major issue that teachers do not like to admit is that some teachers are truly unsure as to how to effectively support their students. Teachers are not sure how to read the data to know what the areas of need are for their students. This is where the teacher trainer can assist. Another item to keep in mind, politically, is that with this coach on board, teachers and students will be supported the way that they should be, consequently causing students achievement to rise and ultimately the school grade to elevate. With school grades on the rise, this will help the community and neighboring districts take notice.

A teacher’s livelihood is all about them keeping up with the times like learning new strategies to keep the students engaged so they can learn and be successful adults;
this, in turn, makes the parents happy. If teachers are not able to keep up, their craft will suffer. With a coach on board, they will be able to support the needs of every teacher.

**Economic Analysis**

This policy will cost money, however, in the end the district should see the return on investing in teacher trainers. Each school will need a teacher trainer position, for each school is unique to its own demographics. Due to each school being distinctive, so will the professional development that the school will implement. When a teacher transfers into a new school, they may or may not have had the training needed to serve the students they will be instructing.

There would not be an expense on materials; however, hiring coaches for every school would require more personnel. According to the No Child Left Behind Briefs, Title II money is to be used for teacher and principal preparation. It states, “Title II monies are designed to rectify the problems of large numbers of students being taught by teachers with inadequate content knowledge and preparation in the subjects they are teaching” (NCLB Action Alerts, p.1). Therefore, hiring coaches for each school site would be putting good use to Title II money.

**Moral/Ethical Analysis**

This policy will be just and equal for all; teachers will be supported in their areas of need. Each year a teacher’s need may change depending on the demographics of their class or the grade level that they are teaching. However, with a coach on board, all needs would be met. This plan will affect students, regardless of ethnicity, disability, etc., for the teacher will receive the support needed to meet the needs of all his/her students.
According to the Code of Ethics & Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida (FLDOE, 2014), “The educator's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential. The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity” (p.1). The Code of Ethics even states that it is the duty of a professional educator to seek professional growth. Many times, our teachers are blind to what they really need. They live in their “own little world,” better known as their classroom, and they fail to see their inadequacies. A teacher trainer can help them see their flaws, and can help them to improve those weaknesses.

The Florida Leadership Standard #4 (FLDOE, 2014) is focused on faculty development. In fact, the standard confirms that the professional learning should be directly linked to the school improvement. It also requires us to identify the instructional proficiencies of our organization and provide them with the training necessary to make them successful, (p. 2). Schools having access to a coach will lighten the load for administration. It will allow the trainer to keep teachers on track with the School Improvement Plan and keep them focused on student achievement.
SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

As the demands of teachers become more challenging, there is more need for support. As it is now, teachers are asked to teach standards that they are not familiar with, and teach the difficulties of a test they have never seen, while keeping parents informed of how their children are performing. Many teachers become burned out and give up because they do not feel supported. Providing each school with a teacher trainer will not only supply confidence within the teachers, but also build capacity within the school building.

According to The Met Life Survey, 49% of administrators state that it is “very challenging”, to provide professional development opportunities and the guidance that the teachers deserve (2013, p.15). Job satisfaction among principals has declined over the past 10 years, due to the amount of stress that their job entails and the lack of support they are given. If this is happening with administrators, how do our teachers feel? One teacher as quoted in an article written by Jennifer Maciejewski, says, “I had so little support, by January, I was burnt out and stopped handing back homework, stopped asking for help, and stopped caring” (2007, p. 1). We need good teachers who care about their students, who strive to do better, and ask for help. Administrators, unfortunately, are not always available, so there needs to be a person on campus that teachers can go to for advice. A coach would take this role.

Goals and Objectives of the Policy

Developing ways to support and retain teachers is a dilemma that affects parents, students, taxpayers, and policymakers, not to mention the new teachers themselves (Brewster & Railsback, 2001, p. 6). The goal is support, not just for beginning teachers,
but all teachers. Unlike most professions, a teacher’s life is ever changing. The way a teacher teaches in the beginning of the year could change drastically by the end of the year due to the dynamics of the classroom. The objective is to meet the needs of all teachers. As I have said before, a teacher’s need could change from year to year. Last year a teacher may have had an excellent class, this year she may have received an Emotional Behavior Disturbed (EBD) student, and she has never experienced behavior such as this; therefore, she would need a support that she has not needed before. It is of no fault of the teacher that she is not sure how to handle the situation; she has never been faced with such severe behaviors before. Having a coach on campus can help with these types of situations. The trainer will be able to assist with ideas or advocate for assistance.

The goal of my proposed policy is to first make sure that the teachers are provided with support that administrators are not capable of providing due to job limitations. Many teachers are not comfortable coming to their evaluator for assistance; with a coach on campus, their sole purpose of the trainer is to be available for teachers, and to assist in any way necessary. The district is going to have to find highly qualified teachers who have training in many areas and who have the ability to work well with adults. The district will also need to be able to train these individuals in many key areas, such as classroom management, lesson planning, differentiated instruction, the Florida standards, and more. These individuals need to be further professionally rounded in their field. Fullan and Knight say it best when they said, “Successful coaches combine instructional expertise with knowledge about school wide and districtwide strategies (2011, p.51).

The coach serves several purposes. The first is to build a community of teachers that are engaged in studying and perfecting their craft. Second, the trainer will cultivate a
shared language needed for the common study of new knowledge and skills. Third, the coach will conduct follow up observations or conduct more assistance with the new acquired knowledge (Showers, 1985, p.19).

**Stakeholders Related to the Policy**

According to dictionary.com, the definition of a stakeholder is someone who has an interest in something. For this policy, the stakeholders would consist of the teachers, the coaches, and the principal. Each group of people plays an important role in the success of school and the students that they instruct.

**Teachers**

The stakeholders who bear the immediate effect of this policy are the teachers. The teachers will improve in their practice, skills, and strategies, as well as, increase student achievement (Stacey, 2010, p.1). Teachers will be less likely to leave while being supported; therefore, teacher turnover will decrease. Teachers will have an increase in the clarity of their thinking through reflection. They will have an improved wellbeing and self-confidence. Teachers will become better problem solvers and will have the ability to become better decision makers. Their communication skills will improve as they build relationships through the discussing of shared practices. Teachers will express a more positive attitude toward professional development; they will learn how to be self-managers, as well as, self-learners (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2005, p.1).
Coaches

The coaches will be well-trained individuals. These educators will work one on one with classroom teachers. Their main goal is to provide guidance, training, deliver new ideas, observe lessons and provide feedback, and model for teachers. Habegger and Hodanbosi tell us that, “The key to a successful coaching program is building a trusting relationship between the teacher and the coach” (2011, p.36). The professional trust that the coach and teacher will build will enable productive conversations about specific concerns that the teacher may be facing in his or her classroom.

Principal

It is the responsibility of the principal to be the instructional leader of the organization. However, many administrators have been out of the classrooms for many years, and therefore are not in touch with the new teaching strategies being used to engage our young and active students. Administrators want their teachers to teach well and they understand the urgency to improve their organizations. The principal will need to be knowledgeable in the strategies that the trainer will provide. The principal will also need to collaborate with the coach to be sure that the mission and vision of the school are still being upheld. Most importantly, it is imperative that the principal supports the trainer. Whatever the coach needs to help make the teachers more successful, the principal should make every effort to accommodate.

Rationale for the Validity of the Policy

It is evident by most school grades that educational organizations are in need of additional support. I am not aware of one principal who would turn down the offer to have someone on staff whose sole job is to meet the instructional needs of the teachers.
Therefore, the objective of supporting teachers is validated by the lack of teacher morale,
lack of time that administration can devote to the cause, and school grades.

Morale

“Teacher job satisfaction is declining…teacher satisfaction has dropped to the
lowest level it has been in 25 years” (Markow, 2013, p.12). The MetLife Survey is a
publication concerning the American teacher and the challenges of school leadership. In
this survey it reports that, “teacher satisfaction has declined 23 percentage points since
2008, from 62% to 39% very satisfied,” and “half (51%) of teachers report feeling under
great stress several days a week” (Markow, 2013, p.14). Teachers are given more
demands each year, with very few demands being taken from them. They have parents to
keep happy, lesson plans to write, assessments to give, and they have to interpret the data
from those assessments to form differentiated groups, all while trying to keep a group of
active students engaged and excited about their learning. If teachers do not feel
supported in this tough and demanding job, they either become burned out or move on to
another school to fill their void.

Responsibilities

A principal should be a change agent in the learning community, all while
juggling duties, discipline, parents, putting out fires, and trying to do walk throughs.
Principals want their organizations to be successful; however, there is not time in the day
to give the teachers the support that they deserve. According to the MetLife report it
states, “75% of principals agree that the job of the principal has become too complex”
(Markow, 2013, p.23). The support of a coach would give the principal ease of mind,
knowing that teachers are being supported and receiving the training that they need and deserve.

**Accountability**

School accountability is at an all-time high. With the demands of the new standards and wondering what the new test will look like, many administrators are nervous about student learning results and school grades. The school that I am currently leading is a first time D, however, point wise we are an F with 322 points. Trying to keep up with walk-throughs and other demands of my job, I do not feel that I am being the effective instructional leader that I could be. Once my walk-through is completed, I input the information into proper database, and am able to give the teachers the appropriate feedback; however, the downfall is with the follow through and the professional development that is needed to support the teachers efficiently.
SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

In every policy, there can be found pros and cons. In this advocacy piece, the need for a teacher trainer at every school site is a win-win. Teachers will receive the training they need and never have to leave their campus; and the students will achieve.

Pros

Supporting new and experienced teachers is critical for student achievement. If a teacher is unsure of how to teach a skill, then that teacher is failing her students. This is not the fault of the teacher; it is the administration that needs to be in classrooms making sure that their teachers are being successful. We ask teachers to be sure that all students are learning and being successful, yet many administrators do not follow those words of advice and leave their teachers to sink or swim. In an article that I was reading by Jennifer Maciejewski, she states that within three years, 30% of teachers move on to a new profession due to the lack of support that they receive (2007, p. 1) What administrators need to keep in mind is that throughout a student’s college career, they are taught about curriculum, theories, and some strategies. However, what they are not taught is how to teach new vigorous curriculum content to struggling, average, and advanced students all at the same time, while trying to manage student behavior as well, not to mention working with the students that are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP’s) or students with limited English capacity.

In Maciejewski’s article on supporting teachers, she quotes Barnett Barry who is the founder and CEO of a research-based advocacy organization called Center for Teaching Quality. He states, “If there’s anything that we probably could do and should
do to improve the quality of teaching and ensure the stability of the workforce, it is to provide better, more substantive support for our newest teachers (2007 p.2).

From my readings, it is clear that high teacher turnover is costly. In a study conducted by Gary Barnes, Edward Crowe, and Benjamin Schaefer, they looked at the cost of teacher turnover in five school districts. What they found was that teacher turnover cost $76 to $128 million per district (p.89). Teacher turnover leads to a less stable learning environment, high demands on teachers and other staff personnel, and then increased expenses for recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers, not to mention the time and effort that goes into this process (Brewster, 2001). Also from my findings, Carol Carpenter quoted Sanders and Rivers is saying that on average, the gains for struggling students that receive instruction from an effective teacher are 53% higher than students who do not (Carpenter, 2008). Carpenter also quoted The NAAC Report from 2003 states that, “with embedded professional development, such as that provided by an onsite mentor, students gains will be measured at 93%” (Carpenter, 2008). The key elements to this process would be extensive training for the mentor teachers, classroom-based mentoring which to include formative assessment on how to monitor student data and be able to analyze to use for effective teaching. A medium sized school district in California provided actual data to show how the initial cost of the mentors did make a difference. The first year the district took a significant expense, costing the district over $6,000 per teacher. However, after five years, not only did student achievement results improve, the district generated an investment of over $8,000 per teacher (Carpenter, 2008).
Cons

Time is a major issue when it comes to professional development. Most schools only have 50 minutes for their block time. By the time the teachers use the restroom and make it to the training room, there is only about 40 minutes remaining; this is not a sufficient amount of time to be effective. Many teachers are not able to stay after school, and if they do, their contract says that we must pay them; then we come into the issue of not having the money to pay them. However, even if we did have the money to pay the teacher to stay after school, or come in on a Saturday, most teachers have families at home for whom they need to tend.

Another concern would be that the teacher trainer would be misused. In the article by Fullan and Knight, they discuss a coaching workshop that they facilitated, where 50 coaches attended. They stated that, “75 percent reported that they spent less than 25 percent of their time coaching”, (2011, p. 51). Instead, they ordered supplies, filed cumulative student data folders, and made copies. The expectations of the coach need to be specific and the administration needs to be supportive and honor those guidelines.

Another issue would be finding educators who are qualified and have the ability to work with adults. Teaching a group of eager students is very different from trying to educate teachers who are burnt out and negative. A coach, who is thrown into a school with no training, is a coach with no direction. Fullan and Knight tell us again that in a district they were working with, the coaches and principals were not trained, and therefore, “the coaches’ efforts prompted resistance, with little change occurring in classrooms” (2011, p.52). We have to be sure that we approach the teachers with respect
and be mindful not to tear them down, but to build them up. To many teachers, it seems that they are only told what they are doing wrong; therefore, we must reassure them that they are doing many great things in the classroom, but with this simple training, we can influence teacher performance and impact classroom achievement.
SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In order for this policy to work, the supporting teacher is going to need extensive training. They will need coaching training, and to be trained in all curriculum areas. The teacher trainer would need to devise a professional development calendar, as well as conduct observations to assist teachers with their individual needs. An observation checklist would need to be created and a follow up plan put into place. The supporting teacher would meet with teachers during their planning time, as needed, and every Wednesday after school. Therefore, teachers would need to be paid for staying past their contractual time. The supporting teacher would also need to create a progress monitoring piece.

Training for Coaches

Trainers will need extensive training in how to coach. Beverly Showers explains that coaches should be trained in the observation and feedback process (1985, p.21). The feedback that is given will determine whether the recipient will act on the feedback. Robyn Jackson (2014) tells us that there are four types of feedback that can be given, each are unique, and when used appropriately true change can take place. Diagnostic feedback identifies the root problem. It clarifies the reason for the struggle and illuminates the expectations for their performance. Prescriptive feedback is designed for teachers who have tried a given strategy and not been successful. This feedback offers the teacher different options. Descriptive feedback is the most common, for it is the easiest. This type of feedback is basically explaining to the teacher what went well and what is needed to improve; this feedback is not effective for teachers who are struggling. This should be used more for self-motivators and those who are reflective. The last type
of feedback to be mentioned here, is micro-feedback, a strategy that is used for teachers who are already model teachers, or those who have some expertise. These teachers are in need of just a little tweaking. This type of feedback could be misused as well, if the coach is not comfortable with potential resistance from the teacher.

Not only is training important, but it is also imperative to network with other coaches and learn from others experiences. Therefore, coaches will meet with their district colleagues once a month. During this time, the coaches will be trained based on a needs assessment that they had previously filled out and be able to have meaningful conversations, and have the opportunity to collaborate with other coaches around the county and the state.

**Staff Development Plans**

The needs of the teachers will vary. Therefore, observations will be conducted first. Then, the teachers need to be prioritized by need. The teachers that are in the greatest need will be assigned to the coach. The coach will assess the needs and form a professional development calendar around the needs of the teachers. Due to the fact that the teachers may not be in the same grade level, teacher will be paid to stay after school every Wednesday afternoon. It is imperative that teachers realize how important professional development is and how it can improve student achievement. A book I read by Hayes Mizell reminds us that,

Even experienced teachers confront great challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, changed laws and procedures, and student learning needs. Educators who do not
experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers (2010, p.9).

Each year a teacher is faced with a set of new challenges, from new standards, to a student with a disability of which the teacher is not familiar. It is the teacher’s responsibility to meet the needs of all students so additional training may be needed.

**Program Budgets**

The money that will be used for this policy will come from Title II dollars. As stated before, Title II funding is to be used for teacher training and recruitment. Title I dollars will also be used for any professional development needs that the coach will need. Title I will also pay for the teachers to stay after school or those that attend trainings on Saturdays. The actual coach will be paid through Title I funding.

**Progress Monitoring**

The coach will check in with their teachers every day. The coach will use the data from their observations to determine whether the intervention is working or not, if not, the trainer will assist the teacher in trying a new strategy. Once a week, the administration will observe the teacher(s) that are under the care of the coach to see if improvement can be detected. Student data will be monitored on a weekly basis to look for progress as well.
SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

A policy assessment plan should be included to monitor progress and evaluate the outcomes and results of the policy if it is implemented. The assessment plan also describes how individuals or groups responsible for the policy’s implementation and administration will be held accountable and what report procedures will be followed. Aspects of stewardship responsibility are being drawn here.

The supporting teacher will be required to meet with administration every Friday afternoon, or as needed if it concerns a more serious measure. At this meeting, the administration and supporting teacher will debrief as to what they observed throughout the week. At this time, the committee will also discuss what needs to be done for the following week(s), to better support those teachers in need. Below is an outline of the standards and the benchmarks that a coach and the administration team should follow as a compilation and general summary outline proposed by this study as a simplification of best practices research (Support for new teachers through high-quality mentoring and induction, p. 8):

STANDARD 1.

Coaches and the administration team should have a clear vision.

a. The amount of teachers that a coach should have at one given time.

b. Be sure that expectations are clear and precise.

c. Be sure that the resources needed, are readily available.

d. Be sure that the expectations and the support are equally balanced.

STANDARD 2.

Coaching should be appropriate to the circumstance.
a. Coach must be a self-motivator.

b. Coach will seek support from their peers.

c. The gradual release model is implemented appropriately with the teachers.

d. Training for teachers is implemented when needed.

e. The coach will receive the necessary funding to provide for the teachers.

STANDARD 3.

Coaches should be prepared to coach.

a. Coaches should be aware and understand the expectations.

b. Coaches receive the appropriate training in how to be a coach.

c. Coaches receive advanced training in all subject areas.

d. Coaches receive advanced training in classroom management.

STANDARD 4.

Data will be collected, analyzed, and evaluated from the coaches.

a. Coaches will be required to keep a log of who, what, when, and where they provided coaching.

b. Coaches and the administration team will provide feedback on the effectiveness.

These standards are guidelines that the coaches should use to stay focused and for accountability purposes. If a struggling teacher receives the supports and services they need and are still not being effective, that teacher will need to be let go. With the documentation that the coaches will use, the administration will have the evidence they
need to uphold the termination. As mentioned in the standards listed, the coach will keep a log of when, where, who, and a brief description of the activity or skill provided (APPENDIX A). In addition, in order to serve the teacher(s) better, the coach will need to do some non-evaluative observations. This form can be found in APPENDIX B. In order to be sure that the coach is fulfilling the needs of the teacher(s), APPENDIX C is a form that will allow the coach and the teacher to converse and assess what is working and what still may need to be addressed.
SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENT

This is a policy that needs to be put into action. This policy is not only doing what is right for the teachers but also, it is what is best for the students. This policy supports the people who work hard, are dedicated, and are in need of a little guidance; these individuals are our teachers. The effects of this policy outweigh any negativity it may encounter. Teachers will be supported with the newest strategies. They will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with an individual that is not an evaluator, but someone who has their best interests at heart. This is an opportunity to build relationships and network with other individuals with the same needs. Most teachers want to be successful and have the desire to do what it takes for their students to achieve. However, sometimes we do not always know the best way to obtain our desired goal. A non-evaluative individual (a coach), as a site based teacher support position, will have the focus and the capacity to observe the needs of the teacher. Then, to form a plan of action, and follow through on that plan, with time allowance for training and guiding the teacher to reflect on classroom practice and research-based strategies, and modeling and coaching during teacher implementation of more productive classroom practices and instructional methods. As a comprehensive support process, the role of the coach provides the support required to meet our obligation to our profession, our students, our parents, our communities, and, especially, to our dedicated teachers. When the teacher is supported, the students will be supported as well, for the teacher will have a better understanding as to how to meet the needs of all students. Once the teachers’ confidence is restored and professional performance is increasingly advanced to higher and higher levels of effectiveness, the students will soon reap the benefits in learning gains demonstrated by
higher test scores and improved school performance indicators. The administration at the school will be able to breathe easier as well knowing that their faculty has the necessary support to function successfully and fulfill their professional potential. Administration wants their teachers to be successful, however, in light of the reality of the demands placed on the school administrators’ time and attention, there is little hope that need for consistent and impossible to be able to meet everyone’s needs. With a coach in place, they will be able to get into the classrooms as guides and support the teachers in a non-threatening way.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Coaches Time Log

Each coach is responsible for keeping accurate documentation.

Send the completed log to administration by _______________________.

School ______________________________________
Coach _______________________________________
Teacher ______________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Brief Description of Activity or Skill</th>
<th>Modeled or Observed</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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Total number of hours and minutes spent with the teacher.

Hours _______ Minutes ______
Coach signature: _________________________________
Teacher signature: ________________________________
APPENDIX B

NON-EVALUATIVE OBSERVATION

To be used by the coach to collect data as requested by the teacher.

School ______________________________________
Coach ______________________________________
Teacher ______________________________________

Type of observation:    ______ Teacher observes Coach
                         ______ Coach observes Teacher
                         ______ Teacher and Coach observe another teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Conference</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives for the lesson being observed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define the activities that the teacher will use to assess if the objective was learned.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observation Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Conference</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What went well?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What needs improvement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the objectives answered, effectively?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This form is to be used to guide the conversation and to discover the needs of the teacher and what actions will be taken to address those needs.

Teacher: ___________________ Date: ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is working</th>
<th>What is not working</th>
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<tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s next steps</th>
<th>Coaches’ next steps</th>
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Next Meeting
Date: _______ Time: _______ and Focus: ______________________