

Fall 2012

Leadership Responsibilities Associated with the Academic Achievement of At-Risk Students: A Study of the Perspectives of National Distinguished Elementary School Principals in an Era of Ubiquitous Educational Accountability

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Leadership Responsibilities Associated with the Academic Achievement of At-Risk
Students: A Study of the Perspectives of National Distinguished Elementary School
Principals in an Era of Ubiquitous Educational Accountability

Mirvetk Tonuzi

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Seton Hall University
2012

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing body of research documenting the effects of leadership on student learning. “Good schools” are headed by principals that have vision and act on that vision. A case can easily be made that quality leadership in schools is vital to the effectiveness of a school. This study, which replicates Valenti’s 2010 work, is undergirded by a framework advanced by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL identified twenty-one categories of specific behaviors relating to principal leadership that have a statistically significant relationship with student achievement. Valenti’s (2010) work explored the perspectives of national “distinguished” elementary school principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the Department of Education, as they relate specifically to the academic achievement of elementary students while meeting accountability measures. It is important to note that in both Valenti’s study and this study’s research, the perspectives of National Distinguished principals have been solicited, given that these principals have been recognized for making superior contributions to their schools and communities, including setting high standards for instruction, student achievement, and lifelong learning. This study differs from Valenti’s by specifically addressing the at-risk elementary school student. This population warrants greater exploration given that they comprise a growing portion of school enrollments, and their poor educational performance has significant consequences, not only for themselves, but for the economy and society-at-large.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Barbara Strobert, Dr. Eunyoung Kim, and Dr. Anthony Colella for guiding the completion of my work. Their approach was couched in academic rigor, scholarly questioning, examination, and critique.

Foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation committee mentor and university advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert. They say that there are two ways of spreading light: To be the candle or the mirror that reflects it. Dr. Strobert has been the candle that spread light for me in this journey. With unfailing and tireless guidance blended with dedication, enthusiasm, keen insight, and overall commitment, she has guided my hand and inspired my thoughts. I am genuinely appreciative. Revision after laborious revision was made more palpable given her bright, focused, and determined outlook for the final work. I respect her opinion and appreciate her guidance. I feel very fortunate to count her in my inner circle of supporters.

Thank you, Dr. Kim, for all your constructive suggestions and outlook. Tweaking the chapter contents and drawing out the statistical relevancy of the study was markedly more commonsensical with all your input. Our communications were always rich with insightful counsel. You have truly been a guiding force in this process.

Further I would like to thank Dr. Anthony Colella for graciously agreeing to be a reader on my committee. His tireless support in doing so is greatly appreciated.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Miftar and Naile Tonuzi. and all my siblings. I am forever indebted to them for their support as I worked to complete this study.

I credit my father with fostering commitment to hard work. Growing up, I remember him always working two and three jobs to support our family. He always did so without complaint. He forged ahead, insisting that getting an education should always be at the helm of our focus. Coming to the United States with suitcase in hand and carving out a life for his family is testament to his strength, intelligence, and determination. As an educator in the old country, he knew the value of an education and was insistent that we all become college-educated. He toiled through jobs that did not reflect his learned nature in order to meet family obligations. *So much personal sacrifice!* I'm proud of him.

My mother, with her munificent nature, intelligence, and sophistication, made sure we stayed focused on learning. Day after day, month after month, she tirelessly sat with each of us and guided our learning as we practiced our skills. She always persevered. With her kind words and loving nature, we wanted to make her proud. She would often say, "Keep going. Tomorrow will be a better day." I often reflect on how she managed everything so seamlessly. Maintaining the household and addressing the needs of all of us speaks volumes of her bountiful strength and nature. Amidst all of this,

she even successfully completed a cosmetology program. Her bountiful strength is immeasurable.

Finally, I want to take a moment and dedicate this study to all my siblings Sadik, Xhevrije, Kimet, Ferija, Flamur, Servetk, and Kujtim. They are forever a part of my existence and at the very core of this paper. *Now*, I feel that this work is complete.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

State accountability systems are increasingly placing the burden of school success – and individual student achievement—“squarely on the principal’s shoulders” (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001, p. 6). The authors further point out that in the not-too-distant past, responsibility for school success was something principals could “share around” with other educators, with parents, and with students themselves. The principal served as a production manager, and quality control was somebody else’s job (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001, p. 6).

The Wallace Foundation (2012) reports that although leadership patterns in any school span a range among principals, assistant principals, formal and informal teacher leaders, and parents, the principal is the central source of leadership influence (p. 4). Researchers Leithwood and Riehl (2003) comments, “In these times of heightened concern for student learning, school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn. They must respond to complex environments and serve all students well” (p. 1). The authors explain further that under the pressure cooker of NCLB there is a growing body of research evidence documenting the effects of leadership on how much students learn (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2).

The findings of a 2010 survey conducted by the Wallace Foundation (2012) revealed that principal leadership was declared as among the most pressing matters on a list of issues in public school education by school and district administrators,

policymakers, and others (p. 3). The foundation, which has published more than 70 reports on school leadership, also found that there is an empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement (p. 3). The finding, a result of a major study by researchers Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) at the University of Minnesota and University of Toronto drew on both detailed case studies and large-scale quantitative analysis. They assert that most school variables, considered separately, have, at most, small effects on learning. “The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal (p. 9).

Against this backdrop, this study works to replicate research conducted by Dr. Michael Valenti (2010) which explored the perspectives of national “distinguished” elementary school principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the U.S. Department of Education as they relate specifically to the academic achievement of elementary students while meeting accountability measures.

Valenti’s (2010) study was grounded on a framework advanced by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL identified 21 categories of specific behaviors relating to principal leadership that have a statistically significant relationship with student achievement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, pp. 42-43). (See Table 1).

The research proffered by Valenti (2010) revealed that the most important leadership responsibilities when improving student achievement were establishing strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students (Communication), monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning (Monitoring/Evaluation), and fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation (Culture) (p. 121). (See Appendix D).

Distinct from Valenti's (2010) work, this research study addresses a different population; specifically, the at-risk elementary school student. This population warrants greater exploration given that they comprise a growing portion of school enrollments and their poor educational performance has significant consequences for the economy and society-at-large (Levin, 1996, p. 226). Research published by the Wallace Foundation (2007) further states the following:

There are countless children who arrive at school already behind. Sometimes that's because of poverty, sometimes that's because of language issues, sometimes that's because of family issues. But regardless of the reason, a lot of kids arrive behind" (p.27).

Reglin (1993) adds that the most prominent use of the term *at-risk* refers to students not succeeding in school. These students are identified as low academic achievers and are more likely one or more grade levels behind in basic subjects such as reading, language, and mathematics (p. 163). Wright (2006) articulates further that many schools find themselves burdened with large numbers of struggling learners who have not

yet acquired the necessary foundation skills that are required in order for them to achieve mastery of the curriculum (p. 35). The author warns that once students reach the point where learning deficits surface, these deficits “can easily become chronic” (p. 35). McNeil (2009) explains further that low standards are not the most serious problem in schooling, contending that “the most serious problem for all industrialized nations is the rise of a new educational underclass—those who from the beginning tend to be failures in school” (p. 281).

Research offered by the Wallace Foundation (2010) further explains:

Lack of educational attainment is highly correlated with lower lifetime earnings, higher incidences of substance abuse, higher rates of incarceration, and poorer health outcomes. As a society, citizens pay the price in lost tax revenue, foregone GDP growth, and increased costs related to health care, crime, and social services (p. 10).

The insight garnered from this study may help to illuminate the competencies and responsibilities of “distinguished” principals that are most supportive of the academic achievement of at-risk students. Probing deeper and examining these competencies and responsibilities further contributes to the growing body of knowledge pertaining to the leadership demonstrated by effective principals. Finally, this research may influence individuals interested in leadership at the elementary school level to reflect further on the fact that the progress and well being of the individual child must always be at the forefront of all planning and operations.

It is important to note that in both Dr. Valenti's (2010) study and this study's research, the perspectives of National Distinguished Principals have been solicited, given that these principals have been recognized for making superior contributions to their schools and communities, including setting high standards for instruction, student achievement, and lifelong learning.

Background of the Study

Although myriad reforms designed to provide a better education for more American students have dotted the educational landscape (Teske, 1999, p. 7), "the magnitude of the list of failing schools under NCLB guidelines continues to produce gasps of disbelief" (Donlevy, 2003, p. 335). Caillier (2007) found that while examining whether or not states are on target to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act, only 2 states out of 35 (Nebraska and Wyoming) are making adequate yearly progress in both reading and mathematics in elementary, middle, and high school grades (p. 582). "If this trend continues," Caillier (2007) explains, "every public school student will not be proficient in mathematics and reading by 2014" (p. 593).

Bemoaning this state of affairs further, Dee, Jacob, Hoxby, and Ladd (2010) report that although NCLB increased the average school district expenditure by nearly \$600 per pupil, they found no evidence that NCLB improved student performance in reading for elementary school children (p. 150).

Turning this situation around, according to research published by the Broad Foundation, "is plainly a huge challenge for American education but one we dare not

shirk” (2003, p. 5). Rationalizing this view, Gable, Hester, Hester, Hendrickson, and Size (2005) explain that it is our nation’s long-standing belief that a democratic and just society can only be achieved when all citizens are educated (p. 40). Bennett, Rhine, and Flickinger (2000) add that widespread literacy is fundamental to popular government (p. 167). Further echoing this view, the Wallace Foundation (2012) found that in a global economy, career success is grounded on a strong education.

Unfortunately, many schools find themselves burdened with large numbers of struggling learners who have not yet acquired the necessary foundation skills that are required in order for them to achieve mastery of the curriculum (Wright, 2006, p. 3). Echoing this view, earlier research by Levin (1996) merits attention:

One consequence will be deterioration in the quality of the labor force. As long as at-risk students were a small portion of the population, they could be absorbed by low-skill jobs or fail to get jobs without direct consequences for the economy. High dropout rates, low test scores, and poor academic performance of a larger and larger portion of the school population mean that a larger portion of the future labor force will be undereducated for available jobs, not only managerial, professional, and technical jobs, but even the lower-level service jobs that are increasingly important in the U.S. economy (p. 227).

Wright (2006) elucidates that once students reach the point where learning deficits surface, these deficits “can easily become chronic” (p. 35). The author explains further:

Research indicates, for example, that young students whose reading skills fall significantly below the reading skills experienced by their peers are at high risk for continuing reading difficulties throughout the course of their entire school career (p. 35).

Earlier research by Levin (1996) further reveals that even higher education is affected by the challenge of at-risk students. The author states:

Without earlier educational interventions, at-risk students who remain in school will graduate with more learning deficits that will prevent many of them from benefiting from current levels of instruction in colleges and universities. High levels of college failures and dropouts and massive remedial interventions mean wasted time for students and wasted resources for colleges, not to mention the psychological toll of failing to “make it.” Substantial remedial activities require additional faculty members. Extended periods in college will impose a greater cost in tuition and lost earnings (p. 228).

Identifying behaviors and competencies of principals that are most supportive of the achievement of the at-risk student population could prove helpful in spurring this population segment to acquire the education and skills needed for future labor market success. Probing deeper and examining the behaviors and competencies of “distinguished” principals more fully also contributes to the growing body of knowledge linked to the leadership responsibilities and behaviors demonstrated by “distinguished” principals.

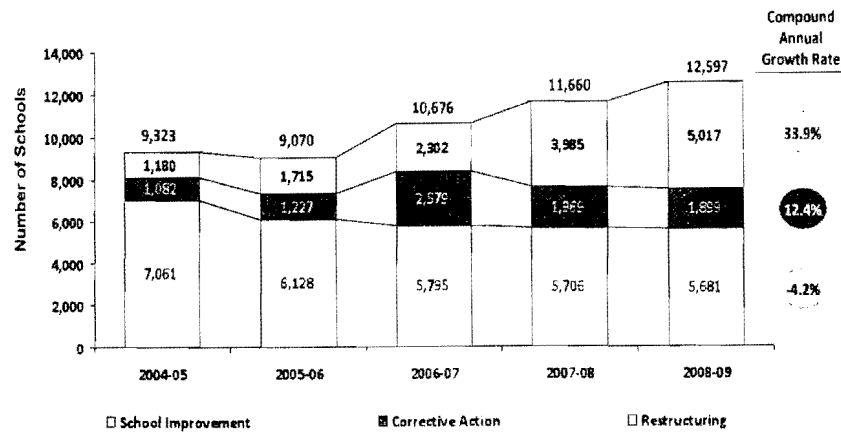
Statement of the Problem

In spite of the controversies the law has spawned, the NCLB Act of 2002 has resulted in a focus on standards, assessment, accountability, and the potential of education to contribute to the nation's economic competitiveness (Kantor & Lowe, 2007, p. 369). In fact, according to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), there is a growing body of research evidence documenting the effects of leadership on how much students learn (p. 1). Although the authors purport that there are still many gaps in our knowledge about effective educational leadership (p. 1). Barton (2005) elucidates that "the road to parity begins with understanding the nature of the gaps and their trends" (p. 12).

One such way is by taking a closer look at students identified as at-risk who are more susceptible to academic failure. Seifert (2004) explains that students who struggle in school early on often continue to experience difficulties that may result in learned helplessness, decreased motivation, lower levels of engagement, and negative attitudes about schools. According to Levin (1996) the "proportion of at-risk students is high and increasing rapidly." The author adds, "Rough estimates derived from various demographic analyses suggest that upwards of one-third of all students in kindergarten through twelfth grade are educationally disadvantaged or at-risk" (p. 227).

Research proffered by the Wallace Foundation (2010) reveals that without successful interventions, the number of schools in restructuring could grow substantially. They explain that in the 2008-2009 school year, the number of schools in restructuring

increased 26% from the previous year, and jumped an alarming 32.5% over the number from five years earlier, as shown in Figure 1.

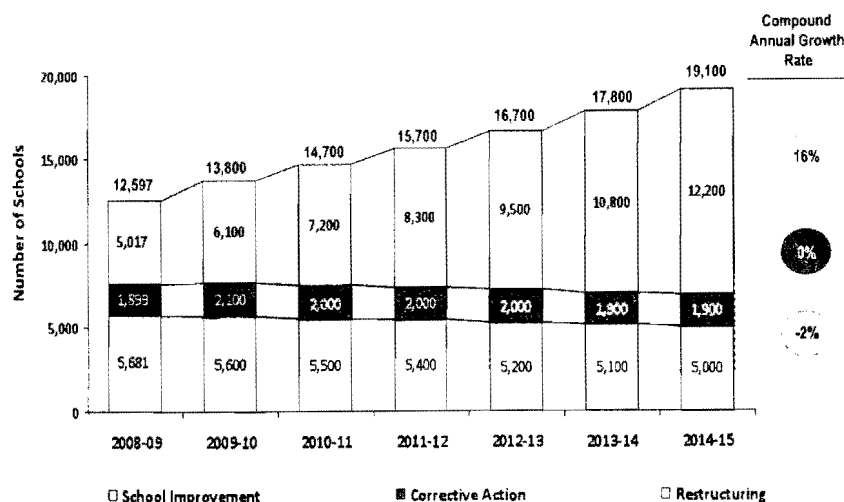


Source: U.S. Department of Education, EdFacts.

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Figure 1. Number of Schools in Need of Improvement, 2004-2009

Extrapolating from the latest trends from 2006 to 2009, Figure 2 shows that without successful interventions, the number of schools in restructuring could grow 143% over the next five years, reaching more than 12,000 by 2014-2015 (pp. 10-11).



Key Assumptions:

- Schools enter school-improvement status at a slightly declining rate, reflecting the 2005-2006 to 2008-2009 CAGR of -2 percent
- An estimated 37 percent of schools progress from improvement to corrective action every year, reflecting the average rate from 2005 to 2009.
- Fewer and fewer schools exit the restructuring category, reflecting the 2005 to 2009 trends

Source: ISG analysis.

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Figure 2. Projected Number of Schools in Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring, 2008-2015

With so much at stake, effective leadership is viewed by many to be tantamount to academic achievement of all students. According to Bottoms and O’Neil (2001), the principal’s job description has expanded to a point that today’s school leader is expected to perform in the role of “chief learning officer,” with ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the enterprise (p. 6).

In fact, research proffered by Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) focused on the effects of specific leadership practices. They identified 21 leadership “responsibilities” (behaviors), calculating an average correlation between each responsibility and the measures of student learning used in their original studies. From

these data they calculated estimated effects of the respective behaviors on student test scores. For example, there would be a 10 percentile point increase in student test scores resulting from the work of an average principal if he/she improved “demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities by one standard deviation” (p. 3).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the importance of “second order” leadership responsibilities and behaviors as identified by McREL in addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students from the perspective of distinguished elementary school principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

Further, this research investigates the perspectives of “distinguished” elementary school principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) as they relate specifically to the academic achievement of at-risk students. Founded in 1921, the NAESP posits that principals are “the primary catalyst for creating a lasting foundation for learning, driving school and student performance, and shaping the long-term impact of school improvement efforts” (National Distinguished Principals Program, n.d.) (para. 2). Similarly, research offered by Marzano et al. (2005) found that specific leadership behaviors for school administrators have well-documented effects on student achievement (p. 7).

As such, an abundance of research has well documented the effects of leadership behaviors on student academic achievement (e.g., Marzano et al., 2005, p. 12).

However, there is a paucity of research on examining and identifying the practices of “distinguished” elementary school principals in addressing the needs of at-risk students.

Probing deeper, the identification of the practices of “distinguished” elementary school principals when addressing the needs of at-risk students merits analysis, given that a thorough empirical exploration of the topic is non-existent.

Research Questions

This study is framed by three research questions:

1. What level of importance do “distinguished” elementary school principals as recognized by NAESP (during the academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011) attribute to the 11 “second order” leadership responsibilities as espoused by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) when addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?
2. How does the level of importance of leadership responsibilities vary by the characteristics of principals and schools?
3. Which No Child Left Behind Act accountability measures are perceived by “distinguished” elementary school principals to have impact on leadership responsibilities for addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?

Conceptual Framework

Undergirding this study is a leadership framework proffered by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL’s framework identifies 21 categories of specific behaviors relating to principal leadership that are significantly

correlated with student achievement. These categories of behaviors, referred to as “responsibilities,” reflect a quantitative and meta-analytic examination of 69 studies involving 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students and 14,000 teachers (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 10). These responsibilities are identified in Table 1 (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-43):

Table 1

McREL’s 21 Leadership Responsibilities That Impact Student Achievement

Responsibility	<i>The Extent to Which the Principal...</i>	Average r
----------------	---	-----------

Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures	.19
Change Agent	Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo	.25
Contingent Rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments	.24
Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students	.23
Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	.25
Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus	.27
Flexibility	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent	.28
Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention	.24
Ideals/Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling	.22
Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	.25
Reprinted by permission of McREL		

Table 1

McREL's 21 Leadership Responsibilities That Impact Student Achievement (continued)

Responsibility	<i>The Extent to Which the Principal...</i>	Average r
----------------	---	-----------

Intellectual Stimulation	Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture	.24
Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	.20
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	.25
Monitoring/Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	.27
Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations	.20
Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines	.25
Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders	.27
Relationships	Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff	.18
Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs	.25
Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems	.33
Visibility	Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students	.20

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The authors further explain that their framework spans 35 years of quantitative research on the effects of school leadership on student achievement. They add, "Our balanced leadership framework moves beyond abstraction to concrete responsibilities,

practices, knowledge, strategies, tools, and resources that principals and others need to be effective leaders” (p. 2).

Their meta-analysis efforts revealed a substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement. The average effect size (expressed as a correlation) between leadership and student achievement was .25 (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 3). Another important finding was that just as the school leaders can have a positive impact on achievement, they also can have a marginal or a negative impact on achievement. In some studies the authors found an effect size for leadership and achievement of .50. “This translates mathematically into a one standard deviation difference in demonstrated leadership ability being associated with as much as a 19 percentile point increase in student achievement” (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 5). Table 2 displays the range of impact that school leaders can have on student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 5)

Table 2

School Leadership's Differential Impact on Student Achievement

Range	Correlation	Change from 50th P for 1 SD Increase in Leadership
--------------	--------------------	--

Mean	.25	60 th
Highest	.50	69 th
Lowest	-.02	49 th

Research Design and Procedures

This study explored the perspectives of national “distinguished” elementary school principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the U.S. Department of Education as they relate specifically to the academic achievement of at-risk elementary students. NAESP annually recognizes outstanding leadership of principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, and lifelong learning. Award recipients must also display a strong commitment to the principalship through active participation in professional associations while assuming an active role in the community. These individuals are viewed as leaders who truly make a difference.

The conceptual design that underpins this study is the leadership framework proffered by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL’s framework identifies 21 categories of specific behaviors relating to principal leadership that are correlated with student achievement (See Table 1). The authors add that two traits or factors seem to underlie the 21 responsibilities; namely, “first order” change and “second order” change (p. 65). This study will explore McREL’s 11 “second order”

responsibilities associated with improving academic achievement of students. Marzano et al. (2005) explain that “second order” change requires leadership techniques that involve dramatic departures from the expected, both in defining a given problem and in finding a solution. The authors add the following elucidation:

We have described the difference between “first” and “second order” change as that between “incremental change” and “deep change.” Incremental change fine-tunes the system through a series of small steps that do not depart radically from the past. Deep change alters the system in fundamental ways, offering a dramatic shift in direction and requiring new ways of thinking and acting (p. 66).

Further, the research design suggests that the skills and knowledge necessary for leaders to positively influence student achievement have been identified. A self-administered four-part survey instrument was employed to collect quantitative data to determine the level to which principals agreed on the “second order” responsibilities that have the most significant impact on the academic achievement of the at-risk elementary school student. The analysis used a p-value of 0.05 as the criterion for significance.

Descriptive analyses of data, including the mean scores and frequency distributions of responses, were generated on each of the individual items encompassed in the research questions. In addition, the possibility of relationships between leadership responsibilities and demographic factors was examined using ANOVA and Post-Hoc testing. The study also examined the degree to which educational accountability

measures implemented by the NCLB are related to the effectiveness of leadership responsibilities and competences for the academic achievement of at-risk students.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument administered to collect quantitative data was the instrument utilized and validated by Valenti (2010). The survey adopted the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's (McREL) 11 "second order" responsibilities associated with improving academic achievement of students, including the following: Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Optimizer, Intellectual Stimulation, Change Agent, Monitoring/Evaluating, Flexibility, Ideals/Beliefs, Culture, Communication, Order, and Input.

McREL explains that "first order" changes are those changes a leader makes based on existing values, ideas, and knowledge of all stakeholders involved in the school. These changes are not perceived as dramatic, but as necessary. Conversely, "second order" changes are seen as those changes that tend to upset the norm. "Second order" change requires all to learn new ideas and practices in order for the change to have a lasting impact (p. 66).

The survey (see Appendix B) consisted of four sections. The first section consisted of questions intended to collect specific demographic data about the principals and their schools. Principal questions included gender, age group range, level of educational attainment, number of years as a principal, and years as principal at the current school. School questions included the total number of students, community

classification (rural, suburban, or urban), the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch, the percentage of the student body representing each ethnic group, and the schools Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

The second section of the survey asked “distinguished” elementary school principals to identify the most important leadership responsibilities and behaviors associated with the academic achievement of at-risk students. Respondents were asked to select from a 4-point Likert scale, including: Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, or Not Important.

The third section of the survey asked “distinguished” elementary school principals to identify how their effectiveness in executing the leadership responsibilities and behaviors while addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students, have been influenced since the onset of more rigorous high-stakes standards and accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act. Respondents rated the 11 “second order” leadership responsibilities (see Table 2) using the following 5-point Likert scale: Increased Greatly, Increased, No Difference, Decreased, and Decreased Greatly.

The final section of the survey consisted of two open-ended questions that were optional to complete. The questions prompted the respondents to suggest recommendations for other school leaders who are grappling with the educational outcomes for at-risk students in their respective schools. The survey was expected to take participants approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Further, permission was requested to use the 11 responsibilities associated with “second order” change as referenced on pages 70-73 of *School Leadership that Works* (Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, 2005) in the survey instrument. This request was granted (see Appendix C) in February 2012 by the study’s publisher, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

To establish the validity of the original survey instrument, a pilot survey was conducted in 2006 with a small cadre of elementary school leaders, previously recognized as National Distinguished Principals. Participants in the pilot represented Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Utah, and Vermont. These individuals served as a jury of experts and provided suggestions concerning length, wording of questions, presentation, directionality of responses, and clarity of directions. The survey was amended based on the feedback received from respondents.

Data Collection

The data utilized in this study were obtained from two sources. The listings of “distinguished” principals were obtained directly from the website of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP): <http://www.naesp.org>. In order to get a sufficient sample size, honoree names were obtained for the years 2009, 2010, and 2011 (See Appendix A). The program, which was established in 1984, annually awards 63 outstanding elementary and middle-level administrators from across the nation in both public and private school from the United States Departments of Defense, Office of Educational Activity, and the United States Department of State Office of Overseas

Schools for their exemplary achievements. The distinguished principals are selected by NAESP state affiliates, including the District of Columbia, and by committees representing private and overseas schools. These individuals set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character, and climate for the students, families, and staff in their learning communities. Starting in 2011, all National Distinguished Principals were members of NAESP.

Approval of the study was requested from the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) during February 2012. Once permission was granted (see Appendix B), the data collection process began. The method used to conduct this research was web based. Surveys were disseminated and responses collected electronically using www.SurveyMonkey.com.

E-mail addresses for each of the principals targeted for this study were gathered from the NAESP. A link to the online survey was sent by e-mail to 151 principals, requesting their participation. Each questionnaire contained a school code number for temporary identification purposes to link the respondent to the appropriate school. Following the initial e-mail, a second and final e-mail was forwarded five days later to all 151 principals. The second e-mail thanked those principals who had already participated and requested those who had not participated to please do so within the time constraints.

The survey was banked on the online survey service www.SurveyMonkey.com. Data were collected from the online survey service and then analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Data Analysis

The results of the survey were analyzed to determine the level to which principals agreed on the “second order” responsibilities that have the most significant impact on the academic achievement of at-risk students since the onset of more rigorous high-stakes testing and accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act. All data collected were initially analyzed in the aggregate. Descriptive statistics were then generated on each of the individual items comprising the research questions. These descriptive statistics included the mean scores and frequency distributions of responses. In addition, ANOVA and Post-Hoc testing was used to examine the possibility of relationships between leadership responsibilities and demographic factors. To provide insight on any patterns or connections, a separate statistical analysis was conducted for each demographic factor.

For all appropriate analyses, both the $p < .05$ (95% probability) and $p < .01$ (99% probability) threshold were reported. In this way, the significance of the relationships between the different variables and the responses to the survey were illustrated in the data analysis.

Significance of the Study

The “United States faces an immense crisis in educating at-risk students” (Levin, 1996, p. 225). The author explains that as at-risk populations become an increasingly

larger share of the U.S. labor force, “their inadequate educational preparation will be a drag on the competitive performance of the industries and states in which they work and on the nation’s economic performance (p.227). Further, state and federal governments will suffer a declining tax base and a concomitant loss of revenues that could be used to fund improvements in education and other services (Levin, 1996, p. 228). Similarly, Day and Newberger (2002) found that the lack of education attainment is highly correlated with lower lifetime earnings, higher incidences of substance abuse, higher rates of incarceration, and poorer health outcomes (as cited in the Wallace Foundation, 2010, p. 10). As a society, citizens pay the price in foregone tax revenue, lost GDP growth, and increased costs associated with health care, crime, and social services.

This study may prove to be invaluable in further illuminating the competencies of nationally recognized “distinguished” leaders that positively impact the academic achievement of students identified as at-risk for academic failure while meeting accountability measures. Additionally, the identified perspectives of these leaders may offer insight and guidance for other elementary school leaders who face similar challenges. Further, the findings could help districts to streamline and tailor professional development programs for their team of administrators in ways that help move their schools forward.

Moreover, these findings may be relevant for policymakers. By focusing on policies that further impact the achievement of at-risk students, policymakers can create

conditions in which students have the resources and necessary support needed to obtain high standards of learning and achievement.

On another front, further empirical studies on the relationship between the competencies of “distinguished” principals and achievement of students identified as at-risk of academic failure may help improve both the in-school and out-of-school experiences of these students.

Limitations of the Study

Although the findings of this study work to advance research on the role of the school principal and the academic achievement of at-risk elementary students, a cautionary approach should be employed when making generalizations based on the findings, as delimitations and limitations apply.

The following delimitations were imposed for this study:

1. The study was limited to school leaders recognized as National Distinguished Principals by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) during 2009, 2010, and 2011.
2. Each participant had to be active in the role of principal during the year in which he/she was named a National Distinguished Principal.
3. To be an eligible recipient of the award, an individual had to serve in a leadership capacity for a minimum of five years.
4. Only principals working in public institutions within the United States were included in the study.

5. The study focused exclusively on the perceptions of “distinguished” principals at the elementary school level.
6. The variables studied included the perceptions of National Distinguished Principals, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning’s (McREL) 11 “second order” responsibilities associated with improving student achievement, and demographic data about the principals and their schools. These leadership responsibilities include the following: Change Agent, Flexibility, Ideals and Beliefs, Intellectual Stimulation, Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Monitor/Evaluate, Optimizer, Communication, Order, Culture, and Input.
7. Data were collected using one survey instrument which focused on the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning’s (McREL) 11 “second order” responsibilities of a school leader to improve student achievement of at-risk students while meeting the rigorous high-stakes standards and accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act.

The researcher also noted the following limitations of the study:

1. Concern about the quality of the survey surfaced; i.e., use of acronyms, verbiage and the use of two Likert scales.
2. Participants’ responses were self-reported and representative of individual experiences with past and current job responsibilities.

3. The study was limited to principals who had access to a computer and the Internet.
4. Data were collected through a survey instrument disallowing for in-depth input that would be obtained from one-on-one interviews.
5. The length of time to complete the survey was approximately 12-15 minutes, given the inclusion of additional survey questions. Valenti's original survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The respondents were not authorized to return to the survey to complete it at a later time.
6. Differences in populations, socioeconomic factors, practices, and policies in the school surveyed may lead to different findings with regard to the questions addressed in this study.
7. The original time frame to collect data from www.surveymonkey.com was one month. This time frame was extended an additional two weeks, given the lackluster response rate from respondents.
8. The ultimate sample size for this study was small--totaling 61 responses, unlike Valenti's (2010) study, which garnered 103 responses. (Note: Although this study solicited 151 principals, only 67 responded. Of the 67 respondents, 6 did not complete the survey fully and were removed from the statistical analysis. Therefore, the actual sample was 61 respondents).
9. Findings from this study may not be generalized to any group other than the "distinguished" principals selected.

10. The small sample size affects the ability to create generalizations to the larger population.
11. Due to the methodology employed in this study, (lack of random selection procedure), the sample may not be representative of the study's population, indicating the possibility of selection bias.
12. Given that the cross-sectional design of the study has only one datapoint for time, the principals' perception of how leadership responsibilities have changed over time cannot be explained.

The researcher made the following assumptions:

1. The survey instrument was an accurate measure of perceptions regarding the essential behaviors and practices of school leaders associated with the achievement of at-risk students.
2. Participants would respond accurately and honestly to the survey questions.
3. Data received from the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) was accurate.

Definition of Terms

Students At-risk Of Academic Failure: Refers to students who are not succeeding academically for reasons including poverty, underfunded schools, language issues, family issues, and/or peer groups that are involved in drugs, crime, and violence.

They have been identified as low academic achievers and are more likely one or more grade levels behind in basic subjects such as reading, language, and mathematical

skills. These struggling learners have not yet acquired the necessary foundational skills that are required in order for them to achieve mastery of the curriculum.

Accountability: In accordance with No Child Left Behind mandates, each state is required to develop and implement a plan that specifies adequate yearly progress benchmarks and corresponding timelines to meet the goals set forth.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): Schools must make adequate yearly progress (AYP), as determined by the state, by raising the level of achievement of subgroups; i.e., Hispanics, Blacks, low-income students, and special education students. Districts that fail to meet AYP targets are held accountable.

Failing schools: Schools falling short of making adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements.

Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL): McREL is a private, 501 (c) 3 education research and development corporation that is committed to providing educators with research-based and practical guidance on the issues and challenges facing K-16 education.

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP): Founded in 1921, this national organization advocates and supports elementary and middle school principals and other education leaders throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas. NAESP believes that the interests of the individual child must be at the forefront of all elementary and middle-school planning and operations and works to ensure that education continues to be recognized as a matter of national priority.

National Distinguished Principals Award: Established in 1984, NAESP annually honors 62 active outstanding elementary and middle level administrators from across the nation, both public and private school, as well as schools from the United States Departments of Defense, Office of Educational Activity, and the United States Department of State Office of Overseas Schools. The award recognizes outstanding leadership of principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, and lifelong learning. They must also display a strong commitment to the principalship through active participation in professional associations while assuming an active role in the community. NDP's are viewed as leaders who truly make a difference.

No Child Left Behind: Requires states to make verifiable annual progress toward raising the percentage of students who are proficient in reading and mathematics; and in narrowing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students by 2014. Further, NCLB law states that all children shall reach proficiency on state academic achievement standards and state assessments.

Proficiency Levels: Under NCLB mandates, states are required to annually measure student achievement. For all content areas, a scaled score between 100-199 falls in the partially proficient range, 200-249 falls in the proficient range and 250-300 falls in the advanced proficient range.

Schools in Need of Improvement: When a school fails to meet its AYP goal for two straight years, it's identified as "in need of improvement." If it fails to make AYP for

a third consecutive year, the school is required to offer students the chance to transfer to a different public school, the first in an annual series of steps designed to improve student performance. In subsequent years, schools must spend money from the NCLB law's Title I program of aid for disadvantaged students to pay for tutoring and then take steps to improve themselves.

Summary

The first chapter begins by introducing the growing challenge faced by principals as they work to advance the academic achievement of at-risk" students while meeting accountability measures. This effort is followed by the statement of purpose, the research questions that propel the analysis, and the conceptual framework. Next, the chapter presents a brief overview of the design and methodology used. It also outlines the significance of the research. The chapter concludes by outlining delimitations and limitations of the study and definitions of terms.

Chapter II presents a review of the literature by drawing attention to the crisis in U.S. education, changes in the legal landscape, educational reform, persisting achievement gaps, and at-risk students. On the heels of this effort, the review works to help mediate the link between effective schools and principalship in American education. The chapter concludes with fundamental practices of exemplary leadership.

Chapter III outlines the planned quantitative research design and methodology undergirding this study. It also depicts the research approach that will be implemented to collect the data, further defining this study.

Chapter IV details the statistical analysis of the data along with findings.

Finally, Chapter V presents a summary of the research, its limitations, and implications for future studies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter begins by drawing attention to the widely held view that the system of public education in the United States is in crisis. Following this examination, a historical review of educational reform initiatives elucidates the mounting accountability pressures associated with student achievement. This effort is followed by a review of the literature that expounds on the persistence of achievement gaps and the accompanying life-long effects on students. The chapter concludes with a close look at the role of an effective school principal as a necessary precondition for an effective school.

Literature Search Procedures

Initially, a wide range of literature was surveyed; subsequently, analysis efforts were refined to those works that seemed most pertinent to studying the relationship between the responsibilities and behaviors of principals and the academic achievement of at-risk students while meeting accountability measures of the No Child Left Behind Act.

The literature review was conducted in stages, first canvassing journals to arrive at a broad general understanding of key terms and concepts, including students at-risk, NCLB, accountability, and the role of principals. Next, the focus narrowed to include only recent works within the field of education that examined the role of the principal in relation to increasing academic achievement of at-risk students in greater depth.

Keywords to accomplish this effort included the following: students at-risk, academic underachievement, failing schools, preventing school failure, academic achievement, leadership effectiveness, principals, public schools, instructional leadership, school administration, educational improvement, and administrator characteristics.

Journal articles were accessed via online databases including: JSTOR, ERIC, ProQuest Research Library, LexisNexis Academic, Academic Search Premier, and the Electronic Journal Service (EJS).

Public Education in Crisis

News gleaned from television, radio, newspapers, and the like paint a disturbingly dismal picture of the failure of our public system of education. Graves (2011) writes, “Everyone knows that the American K-12 public education system is failing our children” (p. 12). The author adds, “The foundation and fuel of American innovation and achievement is a quality education, which leads to opportunity, earning potential, healthier communities, and a stronger nation” (p. 12).

According to a congressional document published October 17, 2011, titled *SBC White Paper on Education in America: It's Not About The Money*, educating U.S. students has skyrocketed, but the quality of their education has not (para. 6). The document contains the following troubling data:

1. The administration's funding request for the Department of Education is \$ 77.5 billion for FY 2012, an increase of 13% compared to FY 2011 levels, and 21% compared to FY 2010 levels.
2. Since 1970, total state, local, and federal spending for elementary and secondary education has more than doubled. In 2008, the last year for which data for all levels of government is available, public expenditures were more than \$500

billion for elementary and secondary education, with spending per pupil passing the \$ 11,000 mark.

3. Despite large and consistent increases in funding, students' scores on national assessments have improved little since 1970.
4. Graduation rates are also relatively unaffected by increased in funding, hovering around 75% since the 1990s.
5. The United States spends thousands of dollars more per student for secondary education than many other countries, but still lags behind in international assessments for mathematics, reading, and science (para. 7).

Offering further insight, Fowler (2009) posits that business, media, and political leaders generally consider public education to be in crisis (p. 8). Similarly, Marzano, Waters and McNulty (1999) explain that "society's view toward public education has also changed" (p.1). Hanushek (1994) maintains that "no one is happy with America's schools. Students, parents, politicians all call for schools to do a better job" (p.10). Research published by McREL (2006) purports that "cries for accountability in schools are deafening" (p. 1).

The news media regularly report the failures of U.S. education, whether in the poor showing of American students in international test score competitions or in the deficiencies of graduates entering the workplace (Hanushek, 1994, p. 10). In fact, international comparisons show that the United States lags behind despite more spending.

Education Reform Efforts

Although education-reform efforts are hardly new, the Obama administration's investment in education reform is, according to research proffered by the Wallace Foundation (2010), "unprecedented" (p.19). In his federal budget proposal for fiscal year 2012, President Obama called for bolstering programs he deemed critical to his vision for a renewed Elementary and Secondary Education Act and proposed new programs in research, early-childhood education, teaching, and efforts to close achievement gaps (Klein, 2011, p. 1). The Wallace Foundation (2010) writes that investment in education reform through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 has "significantly, if temporarily, expanded the federal role in education" (p. 19). Federal funding efforts include the Race to the Top Fund, School Improvement Grants, and Investing in Innovation Fund (p. 3). The authors explain:

The sheer size of the investment, coupled with the magnitude of the budget deficits facing states and districts, has put the federal government in a position to incent policy change at the state level and to set guidelines for turnaround strategies of states and local education agencies (p. 19).

In fact, a report titled *Tough Choices or Tough Times*, cited by Olson (2006), calls for a top-to-bottom overhaul of the U.S. education and training system. The report, unveiled by a prominent panel whose members include former U.S. Secretaries of Education and Labor, retired governors and mayors, state and local superintendents, and business executives, makes the argument that to compete in a global economy and to maintain its standard of living, "America will have to keep a razor-sharp technological

edge and produce workers who have both much higher levels of academic knowledge than they do now and a deep vein of creativity that enables them to keep generating innovative products and services” (p. 1).

Wong and Nicotera (2004) explain that in the 1960s, the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) retained a rather modest role in American education. The authors further articulate that the research conducted by Coleman during the era of Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society initiatives supported increased spending to remedy social problems. The common belief was that his research would justify the reasoning behind the initiatives by finding large resource disparities between primarily White and primarily Black schools that would explain the differences in academic achievement (Grant, 1973; Heckman & Neal, 1996; Kahlenberg, 2001. According to Kiviat (2000), the Coleman Report, which used data from over 600,000 students, is widely considered the most important education study of the twentieth century (para. 3). The author notes further that the report appeared at a time of national unrest, stating, “The issues of racial relations and equality were foremost in the public’s consciousness, and Coleman’s study added fuel to the fire” (para. 4).

The relevancy of the Coleman report findings lies in the fact that it revealed that school resources, including school facilities, curriculum, and teacher quality, do not show statistically significant effects on student achievement. By lending official credence to the idea that “schools didn’t make a difference” in predicting student achievement, the

report, according to Lezotte (2001), fueled vigorous reaction and instigated many of the studies that would follow (p. 1).

Changes in the Legal Landscape

Ryan (2009) explains that the last half-century has seen dramatic changes in the legal landscape for schools. He adds that the standards and testing movement traces back to the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which dramatically warned that America's educational foundations were being eroded by a "rising tide of mediocrity." States, according to Ryan (2009), responded by adopting academic standards to guide education and raise expectations (p. 3). Fowler (2009) cites Boyd and Kerchner's (1988) claim that the major shift in political ideas that has occurred in the United States since the 1970s has shifted the focus of education politics from equality issues to issues relating to excellence, accountability, and choice (p. 10).

By 1994, the federal government became involved and essentially took over the field in 2002 with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (Ryan, 2009, p. 3). The law, which President George W. Bush had made one of the top domestic priorities of his administration, is an overhaul of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act first passed by Congress in 1965 (Hoff, 2008, p. 2). Boo (2007) explains that when Bush promoted his No Child Left Behind plan in the 2000 Presidential campaign, he said that he wanted to subvert "the soft bigotry of low expectations" (p. 4). Abrams (2004) posits that NCLB is "arguably one of the most aggressive federal efforts to improve elementary and secondary education and marks a major departure from the traditionally

noninterventionist role of the national government in forming state education policy (Abrams, 2004, p. 3).

Sunderman and Orfield (2007) add that NCLB is associated with high political costs (p. 4), and Harrison-Jones (2003) elucidates that NCLB is an ambitious reform initiative that continues to be a matter of speculation and vigorous controversy (pp. 348 and 354). Donlevy (2003) is convinced that the requirements of NCLB will ultimately be modified in the face of growing concerns over the consequences of the Act (p. 336).

Research offered by the Wallace Foundation (2010) explains further that the nation is at a critical juncture in its efforts to turn around schools. With more than 5,000 chronically failing schools, the Obama administration announced its intention to use \$5 billion to turn them around in the next five years. "This," according to the Wallace Foundation (2010), "is a bold challenge to a system that has succeeded at turning around individual schools, but has never delivered dramatic change at a national scale" (p. 3). To propel further innovation, the federal government is providing unprecedented levels of strong direction for policy changes to support school improvement and turnaround. The emphasis for states and districts has shifted from planning to action. Such turnaround strategies include Race to the Top (RTTT), Investing in Innovation winners, and the distribution of School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds (2010, p. 3).

Education Reform: At the Heart of NCLB

Abrams (2004) explains that at the heart of NCLB are the assessment and accountability requirements which substantially increase the extent to which students are

tested (p. 3). Pasi (2001) contends that few educators would argue that they face pressures to concentrate on standardized tests and scores (p. 17).

Hoffman and Nottis (2008) posit that the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) has ushered in an era of increased accountability for students' academic performance that has resulted in a proliferation of assessment programs, including mandated testing implemented by the states (p. 209). Abrams (2004) adds that these measures have evoked heated debate, especially as states realize full implementation of their education reform policies. The author further asserts that states still retain the authority to determine how, or if, students will be held responsible for test performance (p. 3). In fact, Representative George Miller, chair of the Committee on Education and Labor, stated, "Among other shortcomings, the law is not fair, not flexible, and not adequately funded (Devarics, 2007, p. 1). However, Miller adds further that "the law's commitment to accountability must not change (Devarics, 2007, p. 1). Together these theories support the statement made by Broad (2011) that "the role of principals clearly matters" (p. 2).

More specifically, NCLB requires states to make verifiable annual progress toward (a) raising the percentage of students who are proficient in reading and mathematics, and (b) narrowing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Further, NCLB law states that all children "shall reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state assessments," and that these standards must "contain coherent and rigorous content," and "encourage the teaching of advanced skills" (Harrison-Jones, 2003, p. 346).

Additionally, Harrison-Jones, (2003) posits that NCLB requires states to create an accountability system of assessments, graduation rates, and other indicators. Schools must make adequate yearly progress (AYP), as determined by the state, by raising the level of achievement of subgroups; i.e., Hispanics, Blacks, low-income students, and special education students (p. 349). In addition, schools that meet test score targets can still fail to make AYP if they do not meet the graduation rate, attendance, or other indicators under the ACT (White-Hood, 2006, p. 5).

Factors Determining Adequate Yearly Progress

The most important factors in determining whether a school makes AYP, according to Hoff (2009) are scores on reading and mathematics tests (p. 2). Although every state has its own version of the assessment (White-Hood, 2006, p. 5), the tests are administered annually to all students in Grades 3-8, and in one year between Grades 9-12 (Hoff, 2009, p. 2). Hoff (2009) explains that to make AYP, a school must meet achievement targets for its student population as a whole and for each demographic “subgroup”; i.e., racial and ethnic minorities, those who are eligible for services as English-language learners, and student with disabilities. Schools’ AYP goals are set by their states based on meeting the law’s overall goal that all students be proficient in reading and math by the end of the 2013-2014 school years (p. 2.). Hoff (2009) explains:

When a school fails to meet its AYP goal for two straight years, it is identified “in need of improvement.” If it fails to make AYP for a third consecutive year, the school is required to offer students the chance to transfer to a different

public school, the first in an annual series of steps designed to improve student performance. In subsequent years, schools must spend money from the NCLB law's Title I program of aid for disadvantaged students to pay for tutoring and then take steps to improve themselves. If schools still haven't made AYP after five years "in need of improvement," their districts must make major changes, such as replacing the schools' staffs or turning the schools into charter schools (p. 4).

Other corrective action includes implementing new curriculum, appointing outside experts, reorganizing the school, and restructuring the school day or year (Harrison-Jones, 2007, p. 347). The work of Ylimaki (2007) explains a more dire consequence for principals with a history of poor student performance, stating, "Unlike principals of the past, contemporary U.S. principals can actually lose their jobs if students perform poorly on these standardized tests over a series of years (p. 11). Similarly, Gilman and Lanman-Givens (2001) write that the pressures of accountability, test scores, the media, parents, legislatures, and outside special interest groups can be challenging for principals. They state, "Principals are increasingly responsible for student achievement as measured by external standards and standardized test scores" (p. 73). The authors also found that standardized test scores, which were originally intended to assist educators in diagnosing student strengths and weaknesses, have now become the basis for judging principals' abilities (p. 73).

The Significance of NCLB

Ryan (2009) states that NCLB is “perhaps the most important—and certainly the most intrusive—piece of federal education legislation in our nation’s history” (p. 3). Dee et al. (2010) explain that the act is “arguably the most far-reaching education policy initiative in the United States over the last four decades.

The hallmark features of this legislation compelled states to conduct annual student assessments linked to state standards, to identify schools that are failing to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP), and to institute sanctions and rewards based on each school’s AYP status. (p. 149).

Meanwhile, Bottoms and O’Neill (2001) explain that accountability has changed nearly everything in education (p.1). State legislatures have established urgency for improved student achievement in an educational system where too many students are not succeeding against the new standards. This era of higher standards and greater accountability requires a “new breed” of school leaders (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001, p. 4).

Lashway (2003) adds that the No Child Left Behind Act has “solidified one emerging trend: school leaders are change agents” (p. 163).

Hoff (2009) reports that almost 30,000 schools in the United States failed to make adequate yearly progress under the NCLB in the 2007-08 academic school year. The author adds that half of these schools missed their achievement goals for two or more years, placing almost one in five of the nation’s public schools in some stage of a federally mandated process designed to improve student achievement (p.1). Further, the

number facing sanctions represents a 13% increase for states with comparable data over the 2006-07 school year (p. 1). Hoff (2009) explains further:

Of those falling short of their academic-achievement goals, 3,559 school--4% of all schools rated based on their progress--are facing the law's more serious interventions in the current school year. That's double the number that was in that category one year ago (p. 1).

Students Identified as At-Risk

Adding to the turmoil of change are students identified as at risk, who are more susceptible to academic failure. According to Reglin (1993) the most prominent use of the term *at-risk* refers to students not succeeding in school. These students are identified as low academic achievers and are more likely one or more grade levels behind in basic subjects such as reading, language, and mathematical skills (p. 163). Wright (2006) adds that many schools find themselves burdened with large numbers of struggling learners who have not yet acquired the necessary foundation skills that are required in order for them to achieve mastery of the curriculum (p. 35).

Wright (2006) explains that young students, for example, whose reading skills fall significantly below the reading skills experienced by their peers, are at high risk for continuing reading difficulties throughout the course of their entire school career (p. 35). Similarly, Bell (2003) found that one of the most pernicious problems faced by at-risk students is that most of them "do not 'get it' the first time" (p. 33).

Echoing this view, Feldner (2009) identifies at-risk children as underserved by their schools, their communities, their parents, and their local governments. Feldner (2009) espouses further that these children can become an at-risk statistic, as “large numbers of them become violent, score poorly on college placement exams, or become pregnant as teenagers” (p. 20).

Meanwhile, authors McIntosh, Flannery, Sugai, Braun, and Cochrane (2008) argue that risk factors are “cumulative in nature—the negative effect of each additional risk factor is multiplicative rather than additive” (p. 245). Similarly, Rothstein (2011) articulates that “each of these disadvantages makes only a small contribution to the achievement gap, but cumulatively, they explain a lot” (p. 12).

Socioeconomic Disparities

Anthony (2008) explains that the effects of poverty on a young child’s development have been well documented (p. 6). Research offered by Woolley (2007) further bolsters his view. The author identified several risk factors as negatively affecting many students in America. These factors include poverty, underfunded schools, crime-ridden neighborhoods, family problems, and peer groups that are involved in drugs, crime, and violence (p. 100). Cauce, Stewart, Rodriguez, Cochran, and Ginler (2003) add that neighborhoods typified by persistent violence, drugs, residential insecurity, underperforming schools, and crowded housing conditions present daily barriers for many poor, urban youths (p. 343).

Offering further insight, Tolan, Guerra, and Montaini-Klov Dahl (1997b) explain that the inner-city environment oftentimes includes multiple risks to healthy adolescent development. Poverty, disorderly and stressful environments, poor health care, deteriorated schools and other institutional supports, and high levels of crime characterize many of the inner-city neighborhoods (p. 195).

Barton (2005) elucidates that "the road to parity begins with understanding the nature of the gaps and their trends" (p. 12). Keegan-Eamon (2002) explains that the child poverty rate in the United States is higher than for most industrialized countries (p. 49). Berliner (2006) explains that the only nation with a record worse than ours is Mexico. This ranking he states " . . . is remarkably steady. The United States likes to be Number1 in everything, and when it comes to the percentage of children in poverty among the richest nations in the world, we continue to hold our remarkable status" (p. 956). Lichter (1997) adds that children experience poverty rates that are nearly twice those of the elderly population, "a situation without precedent in American history" (p. 127).

This view is shared by Wood (2003), who believes that family incomes continue to be reliable indicators in predicting levels of student achievement. Students who live in poverty are not only more likely to underachieve than their peers from middle-and high-income households, they are also at risk of not completing school. During the last twenty-five years, the dropout rate for economically disadvantaged students has declined, but it still remains substantially higher than for students from wealthier backgrounds.

Students who are living in poverty are also more likely to be retained, suspended, and expelled from school (Taylor, 2005).

Echoing this view, Woolley (2007) adds that students struggling to overcome such risks live primarily in lower-income urban and rural areas and are disproportionately Black or Hispanic/Latino (p. 100). This statement is supported by Taylor (2005), who asserts that “African American and Latino children are more likely to attend what the U.S. Department of Education terms ‘high-poverty’ schools.”

Expanding on this view, Berliner (2006) articulates that “there are thousands of studies showing correlations between poverty and academic achievement” (p. 961). Marx (2006) noted that socioeconomic gaps all too often equal achievement gaps. He adds, “In a fast-moving world, the distinction between haves and have-nots is broadening and becoming even clearer (p. 282),

Probing deeper, McCurdy, Kunsch, and Reibstein (2007) contend that sustaining a full continuum of effective practices to promote the success of all students is exacerbated by multiple school and community-based factors, including poverty, abuse, drug or alcohol abuse, neighborhood decay, lack of quality teachers, fewer school resources, and greater numbers of students with problem behaviors (p. 12).

Rothstein (2011) argues further that acknowledging the effects of socioeconomic disparities on student learning is a vital step to closing the achievement gap (p. 12). He illustrates the disparity by stating, “If you send two groups of students to equally high-quality schools, the group with greater socioeconomic disadvantage will necessarily have

lower average achievement than the more fortunate group (p. 12). McIntosh et al. (2008) further assert that the relationship between academic performance and problem behavior in particular provides additional cause for concern because of their documented interaction. Students with early difficulties in behavior are at greater risk for developing academic problems, and students with early difficulties with academics are at greater risk for developing problems in social behavior (p. 245).

Statistics further show that students growing up in households with incomes below the poverty line are more likely to drop out and therefore to earn less money during their lifetimes. Review of the data further showed that the average income of 25- to 34-year old male dropouts over a 30-year period (1971-2002), compared with high school graduates and those who got college degrees, showed serious declines in earnings. Dropouts, however, took the hardest hit; their average income fell by 35% (Jehlen, 2006, p. 32). Taylor (2005) probes deeper and reveals that an estimated 40% of inmates in state prisons today are high school dropouts. Their children, in turn, are faced with limited resources and often compelled to attend poor-quality schools. Consequently, they are not only at an increased risk of succeeding academically but are likelier to repeat the cycle (p. 54).

Life-Long Effects

Ornelles (2007) explains that students who struggle in school early on often continue to experience difficulties, and these negative experiences may result in learned helplessness, decreased motivation, lower levels of engagement, and negative attitudes

about school (p. 3) This view is supported by Woolley (2007), who states, “Success or failure in school has a profound and life-long influence on young people.” The author points out that failure in school and dropping out lead to a cascade of poor outcomes, including lowered lifelong income, greater risk for substance abuse, increased likelihood of abusive or neglectful parenting, and engagement in criminal activity” (p.100).

Similarly, Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle (2006) add that school failure is linked with many risk behaviors and negative outcomes including substance abuse, delinquency, emotional/behavioral problems, and early sexual activity (p. 106). Respress and Lutfi (2006) go a step further and caution that “youth who have trouble at home and school will ultimately enter the welfare and judicial processes” (p. 25).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2011), the pattern of higher median earnings corresponding with higher levels of educational attainment was consistent for each year examined between 1995 and 2009. For example, young adults with a bachelor’s degree consistently had higher median earnings than those with less education. (See Table 3)

Table 3

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2011) The condition of Education 2011 (NCES 201—033), Indicator 17

Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment and sex: Selected years, 1980–2009			
[In constant 2009 dollars]			
Year	All education levels	High school diploma or equivalent	Bachelor's degree
Male			
1980	\$45,000	\$44,000	—
1985	43,900	39,900	—
1990	41,000	36,100	—
1995	38,000	33,800	49,300
2000	41,100	36,100	56,100
2005	38,400	33,000	49,400
2009	40,000	32,900	51,000
Female			
1980	\$31,200	\$28,600	—
1985	31,900	27,900	—
1990	32,000	26,300	—
1995	31,000	24,800	39,400
2000	33,600	26,200	43,600
2005	33,000	26,400	41,700
2009	35,000	25,000	40,100

Offering further insight, Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, and Liddle (2005) promulgate that school success predicts many long-term positive outcomes. “These outcomes include continuing higher education, better job possibilities, more positive self-concept, less adult psychopathology, and lower likelihood of later unemployment.

Barton (2005) adds that the achievement gaps mirror gaps in life and school conditions that have been found to be closely related to cognitive development and school achievement. Barton (2005) identified 14 factors related to cognitive development and economic achievement, starting from birth. Six are related to school and eight are related to both the home and outside environment (p. 14) (See Table 4)

Table 4

Barton's 14 Factors That Affect Achievement

14 FACTORS THAT AFFECT ACHIEVEMENT
IN SCHOOL:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rigor of the curriculum. • The extent of teacher preparation in the subject matter being taught. • The amount of teachers' experience. • Class size. • The availability of technology-assisted instruction. • Safety in school.
BEFORE AND BEYOND SCHOOL:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent participation. • How often students changed schools. • Weight at birth. • Lead poisoning. • Hunger and nutrition. • Reading to young children. • Excessive television watching. • Having two parents in the home (Barton, 2003)

In its quest to improve achievement for students considered at risk of academic failure, the Department of Education's primary research branch has focused its research

priorities on identifying widely deployed educational programs, practices, and policies that can improve academic achievement, weeding out programs and approaches that do not work, and developing better ways to disseminate research findings to the field (Viadero, 2005, p. 1).

Link Between an Effective School Principal and an Effective School

One study conducted by Sather (2001) challenged the long-held notion that effecting harmonious relations among diverse ethnic groups in schools is vested primarily in school leadership (p. 511). The author examined three sources of leadership including the administrator, teachers, and students in two high schools boasting diverse populations. In one school, teachers and students acting in leadership capacities were instrumental in developing a caring environment. In the other, the principal was central to restructuring efforts that greatly increased academic achievement.

The study, a qualitative case study design was a subset of the larger database of the Leading for Diversity Project responsible for 21 schools. From this, two schools were chosen for analysis. According to the author, these schools were chosen because “of their interesting and varied sources of leadership (p. 13). The findings revealed that teacher and student leaders were instrumental in developing a caring environment and building bridges of understanding that addressed race, ethnicity, class, and culture. In the other, the principal was the driving force in restructuring efforts that greatly increased personalization, student attendance, academic achievement, and college attendance rates for a population that was “majority minority” (Sather, 2001, p. 511). The relevancy of

some of these findings illuminates the notion that a single-minded approach to the leadership question, heretofore mentioned, may reflect an impractical naïveté.

Another article penned by Egley & Jones (2005) examined whether administrators' reported behaviors were correlated with school rankings, job satisfaction, school climate, or time spent on instructional leadership (p. 71).

The study, which was voluntary in scope, was administered to 47.8% of Florida's school districts or 32 out of 67 districts. This translated to 264 out of 635 schools participating. Participants included 212 principals, 96 assistant principals, and 17 who did not indicate their administrative rank. Using self-report scales via on-line efforts, administrators rated their professionally-inviting behaviors by completing a 12-item Likert-format questionnaire.

The authors explain that the questionnaire items were used in a prior study to assess teachers' perceptions about their administrators' inviting behaviors and found both scales to be highly reliable as follows: $\alpha = .92$ for the Professionally IB scale and $\alpha = .93$ for the Personally IB scale (p. 74). To test for differences between principals and assistant principals, t-tests for each item and scale were conducted. Findings showed that, statistically, principals and assistant principals have similar perceptions about their inviting behaviors (p. 76).

Further, another study conducted by Quinn (2002) examined the impact of principal behaviors on instructional practice and student engagement. The study was designed to identify correlational relationships between principal leadership behaviors

and instructional practice descriptors. The data were collected during a systemic school improvement process and was limited to schools participating in project ASSIST, which involved 24 schools located across Missouri. The schools included eight elementary schools, eight middle schools, and eight high schools from urban, suburban, and rural school settings with a variety of socioeconomic levels represented (p. 453). The instrumentation utilized to gather the data included the staff assessment questionnaire and the instructional practices inventory. The staff assessment questionnaire (SAQ) consisted of 94 Likert-type items. Instructional practices data were collected using the Instructional practices inventory (IPI). This was accomplished through school-wide observations (p. 453).

Pearson-product moment correlational analysis was used to determine if any of the four instructional leadership subscales, including resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence from the Staff Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), correlated with the instructional practices subscales as measured by the IPI. Next, linear regression was used to identify leadership factors that predicted instructional practice (p. 456).

The author found that leadership impacts instruction. The Pearson-product moment correlational analysis revealed several powerful details of this relationship. The Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI) raw score correlated significantly with instructional leadership factor at a large effect size of 0.507 ($p < 0.05$). Active learning and active teaching correlated significantly with instructional leadership. Strong

leadership is crucial in creating a school that values and continually strives to achieve high educational levels for all students (p. 457).

Mediating the Link: Properties of Effective Schools

To mediate the link between students and academic success, research offered by Marzano et al. (2005) suggests that schools must first operate effectively. Whether a school operates effectively or not increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success (p. 3). Offering further insight, Jansen (2001) notes that research published by Edmonds (1979) is often cited as a basic reference for "checklist studies," listing five factors attributable to effective schools, including:

- Strong administrative leadership
- School climate conducive to learning
- 3 High expectations for children's achievement
- Clear instructional objectives for monitoring student performance
- Emphasis on basic skills instruction (p.185).

Teske (1999) examined leadership as a factor in the creation of good schools and found four commonalities across the actions of the principals studied, including:

- Controlling staff hiring and development practices is critical to creating an effective community. This allows teachers to develop professionally and frees the principal from many of the time-consuming tasks of dealing with staff who do not or cannot work together.

- Experience matters. All the principals had considerable time in the system and drew off this knowledge base to identify strategies that gave them the policy space to pursue their goals.
- A coherent educational mission throughout all grades in the school helps mobilize the staff and the school community, though which theme is selected may matter less.
- High expectations for students, not just in rhetoric but also in practice, was common to every principal and they expected everyone in the school community to live up to high standards and enforce those high expectations (p. 5).

Marzano et al. (2003) have shown that students in effective schools as opposed to ineffective schools have a 44% difference in their expected passing rate on a test that has a typical passing rate of 50% (p. 4). Although there is no single leadership style or approach that is fitting for all school settings (Quinn, 2002; Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 2002), Marzano et al. (2003) explain that we can easily make a case that leadership in schools is vital to the effectiveness of a school (p. 4). As such, Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1998) note, "There is no single theory of leadership that accounts adequately for all the leadership dimensions of successful performance." Checkley (2004) adds that "good schools" were headed by principals that had vision and acted on that vision (p. 70). Day (2000) comments that a key leadership skill is the ability to manage the boundaries of autocratic and democratic decision-making (p. 56).

Principalship in American Education

Work published by the Broad Foundation advances the idea that “For America to have the great schools it needs, those schools must have great leaders-and so must their school system” (2003, p. 5). Hunt (2008) goes on to explain that before the era of reform attributed to *A Nation at Risk*, most administrators were commonly viewed as managers. The author explains, “School boards were happy with principals and superintendents who could build good schedules, discipline students, construct and manage budgets, and deal successfully with the community (para. 5). Probing deeper, Lynn Beck and Joseph Murphy (1993) explain that since the beginnings of principalship in American education, educators have struggled to define a distinctive role for the position. Goens (1998) explains that expectations for principals are as varied and conflicting as the groups that hold them. The author writes that these views are informed by opposing views of leadership, management, priorities, style, education, politics, economics, or other factors (p. 104). “Successful leaders” according to Goens (1998) “need to be able to deal with these incompatible expectations from both internal and external sources (p. 104). Spark (2007) comments that principals are the central figure of school organization. What they say, do, or think has a significant effect on organizational functioning. Sergiovanni (2007) adds that that a principal’s interaction and participation can increase learning climate, productivity, achievement, and school reputation. Echoing these views, Marzano et al. (2003) cite a 1977 U.S. Senate Committee Report on Equal

Educational Opportunity identifying the principal as the single most influential person in a school.

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities that occur in and around the school building. It is the principal's leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. The principal is the main link between the community and the school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success (p. 6).

Meanwhile, the Harvard Graduate School of Education in a press release dated March 22, 2010, titled "Effective Leadership: Transforming the Landscape of Education," announced that school leaders today face an array of financial and organizational challenges and notes that administrators make fundamental decisions that shape the education of students, the growth of staff, and the mission of a school for years to come. The release further notes that an institution's success is grounded in its ability to act both efficiently and adaptively.

Drake (1999) adds that a leader “envisions goals, sets standards, and communicates in such a way that all associated directly or indirectly know where the school is going and what it means to the community. Buhler (1995) makes a distinction between managers and leaders, noting that leaders seek to create a cooperative culture in which everyone has a responsibility to lead and to suggest changes when necessary, while managers rely on the authority given to them from above.

Further, according to Lashway (2003), theoreticians and analysts have repeatedly dissected the job and its place in the larger social and educational context, urging principals in one decade to be “bureaucratic executives,” followed ten years later by “humanistic facilitators,” and then “instructional leaders” (p. 3). Lashway (2003) discusses further that principals struggle with role definition on a daily basis and often engage in self-reflection practices, posing such questions as “How should I spend my time? What do students, teachers, parents, and board members expect of me? and What should be at the top of the to-do list?” (p. 3).

Quinn (2002) adds that when the concept of instructional leadership first emerged, principals were thought to be effective if they led a school by setting clear expectations, maintaining firm discipline, and creating high standards (p.447). In their research on instructional leadership. Quinn (2002) found in his examination of principal leadership through the frames of resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence that leadership impacts instruction. Further, he found that principals who are strong instructional leaders have more of an impact on classroom instructional

practice at the extremes of the engagement continuum (p. 460). Additionally, the study revealed that higher levels of Active Learning/Active Teaching occur in schools where the principal serves as an instructional resource (p. 461).

School Leadership Today

There is a growing body of research focused on the formal leadership of school principals. Lezotte (1991) espouses that “school improvement is an endless journey” (p. 2). Mondo (2010) adds that the literature on leadership repeatedly refers the need for effective leadership of school principals (p. 1). Similarly, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) explain that leading schools is complex work. McCurdy et al. (2007) postulate that school officials today face the challenge of the growing need to provide and sustain a full continuum of effective practices to promote the success of all students (p. 12). Welch, Lindsay, and Halfacre (2001) explain that effective principals do not need to be “walking encyclopedias of school reform”; rather, they need to clearly communicate “what they believe, what they expect, where they’ve been, and where they want to go” (p. 56). Williams (2006) comments that school principals who practice a combination of conceptual and analytical decision-making approaches tend to develop multiple alternatives in addressing issues (p. 3). Echoing this view, Day (2000) notes that effective school leadership is marked by principals who can balance a variety of pressures all the while never losing sight of their values (p. 56).

The expanding duties of the principalship, according to Diamantes (2004), have created a situation in which principals have to make choices relative to the duties that will

consume their time (p. 1). Similarly, Walker and Carr-Stewart (2006) explain that the principal's role has been undergoing dramatic changes, such as the influence of reforms, expectations of stakeholders, and the changing student body mix (p. 18). Daresh and Male (2000) add that principals face "alienation, isolation, and frustration" in the workplace. Walker and Carr-Stewart (2006) further express that "the work of educational leaders has become less predictable, less structured, and more conflict-laden" (p. 18). Thomson (2009) even goes so far as to liken the principalship to an extreme sport (p. 2).

Portin (2004) adds that a principal, together with other school leaders, works each day with a passion for ensuring learning for all students "while the Damocles sword of the next set of high-stakes test scores hangs in the balance, ready to judge whether the school is 'good' or 'failing'" (p. 14). Principals, according to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), exert leadership through "constellations of actions that coalesce around different 'models' of leadership, including transformational, instructional, moral, or participative leadership" (p. 3).

Sergiovanni (2001) identifies seven common functions of leadership in all types of schools, including instructional leadership, cultural leadership, managerial leadership, human resources leadership, strategic leadership, external development leadership, and micropolitical leadership (See Table 5).

Table 5

*Sergiovanni's Seven Core Functions of Leadership in Schools***Sergiovanni's Seven Core Functions of Leadership in Schools**

Function	Action
Instructional Leadership	Ensuring quality of instruction, modeling teaching practices, supervising curriculum, and ensuring quality of teaching resources.
Cultural Leadership	Tending to the symbolic resources of the school (its traditions, climate, and history).
Managerial Leadership	Overseeing the operations of the school (its budget, schedule, facilities, safety and security, and transportation).
Human Resources Leadership	Recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators; developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities.
Strategic Leadership	Promoting vision, mission, and goals-and developing a means to reach them.
External Development Leadership	Representing the school in the community, developing capital, tending to public relations, recruiting students, buffering and mediating external interests, and advocating for the school's interests
Micropolitical Leadership	Buffering and mediating internal interests while maximizing resources (financial and human)

Similarly, Hargreaves and Fink (2004) espouse that education leaders are charged with the primary responsibility of instituting learning that engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally (p. 9). Researchers Glickman (2002) and Stoll, Fink, and Earl, (2002) explain further that sustainable leadership creates lasting, meaningful improvements in learning that go beyond temporary gains in achievement scores.

Greenwood (1996), Hogan, Gordon, and Hogan (1994), and Senge (1990) state that, unlike leadership in other types of organizations, the leaders in learning organizations are expected to serve as designers, teachers, and stewards. They explain that, as designers, leaders generate the “ideas of purpose, vision, and core values by which people will live” (p. 4). Further, leaders as designers promote “policies, strategies, and structures that translate guiding ideas into decisions” and create efficient learning processes that support these endeavors (p. 5). Finally, as teachers, leaders foster a helping atmosphere in which everyone, including the leader, seizes upon a “more insightful view of current reality” (p. 5). Welch et al. (2001) posit that an effective leader provides the guiding framework for where the whole group is headed and what they are doing. This includes:

- Commitment to students. If students’ needs are not the guiding force of the school, the school will fail.
- Maximum effort. A family is undermined when only some of the members work toward the agreed-upon goals. Bitterness and resentment build quickly in a group when some members give their best and others do not.

- Team effort. Even the most talented educator will fail if he or she is isolated from the rest of the faculty.
- Lifelong learning. Attending professional development opportunities, asking questions of other educators, and trying to resolve issues that inhibit student learning should be normal activities.
- Honesty, kindness, and knowledge. To bear the honor of being called an educator, these characteristics are required.
- Respect for administrative rules. Successful schools have relevant and consistent respect for rules.
- Commitment. Behavior is guided by written and unwritten contracts that are based on the mission of the school and students needs. (p. 58).

Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2004) identified six common leadership styles that can either energize or demotivate people (see Table 6). They are as follows:

Table 6

Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee's Six Common Leadership Styles

Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee's Six Common Leadership Styles

Visionary	Inspires by articulating a heartfelt, shared goal, routinely gives performance feedback and suggestions for improvement in terms of that goal.
Coaching	Takes people aside for a talk to learn their personal aspirations, routinely gives feedback in those terms, and stretches assignments to move toward those goals.
Democratic	Knows when to listen and ask for input, gets buy-in and draws on what others know to make better decisions.
Affiliative	Realizes that having fun together is not a waste of time, but builds emotional capital and harmony.
Pacesetting	Leads by hard-driving example and expects others to meet the same pace and high performance standards, tends to give F's, not A's.
Commanding	Gives orders and demands immediate compliance. Tends to be coercive.

The authors contend further that the best leaders make use of four or more of these styles, whereas the poorest leaders tend to overuse both Pacesetting and Commanding,

Leone et al. (2009) offer additional insight, explaining that one of the roles of a school leader is that of a “bridge of knowledge and encouragement,” who facilitates

learning for all of the building's adults and students. Another role is that of the "navigator," who directs the future course of the school through an active approach that involves being a change agent, developing strong community bonds, and focusing on a successful, productive future for all involved (p. 89). Hambright and Franco (2007) add that the increased emphasis on accountability has added instructional leadership to the role of the principal without removing any of the principal's historical roles including business manager and building management (p. 271). Parish (1999) writes that the principalship is "perhaps the most responsible position in all of academia (p. 237). He states that the principal's decisions and acts of discipline often shape young minds and the feelings of teachers in the school (p. 237).

On another level, Marzano et al. (2005) propagate that although the difference in expected student achievement in "effective" versus "ineffective" schools is dramatic, the difference is even more substantial when we contrast "highly effective" schools with "highly ineffective" schools (p. 4). The authors illustrate this point by contrasting the top 1% of schools with the bottom 1%. They espouse that "if students in both schools take a test that has a typical passing rate of 50%, we would expect 72% of the students in the effective school to pass the test and only 28% in the ineffective school to pass--a difference of 44%" (p. 4). This is shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Percentage of Students Expected to Pass or Fail a Test in Effective Versus Ineffective Schools

Percentage of Students Expected to Pass or Fail a Test in Effective Versus Ineffective Schools		
	Expected Pass Rate	Expected Fail Rate
Effective School (A)	72%	28%
Ineffective School (B)	28%	72%

Gates, Blanchard, and Hersey (2002) further assert that successful leaders are those who can adapt their behavior to meet the demands of their own unique environment (p. 348). Substantiating this claim further is research offered by Kruger, Witziers, and Sleegers (2007), which suggests that in the last two decades, there has been a growing body of research focused on the impact of school leadership on school effectiveness and school improvement (p. 1). Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) add that state accountability systems are increasingly placing the burden of school success – and individual student achievement—“squarely on the principal’s shoulders” (p. 6). Similarly, the work of Spillane (2009) espouses that it is not uncommon to place the burden for saving a failing school on the principal, “perpetuating a view of successful school leaders as heroes and less successful ones as failures” (p.70).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) express a similar view, stating, “In these times of heightened concern for student learning, school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn. They must respond to complex environments and serve all students well” (p. 1). Hitch and Coley-Larchmont (2010) add that effective leadership becomes critical given the hectic environment principals face. They explain, “Principals are overworked with a constant bombardment of innumerable daily actions and tasks” (p. 17). Further, according to the Institute for Educational Leadership, “Schools of the twenty-first century will require a new kind of principal, one whose main responsibility will be defined in terms of instructional leadership that focuses on strengthening teaching and learning (Mazzeo, 2003, p. 1). Bottoms and O’Neill (2001) add that today’s principal must be prepared to focus time, attention, and effort on what curriculum students are being taught, how instruction is delivered, and what they are learning (p. 6). They contend, “This formidable challenge demands a new breed of school leaders, with skills and knowledge far greater than those expected of ‘school managers’ in the past” (p. 6).

Fundamental Practices of Exemplary Leadership

Kouzes and Posner (1995) identified five fundamental practices of exemplary leadership that enable leaders to get extraordinary things done. Those efforts include:

1. Challenge the process.
2. Inspire a shared vision.
3. Enable others to act.

4. Model the way.
5. Encourage the heart.

According to Sather (2001), these dictums, identified by Kouzes and Posner as the “leadership challenge” have stood the test of time and are applicable to any type of organization or situation (p. 50).

Along this line, Lashway (2003) discusses that principals must know academic content and pedagogical techniques. They must work with teachers to strengthen skills, utilize data to drive instruction, and “rally students, teachers, parents, local health and family service agencies, youth development groups, local businesses and other community residents and partners around the common goal of raising student performance” (p. 3). Finally, the author suggests that principals must have the leadership skills and knowledge base to exercise the autonomy and authority necessary to implement these strategies (Lashway, 2003, p. 3).

Heck (1992) found that principals in high-achieving schools, as measured by academic achievement in a variety of areas, are more effective instructional leaders than their counterparts in consistently low-achieving schools on eight instructional leadership tasks, including:

1. Makes regular class visits.
2. Promotes discussion of instructional issues.
3. Minimizes class interruptions.
4. Emphasizes test results.

5. Participates in discussion about how instruction affects achievement.
6. Ensures systematic monitoring of student progress.
7. Communicates instructional goals.
8. Protects faculty from external pressures (p. 21).

Lashway (2003) adds that surveys persistently find that principals feel torn between the instructional leadership that almost everyone agrees should be the top priority and the daily management chores that are almost impossible to ignore (p. 3).

Reynolds and Warfield (2010) proclaim that schools today continue to evolve into increasingly complex organizations (p. 61). Similarly, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) contend further that educational leaders must guide their schools through the challenges posed by an increasingly complex environment (p.1). Protheroe (2005) states further that “accountability pressures and ambitious goals have placed both districts and schools in positions requiring rapid and often significant change. Principals are at the center of this speeded-up process, and their leadership is the key to successfully navigating change” (p. 54).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) add that local, state, and federal achievement standards for ambitious learning for all children have changed the landscape of educational accountability. Pressure is on actors at all levels, from students themselves to teachers, principals, and superintendents. In these times of heightened concern for student learning, school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn (p.1). Echoing this view, Mazzeo (2003) discusses that

efforts to improve school leadership are not unwarranted. He articulates that research confirms both a limited supply of talented candidates to lead schools and the important role these individuals can play in improving teaching and learning (p. 1). He explains further that research also suggests that many current and potential principals lack the skills necessary to lead in today's schools. A 2001 Public Agenda report found that 29% of superintendents believe the quality of principals has declined measurably in recent years. The author states that the changing nature of the principalship is one likely source of this dissatisfaction (Mazzeo, 2003, p. 1).

Similarly, Reynolds and Warfield (2010) discuss further that escalating standards also place new demands on educational leaders to create a vision of success for all students (p. 61). Sebring and Bryk (2000) add that the quality of the principal's leadership is crucial in determining whether a school moves forward to improve learning opportunities for students (p. 1). The author purports further that in productive schools, principals share a common leadership style and substantive focus. Characteristics of principals' leadership style include the following:

- Inclusive, facilitative orientation. These leaders can articulate a "vision-in-outline" for the school and invite teachers and parents alike to further shape this vision.
- Institutional focus on student learning. Principals set high standards for teaching and work towards improving learning

- Efficient management. “Things get done” to support staff and students and minimize disruptions
- Support and pressure used to catalyze initiatives, enable others. Professional development is supported (p. 2)

Along this vein, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) explain, “Leading schools is complex work. A principal, in concert with other leaders in the school, does his or her job each day with a passion for ensuring learning for all students while the Damocles sword of the next set of high-stakes test scores hangs in the balance, ready to judge whether the school is ‘good’ or ‘failing.’”

Leithwood, Lewis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) explain further that there are three sets of practices that make up the core of good leadership. In their view, without leadership focused on setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization to meet changing demands, “not much would happen.” Williams (2009) adds that leadership in schools is the key to success for the entire learning community (p. 30). Leithwood (1994) describes instructional leadership as a series of behaviors that is designed to affect classroom instruction (p. 498). Skillful leaders have the ability to employ all of their resources and create a community of shared leadership while maintaining a guiding hand on the direction of the school” (p. 30). Similarly, Spillane (2009, p. 498) asserts that leadership and management make a difference in increasing school productivity and turning around struggling schools (p. 70). Barth (1990) declared, “Show me a good school, and I’ll show you a good principal” (p.64). Meanwhile, in

Cawelti's (2001) view there are four critical--and interrelated--responsibilities that require a principal's personal attention if a school is to improve:

- Sustaining focus on student achievement.
- Perfecting a collaborative organization culture.
- Helping teachers expand their repertoires to include research-based teaching strategies.
- Developing and sustaining a culture that encourages experimentation with new ideas to improve student achievement.

Offering further insight, Lashway (2003) explains that policymakers, practitioners, and university professors have established professional standards that are now used to guide principal preparation programs in at least 35 states. Foremost among these are the guidelines developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) which has established six key themes as pathways to student achievement. They are as follows:

1. Facilitating shared vision.
2. Sustaining a school culture conducive to student and staff learning.
3. Managing the organization for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. Collaborating with families and community members.
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

6. Influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context (p.4).

Echoing these guidelines, the National Association of Elementary School Principal's (NAESP) guide to professional development for principals underscores the leader's role in creating a dynamic learning community by giving the highest priority to student and adult learning, setting high expectations, demanding content and instruction that ensure student achievement, creating a culture of continuous learning for adults, using data to guide improvement, and actively engaging the community (Lashway, 2003, p. 4).

Consistent with these standards, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identified a number of "core practices" as follows:

- Setting directions, which includes identifying and articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, and creating high performance expectations.
- Developing people, which involves offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, and providing an appropriate model.
- Redesigning the organization, which includes strengthening school cultures modifying organizational structures, and building collaborative processes.

Against this backdrop, however, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) explains that the problem is not a lack of *certified* principals but rather a lack of *qualified* principals (p. 1). Certification, they comment, "as it exists today, is not proof of quality

(Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001, p. 2). Effective leaders, they purport, inspire all students to achieve at high levels (p. 2). They state, "Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance--and leadership begins with an effective school principal" (p. 2). In a report published in April 2001, titled *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action*, SREB defined six strategies that state and local leaders can use to acquire an ample supply of highly qualified principals. These strategies include:

Strategy 1: Single out high-performers. Tap people with a demonstrated knowledge of curriculum and instruction, as well as a passion for helping students meet high standards.

Strategy 2: Recalibrate preparation programs. Preparation programs should emphasize the core functions of the high-achieving school including curriculum, instruction, and student achievement.

Strategy 3: Emphasize real-world training. Field-based experiences should be a high priority. Field experiences should provide the following opportunities:

- Observe effective school leaders.
- Practice school leadership by working with others.
- Interact with university faculty who have practical and research-based knowledge of effective school practices (p.16).

Strategy 4: A two-tier performance-based licensure system should be developed. Those with initial licenses would have to earn professional licenses by

demonstrating that they can lead improvement in school, classroom practices, and in student achievement.

Strategy 5: Move accomplished teachers into school leadership positions.

Strategy 6: Use state academies to cultivate leadership teams in middle-tier schools. Schools that focus on creating state leadership academies are most likely to improve student learning and “grow” future principals (p. 3)

Closing the Gap

Back in 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education wrote that for our country to function, its citizenry must be able to reach some common understandings on complex issues. “Education,” the authors wrote, “helps form these common understandings,” a point made by Thomas Jefferson in his famous dictum:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.

Bolstering this view, the job of a school leader, according to Levine (2005), has been transformed by extraordinary economic, demographic, technological, and global change. He charges that as our country makes the transition from an industrial to a global information-based economy, the United States now requires a more educated population (p. 11).

With the increasingly complex demands and challenges confronting principals, d'Arbon (2003) commented that one way to make the principal's job more manageable was to achieve clarity on what is essential and what is important. Waters & Grubb (2004) further state, "Such clarity can help principals prioritize the demands of the job by helping them focus first on the responsibilities and practices correlated with student achievement rather than attempting to fulfill every responsibility that someone deemed important regardless of its impact on learning" (p. 2). Starting in 1998, McREL began synthesizing a growing body of research through meta-analyses of research on student characteristics and teacher and school practices associated with school effectiveness. After analyzing studies conducted over a 30-year period, McREL identified 21 leadership responsibilities that are significantly associated with student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 2). McREL's leadership framework was developed from three key bodies of knowledge, including:

1. A quantitative analysis of 30 years of research.
2. An exhaustive review of theoretical literature on leadership.
3. More than 100 years of combined professional wisdom on school leadership.

In addition to the general impact of leadership, the authors found 21 specific leadership responsibilities significantly correlated with student achievement. These 21 leadership responsibilities and the average effect size for their impact on student achievement are reported in Table 1.

The authors discuss further that leaders can have a positive or negative impact on achievement. They can also have a marginal impact on achievement (Marzano et al, 2005, pp. 42-43). The average effect size between leadership and student achievement is .25. The correlation is explained by Marzano (2003) as follows:

Consider two schools (school A & school B) with similar student and teacher populations. Both demonstrate achievement on a standardized, norm-referenced test at the 50th percentile. Principals in both schools are also average—that is, their abilities in the 21 key leadership responsibilities are ranked at the 50th percentile. Now assume that the principal of school B improves her demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities by exactly one standard deviation...Our research findings indicate that this increase in leadership ability would translate into mean student achievement at school B that is 10 percentile points higher than school A.

Waters et al. (2003) add, “When leaders concentrate on the wrong school and/or classroom practices or miscalculate the magnitude or “order” of the change they are attempting to implement, they can negatively impact student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-43). Table 8 shows the range of impact leaders can have on student performance. In some studies, Waters et al. (2003) found an effect size for leadership and achievement of .50, which translates into a one standard deviation difference in demonstrated leadership (p. 5).

Table 8

Differential Impact of Leadership

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP		
RANGE	CORRELATION	CHANGE FROM 50 th P FOR 1 SD INCREASE IN LEADERSHIP
Mean	.25	60 th
Highest	.50	69 th
Lowest	-.02	49 th

Kenneth Leithwood and Daniel Duke (1999) identified six distinct conceptions of leadership; instructional (influencing the work of teachers in a way that will improve student achievement), transformational (increasing the commitments and capacities of school staff), moral (influencing others by appealing to notions of right and wrong), participative (involving other members of the school community), managerial (operating the school efficiently), and contingent (adapting their behavior to fit the situation).

Lashway (2003) points out that school leaders in all settings face common challenges in meeting expectations, including the following:

- Providing focused instructional leadership.
- Leading change.

- Developing a collaborative leadership structure.
- Providing the moral center (p. 5).

Summary

Review of the literature was divided into four key sections. The first section discussed the call for schools to do a better job. The research revealed that business, media, and political leaders generally consider public education to be in crisis. In fact, one report called for a top-to-bottom overhaul of the U.S. education and training system.

This was followed by a review of the changes in the legal landscape, education reform, and the life-long effects that school success and failure has on student achievement. Ryan (2009) explains that there have been dramatic changes in the legal landscape for schools during the last half-century. The movement spurred by the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* dramatically warned that America's educational foundations were being eroded by a "rising tide of mediocrity" (p. 3). In response to this finding, states adopted academic standards to guide education and raise expectations. Further, research proffered by Wooley (2007) revealed that "success or failure in school has a profound and life-long influence on young people" (p. 100). The author explains that "failure in school and dropout lead to a cascade of poor outcomes, including lowered lifelong income, greater risk for substance abuse, increased likelihood of abusive or neglectful parenting, and engagement in criminal activity" (p. 100).

Finally, reviews of the qualities of an effective school principal were examined, revealing that leaders can have a positive or negative impact on student achievement.

Marzano et al. (2003) explain that we can easily make a case that leadership in schools is vital to the effectiveness of a school. Checkley (2004) adds that “good schools” are headed by principals that have vision and act on that vision (p. 70).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the importance of “second order” leadership responsibilities and behaviors in addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students from the perspective of distinguished elementary school principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

Founded in 1921, the NAESP posits that principals are “the primary catalyst for creating a lasting foundation for learning, driving school and student performance, and shaping the long-term impact of school improvement efforts” (National Distinguished Principals Program, n.d.). As such, an abundance of research has well documented the effects of leadership behaviors on student academic achievement (Berliner, 2006; Cawelti, 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). However, there is a paucity of research on examining and identifying the practices of “distinguished” elementary school principals in addressing the needs of at-risk students.

Research Questions

The study was framed by three research questions:

1. What level of importance do distinguished elementary school principals, as recognized by NAESP (during the academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011), attribute to the 11 “second order” leadership responsibilities espoused by

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) when addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?

2. How does the level of importance of leadership responsibilities vary by the characteristics of principals and schools?
3. Which No Child Left Behind Act accountability measures are perceived by “distinguished” elementary school principals to have impact on leadership responsibilities for addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?

Research Design and Procedures

The research buttressing this study followed the constructs of a quantitative study. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), quantitative methods are directed toward collecting data to test theories. Additionally, a descriptive research approach was implemented to collect the data, further defining this study. Although there are many types of research that can be categorized as “descriptive,” including surveys (questionnaires, Delphi method, interviews, normative), case studies, job analyses, and documentary analysis, a rating survey was used to collect data from the elementary school principals recognized as “distinguished” by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). The NAESP annually recognizes outstanding leadership of principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, and lifelong learning. Award recipients must also display a strong commitment to principalship through active participation in professional associations while assuming an active role in the community. National Distinguished Principals are viewed as leaders

who truly make a difference. This study explored the perspectives of national “distinguished” elementary school principals as they relate to the academic achievement of at-risk students while meeting accountability measures.

Conceptual Design

The conceptual design undergirding this study is the balanced leadership framework proffered by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL’s framework identifies 21 categories of specific responsibilities related to principal leadership associated with student achievement. The authors discuss further that two traits or factors underlie the 21 responsibilities; namely, “first-order change” and “second order” change (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2005, p. 65) (See Table 9).

“First-order” change is incremental change that fine-tunes the system through a series of small steps that do not depart radically from past practices. “Second order” change, however, involves a dramatic shift in direction and requires new ways of thinking and acting (p. 66). “Second order” change essentially conflicts with existing norms, requires a new knowledge base, and can be complex. In fact, “to successfully implement a second-order change initiative, a school leader must ratchet up his idealism, energy, and enthusiasm” (Waters et al., 2005, p. 75) (See Table 9). The authors add that the school leader might pay a certain price for implementing a second-order change initiative, explaining that “the school leader must be willing to live through a period of frustration and even anger from some staff members” (p. 75). The authors elucidate that,

given their impact on the progress of change, effective leaders must understand both the order of change they are leading and how to select and skillfully use appropriate leadership practices (Waters et al., 2003, p. 8).

Table 9

“First” and “Second Order” Change Characteristics

“First Order” Change	“Second Order” Change
An extension of the past	A break with the past
Within existing paradigms	Outside of existing paradigms
Consistent with prevailing values and norms	Conflicted with prevailing values and norms
Focused	Emergent
Bounded	Unbounded
Incremental	Complex
Linear	Nonlinear
Marginal	A disturbance to every element of a system
Implemented with existing knowledge & skills	Requires new knowledge and skills to implement
Problem-and solution-oriented	Neither problem-nor solution-oriented
Implemented by experts	Implemented by stakeholders

Marzano et al. (2005) report further that within the realm of K-12 education, “someone is always trying to change it—someone is always proposing a new program or a new practice” (p. 65). The authors add that although many of these program initiatives are well-thought-out and even well-researched, “many, maybe even most, educational innovations are short-lived” (p. 65). They further postulate the following:

Leadership supporting an innovation must be consistent with the order of magnitude of the order of change required by an innovation. If leadership

techniques do not match the order of change required by an innovation, the innovation will probably fail regardless of its merits. Some innovations require changes that are gradual and subtle; others require changes that are drastic and dramatic (p. 66).

The authors argue further that “solutions to most recurring modern-day problems require a second-order perspective” (p.67). As such, this study examined the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning’s (McREL) 11 “second order” responsibilities associated with improving student achievement. These “second order” responsibilities include Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Optimizer, Intellectual Stimulation, Change Agent, Monitoring/Evaluating, Flexibility, Ideals/Beliefs, Culture, Communication, Order, and Input (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, pp. 116, 120). (See Table 10).

Table 10

McREL’s Leadership Team Responsibilities and Actions When Guiding “Second Order” Change

Responsibilities	Actions of the Leadership Team
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work individually with staff members regarding implementation of the innovation. • Attend staff development opportunities regarding the innovation.
Optimizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak positively about the innovation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide examples of other schools that have successfully implemented the innovation.• Express a continued belief that the innovation will enhance student achievement.• Identify roadblocks and challenges to the innovation.
Intellectual Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include research about the innovation in conversations.• Ask questions that cause teacher to be reflective in their practices related to the innovation.• Lead discussions around current practices related to the innovation.
Change Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise issues around achievement related to the innovation.• Share data related to other schools that have implemented the innovation.• Compare where the school is and where it needs to be in terms of implementing the innovation.• Demonstrate “tolerance for ambiguity” regarding the innovation.
Monitoring/Evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look at both formative and summative assessments in relation to the innovation.• Conduct classroom walk-throughs related to the innovation.
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continually adjust plans in response to progress and tension.• Use situational leadership regarding the innovation.• Use protocols that allow for input regarding the innovation without bogging down into endless discussion.

Table 10

McREL's Leadership Responsibilities and Actions When Guiding "Second Order" Change (continued)

Responsibilities	Actions of the Leadership Team
Ideals/Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate ideals and beliefs related to the innovation in formal and informal conversations and model through behaviors. • Ensure that practices related to the innovation are aligned with shared ideals and beliefs. • Ask strategic questions regarding the innovation when actions don't reflect agreed-upon purposes, goals, and understandings.
Culture (Negatively affected by second-order change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually remind colleagues of the vision for the initiative and why it is important. • Model a "we're all in this together" attitude.
Communication (Negatively affected by second-order change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss disagreement and contentions in staff and team meetings. • Probe for questions and concerns from colleagues and bring them to the leadership team for resolution.
Order (Negatively affected by second-order change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design effective decision-making procedures, problem-solving tools, and conflict resolution tools. • Model effective mediation strategies.
Input (Negatively affected by second-order change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet frequently with small groups to hear concerns and respond. • Actively seek input from staff. • Work to develop "ownership" rather than "buy-in" for the initiative.

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Population and Sample

The target population of this study is elementary school principals who have been selected as nationally distinguished principals by the NAESP. The program, which was established in 1984, annually honors 63 outstanding elementary and middle-level administrators from across the nation in both public and private schools from the United States Department of Defense Office of Educational Activity and the United States Department of State Office of Overseas Schools for their exemplary achievements.

The sample for this study consisted of 151 public school honorees from across the nation given that they comply with No Child Left Behind mandates. Private schools, including religious schools, were excluded from the sample.

In order to get a sufficient sample size, honoree lists were obtained for the years 2009, 2010, and 2011. Further,

1. The study was limited to public school leaders recognized as National Distinguished Principals by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) during 2009, 2010, and 2011.
2. Each participant had to be active in the role of principal during the year in which he or she was named a National Distinguished Principal.
3. To be an eligible recipient of the award, an individual had to serve in a leadership capacity for a minimum of five years.
4. Only principals working in public institutions within the United States were included in the study.

5. The study focused exclusively on the perceptions of “distinguished” principals at the elementary school level (Patton’s criterion sampling procedure).

Table 11

Principal Demographics

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	24	39.3
Female	37	60.7
Age of Participants		
21-29	0	0
30-39	4	6.6
40-49	16	26.2
50-59	28	45.9
60 or older	13	21.3
Educational Level of Participants		
Bachelors	1	1.6
Masters	42	68.9
Doctorate	18	29.5
Years (Overall) Served as an Administrator/Principal		
0-5	0	0
6-10	7	11.5
11-15	23	37.7
16-20	13	21.3
21 +	18	29.5
Years of Experience as Principal at Current School		
0-5	6	9.8
6-10	26	42.6
11-15	24	39.3
16-20	4	6.6
21 +	1	1.6

As Table 11 shows, about 60% of the sample population were female and 40% of the sample were male, with a majority of the principals age 50 or over. All but one respondent had a master's or higher. Principals were well experienced in their positions with almost 90% serving 11 years or more.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument administered to collect quantitative data was the same instrument utilized by Valenti (2010). The survey examined the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's (McREL's) 11 "second order" responsibilities associated with improving academic achievement of students (Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, 2005).

A rating survey using a Likert scale for rating survey responses was chosen over a ranking survey. According to Suskie (2008), a ranking survey can be tedious to complete, produce incomplete information, and yield data that are difficult to analyze statistically. On the other hand, the Likert Scale or Likert Rating Method is very effective for allowing survey respondents to express different feelings, opinions, and agreements or disagreements while producing interval data that allow for quantitative examinations. By using the Likert Scale, survey respondents are generally asked to rank their agreement or disagreement with a particular statement and respondents have the option of choosing one answer ("Survey instrument," n.d.).

Additionally, given that the data were collected from principals located across the nation, face-to-face interviews were not deemed practical for this study. Bolstering this

approach further is the threat of bias and the possible inconsistencies in the administration of conducting an interview or observation, as they may invariably compromise the statistical integrity of the analysis.

The variables studied included the perceptions of National Distinguished Principals, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's (McREL) 11 "second order" responsibilities associated with improving student achievement, and demographic data about the principals and their schools. These leadership responsibilities include Change Agent, Flexibility, Ideals and Beliefs, Intellectual Stimulation, Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Monitor and Evaluate, Optimizer, Communication, Order, Culture, and Input.

The survey (See Appendix B) consisted of four sections. The first section of the survey consisted of questions intended to capture specific demographic data about the principals and their schools. Principal questions included gender, age, level of educational attainment, number of years as a principal, and years as principal at the current school. School questions included total number of students, community classification (rural, suburban, or urban), the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch, the percentage of the student body representing each ethnic group, and the schools Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

The next section asked "distinguished" elementary school principals to identify the most important leadership responsibilities and behaviors developed by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) when working to improve the academic achievement of at-

risk students. Respondents were asked to select from a 4-point Likert-type scale including: Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, or Not Important.

The third section of the survey asked “distinguished” elementary school principals to identify how their effectiveness to execute the leadership responsibilities and behaviors developed by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), has been influenced since the onset of more rigorous high-stakes standards and accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act. Respondents were asked to rate the 11 “second order” leadership responsibilities (see Table 1), using the following 5-point scale: Increased Greatly, Increased, No Difference, Decreased, and Decreased Greatly.

The final section of the survey consisted of two open-ended questions that were optional. These questions prompted respondents to suggest recommendations to other school leaders who are grappling with the educational outcomes for at-risk students in their school.

Further, permission was requested to use the 11 responsibilities associated with “second order” change as referenced on pages 70-73 of *School Leadership that Works* (Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, 2005) in the survey instrument. This request was granted (see Appendix C) in February, 2012, by the study’s publisher, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

To establish the validity of the original survey instrument, a pilot study was conducted in 2006 with a small cadre of elementary school leaders, previously recognized as National Distinguished Principals. The eight participants in the pilot

represented Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Utah, and Vermont.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Three practicing administrators pretested the instrument. These individuals provided suggestions concerning the length of the survey, wording of the questions, structure of the questions, and the clarity of directions. The survey was modified based on their feedback.

Data Collection Procedure

Given that the data were collected from principals located across the nation, face-to-face interviews were not deemed suitable for this study. Instead, e-mail addresses for each of the principals targeted for this study were gathered from the NAESP website and www.MSN.com.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) website was accessed to acquire the listings of the 151 school leaders who were recognized as National Distinguished Principals during 2009, 2010, and 2011 (See Appendix A). Information regarding the leadership practices of these elementary school principals associated with improving student achievement was collected from a self-administered web-based survey instrument. The survey included short questions intended to produce specific demographic data about the respondents and their schools along with two open-ended questions (See Appendix B). The survey was expected to take participants approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Once approval of the study was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Seton Hall University (See Appendix E), the data collection procedure began. Surveys were disseminated and responses collected electronically using www.SurveyMonkey.com.

Before the online effort commenced, each respondent was called directly to personalize the effort and spur participation. This was followed with an online communication. A letter of solicitation and a link to the online survey was sent via e-mail to 151 principals, urging them to participate in the study (See Appendix F). It described the study, outlined expectations, assured confidentiality, and invited participation. Each questionnaire contained a school code number for temporary identification purposes to link the respondent to the appropriate school.

Within minutes of disseminating the survey, confirmation of email delivery was received along with notification that eight of the respondents had previously opted out. Following the initial e-mail correspondence, which garnered 27 responses, a second e-mail request was forwarded one week later to all principals who had received an email message but had not responded. At this point, it was discovered through follow-up online/telephone communication that:

- Two principals had opted-out
- Nine principals had left the district
- Two principals had retired
- Four principals were gainfully employed in other capacities at the district level

Taking these adjustments into account, the actual sample population was reduced to 130.

A third and final email blast was forwarded two weeks later, resulting in 68 total respondents. From this total, seven principal respondents who only partially completed the survey were eliminated from the data analysis altogether, resulting in 61 principal respondents for this study or a survey response rate of approximately 40%.

The survey was banked on the online survey service www.SurveyMonkey.com. Data were collected from the online survey service and then analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software.

Data Analysis

The results of the survey were analyzed to determine the level to which principals agreed on what “second order” responsibilities have the most significant impact on the academic achievement of at-risk students since the onset of more rigorous high-stakes testing and accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act. Additional demographic questions intended to produce specific data about the respondents and their schools were examined for patterns, consistencies, and variations.

All data collected were initially analyzed in the aggregate. Descriptive statistics were then generated on each of the individual items comprised in the research questions. These descriptive statistics included the mean scores and frequency distributions of responses. To examine any patterns or connections, a separate statistical analysis was conducted for each demographic factor.

For all appropriate analyses, both the $p < .05$ (95% probability) and $p < .01$ (99% probability) threshold were reported. In this way, the significance of the relationships

between the different variables and the responses to the survey were illustrated in the data analysis. Next, the possibility of relationships between leadership responsibilities and demographic factors were examined using ANOVA and post-hoc testing.

Table 12 depicts an organizational matrix of the research study showing each research question, sources of data used, and the statistics generated to answer the questions.

Sampling Bias

For purposes of investigating sampling bias, a comparison of the group of principals who completed the survey with those who did not revealed that there was not an overwhelming bias. In fact, non-respondents were called directly to determine the reason(s) for non-completion of the survey instrument. Non-respondents explained that (1) since receiving the titled distinction from NAESP, they have been over-solicited by individuals/groups and have opted to 'just pick' surveys to complete from the mounting requests and (2) time constraints have further hindered their interest to complete survey requests.

To deal with sampling bias, the mean values from the school demographics were compared for the group of respondents who completed the survey with those that did not. Further, an analysis of the various factors, including region, number of students, percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch, student-teacher ratio, and the ethnic makeup of the student population, revealed that for all the variables except one, the differences were not statistically significant. The data were statistically significant ($t = -2.17, p=.03$) for the African-American student population. As such, it is important to

note that caution is necessary in making inferences and generalizing results for this population. Based on the above, the researcher posits that this study's sample was an unbiased reflection of the specific population of study.

Table 12

Research Study Data Analysis Matrix

Research Question	Statistics Generated to Answer Questions
What level of importance do "distinguished" elementary school principals as recognized by NAESP (during the academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011) attribute to the 11 "second order" leadership responsibilities as espoused by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) when addressing the academic achievement of a-risk students?	Descriptive Statistics using Mean Scores and Standard Deviation
How does the level of importance of leadership responsibilities vary by the characteristics of principals and schools?	t-test and ANOVA
Which No Child Left Behind Act accountability measures are perceived to have impact on leadership responsibilities for addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?	Descriptive Statistics using Mean Scores and Standard Deviation

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter begins with an examination of the characteristics of the sample, looking for patterns, consistencies, and variations. This is followed by an analysis of the results of the survey to determine the level to which principals agreed on which 11 “second order” responsibilities have the most significant impact on the academic achievement of at-risk students.

Next, the possibility of relationships between leadership responsibilities and demographic characteristics were examined, using ANOVA and Post-Hoc testing. The chapter continues with an examination of the degree to which educational accountability measures implemented by the NCLB are related to the effectiveness of leadership responsibilities and competences for the academic achievement of at-risk students. The chapter concludes with a summary of the data findings as they relate to the research questions.

Research Questions

1. What level of importance do “distinguished” elementary school principals as recognized by NAESP during the academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011 attribute to the 11 “second order” leadership responsibilities espoused by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) when addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?

2. How does the level of importance of leadership responsibilities vary by the characteristics of principals and schools?
3. Which No Child Left Behind Act accountability measures are perceived by “distinguished” elementary school principals to have impact on leadership responsibilities for addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?

Survey Results

The first section of the survey consisted of questions intended to collect specific demographic data about the principals and their schools. Demographic questions included gender, age range, level of educational attainment, number of years as a principal, and years as principal at the current school (See Table 11).

School Demographics

With regard to school demographics, the largest response from principals reflected approximately 250-499 students (36.1%) attending their school, followed by 500-749 students (29.5%), 750-999 (16.4%), 0-249 students (13.1%), and 1000+ (4.9%).

50.8% of principals responded that their school serves a suburban community. Twenty-three principals (37.7%) responded that their school serves a rural community, while 11.5% of respondents answered that their school serves an urban community (See Table 13).

Table 13

Community Classification

Community Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	23	37.7
Suburban	31	50.8
Urban	7	11.5

The most frequent percentage range of students receiving free/reduced lunch was 31-40 (18%), followed by 51-60 (13.1%), and, an equal percentage of principals (13.1%) responded that 61-70 % of their students receive free or reduced lunch (See Table 14).

Table 14

Percentage of Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch

	Frequency	Percentage
0-10	2	3.3
11-20	5	8.2
21-30	7	11.5
31-40	11	18.0
41-50	6	9.8
51-60	8	13.1
61-70	8	13.1
71-80	7	11.5
81-90	4	6.6
91-100	3	4.9

A majority of principals responded that their school made AYP through meeting benchmark goals for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Further, meeting AYP goals through Safe Harbor increased from 9.8% in 2009-2010 to 14.8% in 2010-2011. Schools that did not meet AYP requirements increased 3.2% from 23% in 2009-2010 to 26.2% in 2010-2011 (See Table 15).

Table 15

Meeting AYP Goals for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011

	School AYP Status for 2009-2010		School AYP Status for 2010-2011	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes. Through meeting benchmark goals	41	67.2	36	59.
Yes. Through Safe Harbor.	6	9.8	9	14.8
No.	14	23.0	16	26.2

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their student body they believe are at-risk for academic failure. Two categories were equally rated by 34.4% of principal respondents, including the 0-10% and 11-20% groups. This was followed by 21-30 (18.0%) and then 51-60 (6.6%). (See Table 16).

Table 16

Percentage of Student Body At-Risk for Academic Failure

	Frequency (Number of Principals)	Percent
0-10	21	34.4
11-20	21	34.4
21-30	11	18.0
31-40	2	3.3
41-50	1	1.6
51-60	4	6.6
61-70	0	0
71-80	1	1.6

For further clarification, principals were asked to identify which grade levels are most at-risk for academic failure. Approximately 43% of principals answered that their fourth grade students were most at-risk. The next most vulnerable group identified by principals was third grade (32.8%), followed by first grade (27.9%), and fifth grade (27.9%). Only 4.9% of principals responded that their sixth grade population was at-risk.

Respondents were then asked to select three variables that would best explain why students are at-risk for academic failure. Only variables ranked one (being the highest rating) are reported here. As such, 41.2% of principals responded that students who “have not acquired the necessary foundational skills” were most at-risk for academic failure. This was followed by socioeconomic disparities (31.3%), family issues (31.3%), and language issues (28.6%). Only two principals answered that the “Underfunded school” and the “None of the Above” categories best explain why students are at-risk.

Last, the category “Peer groups that are involved in drugs, crime and violence” did not receive a ranking of one by any of the principal respondents See Table 17).

Table 17

Variables Receiving the Highest Rating of 1 Explaining Why Students Are At-Risk for Academic Failure

	Frequency	<u>N</u>	Percent
Have not acquired the necessary foundational skills	21	51	41.2
Socioeconomic Disparities	15	48	31.3
Family Issues	15	52	28.8
Language Issues	6	21	28.6
None of the Above	2	8	25.0
Underfunded School	2	12	16.7

Research Question 1

The first research question asked “distinguished” elementary school principals to identify the most important leadership responsibilities and behaviors they perceive as significant for the academic achievement of at-risk students. Respondents rated the 11 leadership responsibilities associated with second-order change on a 4-point Likert scale

with 1 as “Very Important,” 2 = “Important,” 3 = “Somewhat Important,” and 4 = “Not Important.” The numeric values of the descriptors were 1 = “Very Important,” 2 = “Important,” 3 = “Somewhat Important,” and 4 = “Not Important.”

The analysis revealed that several of Marzano’s et al. (2005) key leadership responsibilities emerged as “Very Important.” These responsibilities include Communication (establishing strong lines of communication with teachers and students), Monitoring and Evaluating, (monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning) and Culture (fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation).

In fact, a majority of the principals (91.8%) scored the responsibility of Communication closer to “Very Important.” Its mean score of 1.11 (SD = .45) indicates that the responding principals believed that this responsibility was essential when meeting the challenges of at-risk students. Communication also had the lowest standard deviation (.45) of all 11 leadership responsibilities. This signifies a small variation of the data from the mean, which may also suggest that most if not all respondents thought that this responsibility was “Very Important.”

Ranking slightly below the responsibility of Communication was the responsibility of “Monitoring/Evaluating,” which was identified as “Very Important” by 90.2% of principal respondents (mean=1.13, SD = .46).

Culture was also recognized for its magnitude with a mean of 1.18 (SD = .53) and 86.9% of principal respondents in agreement. Only one principal (1.6%) responded that

none of these three responsibilities were “Very Important” for the success of at-risk students.

There were several responsibilities that emerged as “Somewhat Important.” These responsibilities included Optimizer (11.5%), Intellectual Stimulation (8.2%), Change Agent (6.6%), Order (3.3%), Flexibility (1.6%), Ideals/Beliefs (1.6%), and Culture (1.6%). Overall, 34.4%, or 21, of the participating principals identified certain responsibilities as “Somewhat Important.”

The leadership responsibility with the highest mean (1.51) and the highest standard deviation (.70) was Optimizer. This indicates that elementary school principals found that leading and challenging innovations were the least important of the 11 responsibilities when addressing the academic achievement of at-risk” students. This responsibility was followed by Flexibility ($\mu = .46$, $SD = .62$), Change Agent ($\mu = 1.41$, $SD = .69$), and Order ($\mu = 1.39$, $SD = .56$). Standard deviations for Research Question 1 ranged from .45 to .70 (See Table 18).

Table 18

Most Important Leadership Responsibilities and Behaviors (N = 61) Perceived by Distinguished Principals as Significant for the Academic Achievement of At-Risk Students

Leadership Responsibility / Behavior	Mean	SD
Communication	1.11	.45
Monitoring/Evaluating	1.13	.46
Culture	1.18	.53
Input	1.23	.53
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	1.25	.54
Ideals/Beliefs	1.30	.59
Intellectual Stimulation	1.38	.64
Order	1.39	.56
Change Agent	1.41	.69
Flexibility	1.46	.62
Optimizer	1.51	.70

Note: This table is arranged by ascending mean scores

Research Question 2

The second research question examined how the level of importance of leadership responsibilities varies by the characteristics of principals and schools. This question was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations for

each of the individual responses. Next, ANOVA and Post-Hoc testing were performed to determine whether or not the difference in means of several groups were statistically significant.

Gender of Respondents

Analysis of data from an independent sample t test of leadership responsibilities by gender, showed that none of the mean differences were statistically significant. This analysis suggests that gender had no impact on the respondents rating of responsibilities (See Table 19).

Table 19

Independent Sample t test of Leadership Responsibilities by Gender

	t	Mean Difference	Sig	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Change Agent	.062	.011	.951	-.354	.377
Communication	.142	.017	.888	-.222	.255
Culture	1.135	.184	.266	-.148	.515
Flexibility	-1.722	-.276	.090	-.596	.045
Ideals/Beliefs	.763	.132	.451	-.219	.483
Input	.242	.034	.810	-.245	.313
Intellectual Stimulation	.801	.134	.427	-.201	.469
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	1.792	.282	.083	-.039	.602
Monitoring/Evaluating	1.370	.196	.182	-.097	.489
Optimizer	-1.205	-.219	.233	-.584	.145
Order	.261	.038	.795	-.256	.332

Age of Respondents

The difference between the principal age group and the leadership responsibility of Monitoring/Evaluating was revealing. The ANOVA test showed a statistically

significant ($p=.03$) relationship. (See Table 20). A look at the post-hoc data further reveals that two age groups, 40-49 and 60+ ($M=1.06$, $M=1$), scored closer to “Very Important” than the age group of 30-39 ($M=1.75$). This comparison suggests that the 40-49 and 60+ age groupings believe that monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning is more important for the academic achievement of at-risk students than both the 30-39 and 50-59 age groups.

Other significant effects between the principals’ age groups and Marzano’s et al. (2005) most important leadership responsibilities revealed by the ANOVA test included Culture, Ideals/Beliefs, Input, Knowledge of Curriculum and Assessment, and Optimizer

Table 20

An Analysis of Variance of Leadership Responsibilities by Age

Responsibility	<i>SS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Change Agent	2.53	1.83	.15
Communication	1.90	3.5	.02*
Culture	3.10	4.22	.01**
Flexibility	1.7	1.47	.23
Ideals/Beliefs	2.93	3.11	.03*
Input	2.71	3.66	.02*
Intellectual Stimulation	1.09	.895	.45
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2.86	3.77	.02*
Monitoring / Evaluating	1.84	3.136	.03*
Optimizer	3.86	2.88	.04*
Order	.74	.79	.50

Note: *Significant at the .05 level
 **Significant at the .01 level
 ***Significant at the .001 level

Years as an Administrator

An investigation of the effect of the principal's number of years as an administrator and Marzano's et al. (2005) most important "second order" leadership responsibilities when addressing the academic success of at-risk students provides interesting results. Descriptive statistics show that the two leadership responsibilities Communication and Culture were statistically significant .

The ANOVA test was statistically significant at ($p = .03$) (See Table 21). The Post-Hoc test further shows that principals with 11-15 years of experience ($\text{mean} = 1$) scored the responsibility of Communication as “Very Important,” while principals with 6-10 years of experience ($\mu = 1.57$) scored the responsibility of Communication closer to “Important.” These data suggest that respondents with 11-15 years of experience believe that the responsibility of “Communication,” or establishing strong lines of communication with teachers and students, is more important for the achievement of at-risk students than their colleagues with 0-5, 6-10, and 16-20 years of administrative experience.

Table 21

An Analysis of Variance of Leadership Responsibilities by Years as an Administrator

Responsibility	SS	F	Sig
Change Agent	4.29	3.33	.03*
Communication	1.78	3.25	.03*
Culture	2.00	2.53	.07
Flexibility	.80	.68	.57
Ideals/Beliefs	1.58	1.57	.21
Input	1.99	2.55	.06
Intellectual Stimulation	1.37	1.13	.34
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	1.86	2.28	.09
Monitoring/Evaluating	1.54	2.57	.06
Optimizer	.49	.32	.81
Order	1.05	1.13	.34

Note: *Significant at the .05 level
 **Significant at the .01 level
 ***Significant at the .001 level

An investigation of the variation of the principal's number of years as an administrator within the current school in addressing the academic success of at-risk students revealed that several leadership responsibilities including Communication, Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Monitoring/Evaluating were statistically significant.

Next, the ANOVA data show that there are two statistically significant findings ($p=.01$) including Culture (Fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation) and Optimizer (Inspiring and leading new and challenging innovations) not reflected in the descriptive data (See Table 22).

Table 22

An Analysis of Variance of Leadership Responsibilities by Years as an Administrator/Current School

Responsibility	SS	F	Sig
Change Agent	4.29	3.33	.03*
Communication	1.78	3.25	.03*
Culture	2.00	2.52	.07
Flexibility	.80	.68	.57
Ideals/Beliefs	1.58	1.57	.21
Input	1.99	2.60	.06
Intellectual Stimulation	1.37	1.13	.34
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	1.86	2.28	.09
Monitoring/Evaluating	1.54	2.6	.06
Optimizer	.49	.32	.81
Order	1.05	1.13	.32

Note: *Significant at the .05 level
 **Significant at the .01 level
 ***Significant at the .001 level

Number of Students in Attendance

An investigation of the effect of the number of students in attendance in the school and Marzano's et al. (2005) most important "second order" leadership responsibilities when addressing the academic success of at-risk students revealed that seven of the eleven leadership responsibilities including Flexibility, Ideals/Beliefs, Input, Intellectual Stimulation, Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Monitoring/Evaluating, and Order are statistically significant.

Further, data from the Post-Hoc table show that the principals of schools who have 500-749 students in attendance ($\mu = 1.11$) scored the responsibility of Flexibility closer to "Very Important" than their colleagues serving all the other groupings. These data suggest that these principals believe that adapting leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and being comfortable with dissent is more important for the academic achievement of at-risk students than all their peer groups.

Similarly, the post-hoc tables further revealed that principals of schools with 500-749 ($M = 1.22$) students in attendance scored closer to "Very Important" for the responsibility of Intellectual Stimulation than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($M = 2$). These data suggest that these principals believe that ensuring the faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and making the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture is more important for the achievement of at-risk students than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($M = 2$).

Table 23

*An Analysis of Variance of Leadership Responsibilities by
Number of Students in School*

Responsibility	SS	F	Sig
Change Agent	1.10	.56	.70
Communication	.22	.26	.90
Culture	.23	.20	.94
Flexibility	.48	3.68	.01*
Ideals/Beliefs	1.86	1.39	.25
Input	1.22	1.09	.37
Intellectual Stimulation	4.04	2.79	.04*
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2.50	2.36	.06
Monitoring / Evaluating	1.28	1.53	.21
Optimizer	2.15	1.11	.36
Order	1.35	1.10	.37

Note: *Significant at the .05 level
 **Significant at the .01 level
 ***Significant at the .001 level

Community

An investigation of the variability of the community on Marzano et al.'s (2005) most important "second order" leadership responsibilities in addressing the academic success of at-risk students reveals that the responsibilities of Communication and Culture are statistically significant.

Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch

An investigation of the impact of the number of students receiving free/reduced lunch and Marzano et al.'s (2005) most important "second order" leadership responsibilities when addressing the academic success of at-risk students provides interesting results.

Descriptive statistics show that eight of the eleven "second order" responsibilities emerged as statistically significant, including: Communication, Culture, Ideals/Beliefs, Input, Intellectual Stimulation, Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Monitoring/Evaluating, and Order.

From this, two of the most notable findings are reported here. First, the data show that for the leadership responsibility of Communication, 32 principals, collectively from five of the group ranges, believe that establishing strong lines of communication with teachers and students (Communication) is important for the academic achievement of at-risk students.

Next, the ANOVA data (See Table 24) show that the responsibility of Flexibility (adapting leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and being comfortable with dissent) is statistically significant ($p=.01$). Further, the Post- Hoc data show that principals with 11-20 of their student body receiving free/reduced lunch ($\mu = 1.4$, $SD=.55$) scored the responsibility of Flexibility closer to "Very Important" than principals with 0-10 of their student body receiving free/reduced lunch ($\mu=3$, $SD=1.41$). Principals with 0-10 of their student body receiving free/reduced lunch scored the

responsibility of Flexibility closer to “Somewhat Important.” This comparison suggests that principals with 11-20 of their student body receiving free/reduced lunch believe that the responsibility of Flexibility is more important for the academic success of at-risk students than principal respondents with schools that have 0-10 percent of their student body receiving free/reduced lunch.

Table 24

*An Analysis of Variance of Leadership Responsibilities by Students
Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch*

Responsibility	SS	F	Sig
Change Agent	6.41	1.62	.13
Communication	3.11	1.94	.07
Culture	4.22	1.87	.08
Flexibility	7.5	2.73	.011
Ideals/Beliefs	3.81	1.28	.27
Input	2.93	1.2	.32
Intellectual Stimulation	2.7	.71	.70
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	4.31	1.9	.08
Monitoring / Evaluating	2.89	1.62	.13
Optimizer	7.09	1.81	.09
Order	2.02	.70	.71

Note: *Significant at the .05 level
 **Significant at the .01 level
 ***Significant at the .001 level

School AYP Status – 2009-2010

An investigation of the effect of whether or not the school met AYP requirements for 2009-2010 academic year and Marzano et al.'s (2005) most important “second order” leadership responsibilities when addressing the academic success of at-risk students provides interesting results. Descriptive statistics show that two of the eleven responsibilities emerged as statistically significant, including Communication and “Monitoring/Evaluating.”

School AYP Status - 2010-2011

First, the descriptive data show that for the responsibilities Communication and Input 14.75% of the respondents ($\mu = 1$, $SD=0$) who made AYP through Safe Harbor believe that these responsibilities are important when meeting AYP requirements and addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students.

The ANOVA data further show a statistically significant relationship ($p=.04$) for the responsibility of Input (involving teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies) (See Table 25)

Table 25

An Analysis of Variance of Leadership Responsibilities by Whether or Not AYP Requirements Were Met (2010-2011)

Responsibility	SS	F	Sig
Change Agent	.2	.20	.82
Communication	.45	1.10	.34
Culture	.82	1.5	.24
Flexibility	.49	.62	.54
Ideals/Beliefs	.19	.27	.77
Input	1.79	3.46	.038*
Intellectual Stimulation	.28	.34	.72
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	.24	.40	.67
Monitoring / Evaluating	.31	.72	.50
Optimizer	.31	.31	.74
Order	.03	.05	.96

Note: *Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at the .01 level

***Significant at the .001 level

Research Question 3

The third section of the survey asked “distinguished” elementary school principals to identify how their effectiveness to execute leadership responsibilities and behaviors while addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students, has been influenced since the onset of more rigorous high-stakes standards and accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Results reveal that the No Child Left Behind Act has contributed to an increase in the principals' effectiveness to carry out leadership responsibilities when dealing with the academic achievement of the at-risk population. In fact, several second-order responsibilities emerged during the analysis including Monitoring/Evaluating, Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Change Agent. From this grouping, however, Communication was the most influenced behavior when considering the mandates of NCLB. The analysis shows that 24 principals (39.3%) responded that monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning increased greatly (Post-hoc tables further revealed that principals of schools with 500-749 ($\mu=1.22$) students in attendance scored closer to "Very Important" for the responsibility of Intellectual Stimulation than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=2$). These data suggest that these principals believe that ensuring that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and making the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture is more important for the achievement of at-risk students than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=1.92$, $SD=.9$). None of the principals responded that there was a "Decrease" for this responsibility.

Next, 18 principals (29.5%) responded that Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment "Increased Greatly" (Post-Hoc tables further revealed that principals of schools with 500-749 ($\mu=1.22$) students in attendance scored closer to "Very Important" for the responsibility of Intellectual Stimulation than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=2$). This data suggests that these principals believe that ensuring the

faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and making the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture is more important for the achievement of at-risk students than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=2.02$, $SD=.85$). This was followed by 16.4% of principals who answered that a willingness to actively challenge the status quo (Change Agent) "Increased Greatly" (Post-Hoc tables further revealed that principals of schools with 500-749 ($\mu=1.22$) students in attendance scored closer to "Very Important" for the responsibility of Intellectual Stimulation than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=2$). These data suggest that these principals believe that ensuring the faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and making the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture is more important for the achievement of at-risk students than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=2.28$, $SD=.84$).

Additionally, about 25% of principals responded that a focus on school culture "Increased Greatly" (Post-Hoc tables further revealed that principals of schools with 500-749 ($\mu=1.22$) students in attendance scored closer to "Very Important" for the responsibility of Intellectual Stimulation than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=2$). These data suggest that these principals believe that ensuring that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and making the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture is more important for the achievement of at-risk students than their colleagues serving 0-249 students ($\mu=2.44$, $SD=1.06$) (See Table 26).

Table 26

The Influence of NCLB on Principal Leadership Responsibilities

Leadership Responsibility / Behavior	Increased Greatly		Increased		No Difference		Decreased		Decreased Greatly		Mean	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	-	-
Monitoring/Evaluating	24	39.3	20	32.8	16	26.2	0	0	1	1.6	1.92	.9
Knowledge of Curriculum	18	29.5	26	42.6	16	26.2	0	0	1	1.6	2.02	.85
Change Agent	10	16.4	28	45.9	20	32.8	2	3.3	1	1.6	2.28	.84
Intellectual Stimulation	10	16.4	25	41.0	23	37.7	2	3.3	1	1.6	2.4	.85
Optimizer	15	24.6	15	24.6	24	39.3	5	8.2	2	3.3	2.41	1.05
Culture	15	24.6	13	21.3	26	42.6	5	8.2	2	3.3	2.44	1.06
Flexibility	12	19.7	17	27.9	28	45.9	2	3.3	2	3.3	2.5	.96
Ideals/Beliefs	8	13.1	19	31.1	32	52.5	1	1.6	1	1.6	2.5	.81
Communication	12	19.7	11	18	34	55.7	3	4.9	1	1.6	2.51	.92
Order	10	16.4	13	21.3	35	57.4	2	3.3	1	1.6	2.52	.87
Input	8	13.1	17	27.9	30	49.2	5	8.2	1	1.6	2.6	.9

Open-Ended Responses

The last part of the survey consisted of two open-ended questions, which were optional. The questions prompted respondents to suggest recommendations to other school leaders who are grappling with the educational outcomes for at-risk students in their school. The questions were as follows:

1. What have you been doing as a school leader to improve the educational achievement for at-risk students in your school?

2. What recommendations can you provide to other school leaders who are grappling with the educational outcomes for at-risk students in their school?

Respondent comments were examined for patterns, consistencies, and variations. Several themes emerged. In many instances, comments overlapped categories. Detailed responses can be found in Appendix G. In total, six categories emerged for each question. The first question, “What have you been doing as a school leader to improve the educational achievement for at-risk students in your school?” resulted in the following category groupings, including: Staff Professional Development/Professional Learning Community, Student Data Review, Monitoring Achievement, Response to Intervention, Building School/Community Relationships, and Providing Intervention Programs.

Next, responses were analyzed for categorical placement. Most responses resulted in multiple categorical groupings. The results of the responses are represented in Table 27 as follows:

Table 27

Categorical Groupings of Principal Leadership – Survey Question 20

Category	# of Respondents
Provide Intervention Programs	35
Monitor Achievement	28
Student Data Review	25
Staff PD / Professional Learning Community	20
Build School/Community Relationships	19
Response to Intervention	12

Note: this table is arranged in descending order based on the number of responses for each category

Thirty-five participants responded that providing intervention programs is critical in advancing the academic success of at-risk students. This is followed by monitoring achievement. Close on the heels of this category, review of student data is viewed as important. Staff professional development and professional learning community efforts follow. Next, building school/community relationships has relevancy. Last, a response to intervention model was advocated. The Response to Intervention (RTI) is a process that schools can use to help children who are struggling academically or behaviorally. One of its underlying premises is the possibility that a child's struggles may be due to inadequacies in instruction or in the curriculum either in use at the moment or in the child's past. This is represented in Figure 3.

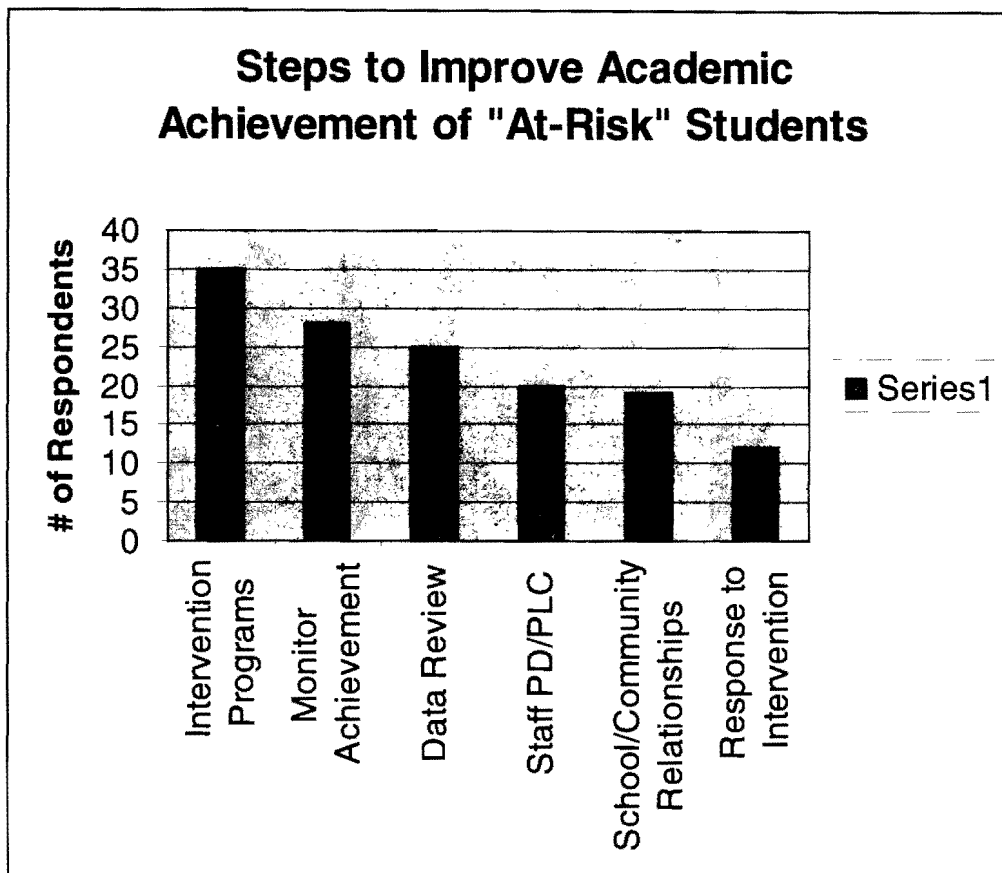


Figure 3. Steps to Improve the Academic Achievement of At-Risk Students

The second open-ended question, “What recommendations can you provide to other school leaders who are grappling with the educational outcomes for at-risk students in their school?” resulted in the following categorical breakdowns, including: Staff Professional Development/Professional Learning Community, Student Data Review, Monitoring Achievement, Building School/Community Relationships. Providing Intervention Programs, and Other.

Most responses resulted in multiple categorical groupings. Detailed responses can be found in Appendix G. The results of the responses are represented in Table 28.

Table 28

Categorical Groupings of Principal Leadership – Survey Question 21

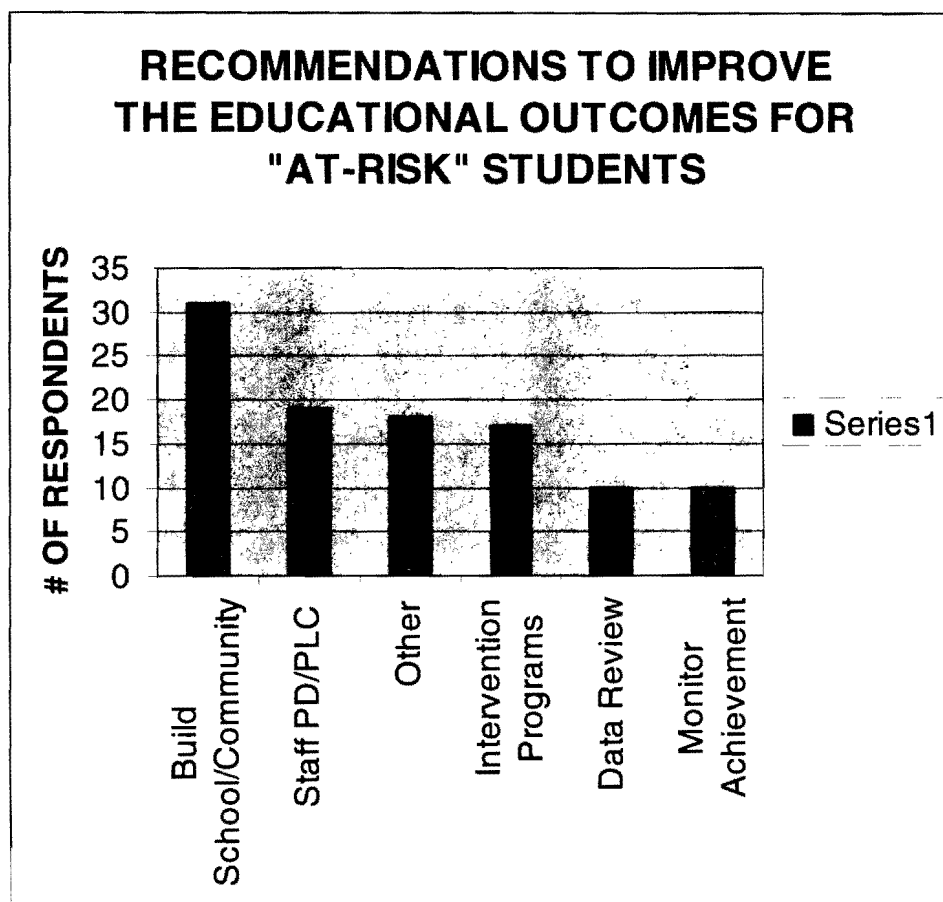
Category	# of Respondents
Build School/Community Relationships	31
Staff PD / Professional Learning Community	19
Other	18
Provide Intervention Programs	17
Student Data Review	10
Monitor Achievement	10

Note: this table is arranged in descending order based on the number of responses for each category

Participants responded foremost that building school/community relationships is critical in advancing the academic success of at-risk students. This is followed by Staff Professional Development/Professional Learning Community. Close on the heels of this category is “Other.” This category encompasses a diverse range of responses including selecting the best teaching staff, getting more involved in politics and policy agendas, looking at the big picture, building a “no-excuses” culture, know your students, seek grants/corporate sponsorships, and membership in professional organizations. Next,

providing intervention programs was viewed as important. Student data review efforts followed. Finally, monitoring student achievement was also promoted (See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Recommendations Made by Distinguished Principals to Other School Leaders Who Are Grappling with the Outcomes for At-Risk Students in Their School.



Summary

This chapter began with an examination of the demographic characteristics of the sample participant. This was followed by an examination of the schools' demographics. Next, the possibility of relationships between Marzano et al.'s (2005) 11 "second order"

leadership responsibilities and demographic factors was reported. The chapter then examined the degree to which educational accountability measures implemented by the NCLB are related to the effectiveness of Marzano et al.'s (2005) 11 "second order" leadership responsibilities and competences for the academic achievement of at-risk students.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Accountability has changed nearly everything in education (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001, p. 1). State legislatures have established urgency for improved student

achievement in an educational system where too many students are not succeeding against the new standards. This era of higher standards and greater accountability requires a “new breed” of school leaders (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001, p. 4). Lashway (2003) adds that the No Child Left Behind Act has “solidified one emerging trend: school leaders are change agents” (p. 6.3).

Adding to the turmoil of change are students identified as at-risk who are more susceptible to academic failure. According to Reglin (1993) the most prominent use of the term at-risk refers to students not succeeding in school. These students are identified as low academic achievers and are more likely one or more grade levels behind in basic subjects such as reading, language, and mathematical skills.

This chapter presents a summary of the research purpose and procedures, followed by a discussion of the findings and the literature available on the topic. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research and implications for future school leadership.

Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess the importance of “second order” leadership responsibilities and behaviors as identified by McREL in addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students from the perspective of distinguished elementary school principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

Founded in 1921, the NAESP posits that principals are “the primary catalyst for creating a lasting foundation for learning, driving school and student performance, and shaping the long-term impact of school improvement efforts” (“National Distinguished Principals Program,” n.d.). Similarly, research by Marzano et al. (2005) found that specific leadership behaviors for school administrators were positively associated with student achievement (p. 7).

As such, an abundance of research has well documented the effects of leadership behaviors on student academic achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). However, there is limited research that examines and identifies the practices of “distinguished” elementary school principals in addressing the needs of at-risk students.

Research Questions

The study was framed by three research questions:

1. What level of importance do “distinguished” elementary school principals, as recognized by NAESP (during the academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011), attribute to the 11 “second order” leadership responsibilities espoused by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) when addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?
2. How does the level of importance of leadership responsibilities vary by the characteristics of principals and schools?

3. Which No Child Left Behind Act accountability measures are perceived by “distinguished” elementary school principals to have impact on leadership responsibilities for addressing the academic achievement of at-risk students?

Summary of Procedures

The research buttressing this study followed the constructs of a quantitative study. According to Taylor & Bogdan (1984), quantitative methods are directed toward collecting data to test theories. Additionally, a descriptive research approach was implemented to collect the data, further defining this study. Although there are many types of research that can be categorized as “descriptive” including surveys (questionnaires, Delphi method, interviews, normative), case studies, job analyses, and documentary analysis, a rating survey was used to collect data from the elementary school principals recognized as “Distinguished” by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

The population for this study consisted of 151 NAESP honorees from 2009, 2010, and 2011. National Distinguished Principals are viewed as leaders who truly make a difference. As such, the perspectives of national “distinguished” elementary school principals as they relate to the academic achievement of at-risk elementary students while meeting accountability measures was the focus of this study. This sample size was reduced due to survey response opt-outs, job changes, and principals who retired from the field. Although 68 principals completed the survey, seven were eliminated from analysis

given that they had not fully completed the survey, resulting in 61 complete survey responses.

The conceptual design undergirding this study is the balanced leadership framework proffered by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL's framework identifies 21 categories of specific behaviors relating to principal leadership that are correlated with student achievement. The authors discuss further that two traits or factors underlie the 21 responsibilities; namely, "first-order change" and "second order" change (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2005, p. 65). Given their impact on the progress of change, the authors elucidate that effective leaders must understand both the order of change they are leading and how to select and skillfully use appropriate leadership practices (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 8).

The authors argue further that "solutions to most recurring modern-day problems require a second-order perspective" (p. 67). As such, this study examined the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's (McREL) 11 "second order" responsibilities associated with significantly improving student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2005, p. 120).

Given that the data were collected from principals located across the nation, face-to face interviews were not deemed practical for this study. Bolstering this approach further is the threat of bias and the possible inconsistencies in the administration of conducting an interview or observation, as they may invariably compromise the statistical integrity of the analysis.

Demographic Data and Patterns

The survey was designed to garner demographic data about the respondents and the schools they serve. As such, a question which inquired about the gender of the respondents revealed that 60.7% of the population were females and 39.3% of the sample were males. In support of this finding, data from the National Center For Education Statistics, Indicator 18 shows that from 1999-2000 and 2007-08, the percentage of principals who were female increased from 52 to 59 percent at public elementary schools (2012).

Next, data revealed that about 46% of principal respondents were between 50-59 years of age. Further, the majority of the respondents hold a master's degree (68.9%). About 38% of principals responded that they had 11-15 years of experience as an administrator/principal, followed by 29.5% of principals who answered that they had 21+ years of experience. A majority of the principals (50.8%) responded that their school is located in the suburbs, followed by 37.7% rural and 11.5% urban. In contrast, data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics show that in 2009–2010, the largest percentage of traditional public schools were in rural areas (33%), followed by schools in suburban areas (28%), cities (25%), and towns (14%).

This question was followed by an inquiry as to the approximate percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25% or fewer students are eligible, and high-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 76% or more students are eligible. As such, the most frequent

percentage range of students was 31-40 (18%), followed by 51-60 (13.1%), and, an equal percentage of principals (13.1%) responded that they had 61-70% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch (see Table 1).

Participants were then asked to approximate the percentage of their student body they believe are at-risk for academic failure. Two categories received equal ranking by 34.4% of principal respondents, including the 0-10 and 11-20% groups. This was followed by 21-30 (18.0%) and then 51-60 (6.6%).

Wright (2006) explains that the quality of the labor force will be impacted by the large numbers of struggling learners who have not yet acquired the necessary foundation skills that are required in order for them to achieve mastery of the curriculum.

For further clarification, principals were asked to identify which grade levels are most at-risk for academic failure; 42.6% of principals answered that their fourth grade students were most at-risk followed by third grade (32.8%), then first grade (27.9%), and fifth grade (27.9%).

Participants were then asked to select three variables that would best explain why students are at-risk for academic failure. Only variables ranked 1 (being the highest rating) are reported here. As such, 41.2% of principals responded that students who “have not acquired the necessary foundational skills were most at-risk, followed by socioeconomic disparities (31.3%), family issues (31.3%), and language issues” (28.6%).

Research Question 1

The first research question asked “distinguished” elementary school principals to identify the most important leadership responsibilities and behaviors they perceive as significant for the academic achievement of at-risk students

Respondents answered that three leadership responsibilities were “Very Important”: Communication (Establishing strong lines of communication with teachers and students), Monitoring/Evaluating (Monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning), and Culture (Fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation).

The data seem to suggest a causal relationship as well. The combined percentages for the “Very Important” and “Important” categories for each leadership responsibility were over 90%, indicating that the responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) are considered “Important” by National Distinguished Principals for the academic achievement of at-risk students.

This study also revealed that schools meeting AYP requirements through benchmark goals dipped 8.2%, from 67.2% in 2009-2010 to 59% in 2010-2011. Further, meeting AYP goals through Safe Harbor increased from 9.8% in 2009-2010 to 14.8% in 2010-2011. Schools that did not meet AYP requirements increased 3.2%, from 23% in 2009-2010 to 26.2% in 2010-2011, further buttressing the importance of taking a closer look at students identified as at-risk who are, according to Seifert (2004), more susceptible to academic failure (as cited in Ornelles, 2007, p. 3).

Last, despite a few commonalities, the majority of “second order” leadership responsibilities and behaviors acknowledged by National Distinguished Principals as “Important” in improving student achievement were identified differently when compared to research offered by Marzano et al. (2005). More specifically, the authors posit that a principal looking to provide leadership for a “second order” change initiative would have the following priorities for the top three responsibilities: Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Optimizer, and Intellectual Stimulation (p. 70). The findings of this study and research offered by Valenti (2010), however, reveal that the responsibilities of Communication, Monitoring/Evaluating, and Culture are the most important responsibilities for principals looking to provide leadership for a “second order” change initiative.

Research Question 2

The effect of demographic survey questions and Marzano et al.’s (2005) most important “second order” leadership responsibilities when addressing the academic success of at-risk students revealed that three responsibilities dominated the ranking order of responses by principals: Communication, Monitoring/Evaluating, and Culture.

The findings further revealed that the responsibilities of Communication and Culture are statistically significant for administrators serving urban schools. Tolan, Guerra, and Montaini-Klov Dahl (1997b) explain that the inner-city environment often-times includes multiple risks to healthy adolescent development (as cited in Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006, p. 105). Further, according to Dappen and Isernhagen,

Herarra (1999) describes that many families face innumerable economic and social stressors resulting in parents being uninvolved or overwhelmed with their children, leaving their children without the help of the caring adult they need (p. 21).

Despite a few commonalities, the majority of “second order” leadership responsibilities and behaviors acknowledged by National Distinguished Principals as “Important” in improving the academic achievement of at-risk student were identified differently when compared to the Marzano, Waters, and McNulty’s (2005) meta-analysis. In fact, the top three “second order” responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) included Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Optimizer, and Intellectual Stimulation (p. 70). The authors explain further that some responsibilities are negatively impacted by “second order” change. They identified the responsibilities Culture and Communication as being negatively impacted, adding that Culture has the strongest negative relationship with “second order” change initiatives, followed by Communication (p. 73). This finding is in direct opposition to this study’s findings.

Research Question 3

Some of the findings of this study are similar to Valenti’s (2010) study in terms of ranking order. Both studies rank the leadership responsibility of Monitoring/Evaluating as the responsibility most influenced by the NCLB mandates. Additionally, and similar to Valenti’s (2010) study, three other leadership responsibilities, including Change Agent, Intellectual Stimulation, and Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

ranked within the top tier as being responsibilities most influenced by the accountability measures associated with NCLB (See Table 28).

Table 29

A Comparison of the Impact of NCLB on McREL's "Second Order" Leadership Responsibilities

Responsibility	Valenti	This Study	McREL
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	5	5	1
Optimizer	11	11	2
Intellectual Stimulation	10	7	3
Change Agent	6	9	4
Monitoring/Evaluating	2	2	5
Flexibility	8	10	6
Ideals/Belief	4	6	7
Culture	3	3	8
Communication	1	1	9
Order	9	8	10
Input	7	4	11

Note: This study and Valenti's 2010 study solicited information from distinguished principals. McRel's study solicited information from teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research are based on the findings drawn from this study.

1. Although this study was limited to school leaders recognized as National Distinguished Principals by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) during 2009, 2010, and 2011, increasing the sample size to

include National Distinguished Principals from previous years would be beneficial. This effort might result in a better understanding of the responsibilities and behaviors that have an impact on the achievement of at-risk students. Additionally, increasing the sample size of the study could provide findings that were more reliably generalized over the broader population.

2. A study that works to solicit and analyze responses from elementary school principals that have not received the titled distinction from NAESP may prove to be interesting. Then, a comparison of these two groups regarding the impact of different leadership responsibilities and behaviors on the academic achievement of at-risk students may prove to be further revealing.
3. A study focused on other administrative groups, including superintendents and high school principals that received similar titles of distinction, would be valuable. Garnering their responses regarding the impact of different behaviors and practices on the achievement of at-risk students could further illuminate this area of study.
4. While this study offered some statistically significant findings, future research could be designed to solicit even more in-depth information. For example, survey questions that offer "None of the Above" as a response option could allow the respondents opportunity to elaborate their answers.
5. A question could be added to the survey questionnaire about class size.

Achilles (1999) found that small class sizes (fewer than 20) were associated with higher achievement at all grade levels, especially if students were in the small classes for more than 100 hours, and if student assignment was carefully controlled (p. 13).

6. Prior to the dissemination of the survey, each of the potential respondents was called directly and asked to complete the survey. Those respondents not available were left a voice-mail message. Several of the principals revealed that they were constantly solicited by individuals and groups since they've received the titled distinction. These individuals explained that had the telephone solicitation not occurred, they would have simply deleted the email request. Hence, other methods of solicitation could be considered, and perhaps an incentive for survey completion would further spur response activity.

Recommendations for Practice

Perhaps the most alarming revelation in this study was that schools meeting AYP requirements through benchmark goals dipped 8.2% from 67.2% in 2009-2010 to 59% in 2010-2011 in spite of having "distinguished" principals in the forefront leading the charge of success. Further, meeting AYP goals through Safe Harbor increased from 9.8% in 2009-2010 to 14.8% in 2010-2011, and schools that did not meet AYP requirements increased 3.2% from 23% in 2009-2010 to 26.2% in 2010-2011, further buttressing the importance of taking a closer look at students identified as at-risk who are, according to Seifert (2004), more susceptible to academic failure (p. 3).

Based on these data, principals concerned about their schools not making AYP requirements could become even more cognizant of the Safe Harbor criteria. The data reveal that this option showed a 5% increase from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011. Additionally, a focused and deliberate effort to identify all the at-risk population within the schools and the strategic implementation of initiatives recommended by “distinguished” principals could help close the widening gap. Principals need to know who all their at-risk students are and address their academic success armed with the responsibilities noted in this study. In fact, the responses to the two open-ended survey questions provides over 100 specific recommendations and suggestions for improving the achievement of at-risk students including intervention programs, improved parent relations, and providing training to teachers. Perhaps stepped-up efforts to utilize the recommendations (see Appendices G and H) on a larger scale could also prove fruitful for all the principal participants and their students.

Principals involved in new building development plans should be cognizant of empirical studies of school size effects on a variety of student and organizational outcomes. Research shows that elementary schools with large proportions of students who traditionally struggle at school and students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds should be limited in size to not more than about 300 students; those serving economically and socially heterogeneous or relatively advantaged students should be limited in size to about 500 students (Leithwood & Jantzi, .2009, p. 464)

Further, school buildings serving larger populations of students could be re-grouped/reconfigured in some way to accommodate the findings of this research.

The research provided in this study could also help shape the focus of in-service Professional Development topics that would further the success of at-risk students. Numerous themes emerged when respondents were asked to make recommendations. These themes included Staff Professional Development/Professional Learning Community, Student Data Review, Monitoring Achievement, Building School/Community Relationships, Providing Intervention Programs, and Response to Intervention.

This researcher also suggests that results of this study be reviewed by policymakers at the state level who exert considerable influence through licensure requirements for principals. For example, candidates vying for principalship could be evaluated on their skill sets associated with the second-order responsibilities of Communication, Monitoring/Evaluating, and Culture. Candidates receiving the highest scores in these three areas could be gleaned from the pool of candidates for greater consideration.

Further, review of the characteristics of exemplary principals and the ways they positively impact the achievement of at-risk students may help shape the standards by which an administrator is selected.

Also, this study may well serve as a resource to higher education institutions that offer principal preparation programs. The inclusion of the findings in the coursework may provide aspiring principals with the knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools they need to positively impact the achievement of at-risk students. Focusing on responsibilities such as establishing strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students (Communication), monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning (Monitoring/Evaluation), and fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation (Culture) will help new principals prioritize the responsibilities necessary to successfully fulfill the requirements of their profession.

Conclusion

McREL's "second order" responsibility of Communication (the extent to which the principal establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students) was the top rated response in all three research questions. Offering insight, Hoffmann (2010) explains that "communication is the beginning of leadership. Without effective communication you cannot lead or manage effectively. When you merge leadership and communication, you have the most potent of communication skills" (para. 5).

Research shows that the consequences of failing to deal with the challenge of at-risk students may result in students' learned helplessness, decreased motivation, lower levels of engagement, and negative attitudes about school (Ornelles, 2007, p. 3). Furthermore, without successful interventions, the number of schools in restructuring

could grow substantially (Wallace Foundation, 2010, pp. 10-11). Another consequence will be deterioration in the quality of the labor force and the erosion of our society's footing in global markets. Given this backdrop, effective leadership is tantamount to academic achievement of all students.

Further, data were analyzed on how leadership behaviors have been influenced since the onset of more rigorous high-stakes standards and accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act (Research Question 3). The top three findings for this question mirrored the findings of Research Question 1. Some of the findings of this study are similar to Valenti's (2010) study in terms of ranking order. Both studies rank the leadership responsibility of Communication as the responsibility most influenced by the NCLB mandates. Additionally, and mirroring Valenti's (2010) study, two other leadership responsibilities, Monitoring/Evaluating and Culture ranked within the top tier as being responsibilities most influenced by the accountability measures associated with NCLB. These findings prompt discussion, given that they rank differently when compared to Marzano et al's (2005) study. In fact, this study, along with Valenti's (2010) study, trails away from the work presented by Marzano et al. (2005). The question begging to be answered is this: Which of the two studies is closer to being correct?"

Perhaps we can reach two conclusions:

1. The benchmark goals set up by the Department of Education are not grounded in reality.

2. Perhaps the framework undergirding this study does not reveal all the dimensions needed to address the research questions

Finally, the research shows that school success predicts many long-term positive outcomes. “These outcomes include continuing higher education, better job possibilities, more positive self-concept, less adult psychopathology, and lower likelihood of later unemployment (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2005). We know from this and other studies that the need to address the academic success of at-risk students is real and ever more dire. In fact, Achilles’ (1999) “One Future View” warrants mention. The author writes as follows

If you want to know what society will be like in the near future, don’t look at older people, or at people currently making policy for young children. Look at the children. They are the future. One way to bring the future into present focus is to study today’s children, who are the demographic harbingers of tomorrow (p. 12).

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Appendix A
List of NAESP Award Recipients



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7. Connecticut

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Dr. Don Sternberg
Wantagh Elementary School
1765 Beech Street
Wantagh, NY 11793
Tel.: (516) 679-6480
Fax: (516) 679-6365
sternbergd@wantaghschools.org

32. North Carolina

DeAnna C. Finger
Tuttle Elementary School
2872 Water Plant Road
Maiden, NC 28650
Tel. : (828) 428-3080
DeAnna_Finger@catawba.k12.nc.us

33. North Dakota

Gail M. Wold
Beulah Middle School
1700 North Central Avenue
Beulah, ND 58523
Tel. : (701) 873-4325
Fax: (701) 873-2844

34. Ohio

Diane L. Kettelberger
Genoa Elementary School
519 Genoa Road SW
Massillon, OH 44646
Tel.: (330) 478-6171
Fax: (330) 478-6173
kittelberger@perry1.stark.k12.oh.us

35. Oklahoma

Faye M. Garrison
Hillsdale Elementary School
315 Peak Boulevard
Muskogee, OK 74403
Tel. : (918) 683-9167
Fax: (918) 683-0556
Faye_garrison@hilldale.k12.ok.us

36. Oregon

Pamela J. Zaklan
Wilson Elementary School
1400 Johnson Street
Medford, OR 97404
Tel.: (541) 842-3870
Fax: (541) 842-3575
Pam.zaklan@medford.k12.or.us

37. Pennsylvania

Willaim P. DelCollo
Fort Washington Elementary School
1010 Fort Washington Avenue
Fort Washington, PA 19304
Tel.: (215) 643-8961
Fax: (610) 933-6471
wdelcoll@udsd.org

38. Rhode Island

Nancy A. Nettik
West Kingston Elementary School
3119 Ministerial Road
West Kingston, RI 02892
Tel.: (401) 360-1130
Fax: (401) 360-1131

39. South Carolina

Camilla D. Groome
Newington Elementary School
10 King Charles Circle
Summerville, SC 29485
Tel.: (843) 871-3230
Fax: (843) 821-3981
cgroome@dorchester2.k12.sc.us

40. South Dakota

Dr. Jackie E. McNamara
Cleveland Elementary School
1000 s. Edward Drive
Sioux Falls, SD 57103
Tel. : (605) 367-6150
Fax: (
Jackie.mcnamara@k12.sd.us

41. Tennessee

Rick A. Wilson
John Sevier Elementary School
2001 Sequoyah Avenue
Maryville, TN 37804
Tel.: (865) 983-8551
Fax: (865) 977-0725
rwilson@ci.maryville.tn.us

42. Texas

Kenneth D. Davis
Hillman Foreset McNeill Elementary
7300 South Mason Drive
Richmond, TX 77407
Tel.: (832) 223-2800
Fax: (
kdavis@lcisd.org

43. Utah

Jody A. Schaap
Antelope Elementary
1801 S. Main Street
Clearfield, UT 84015
Tel.: (801) 402-2100
jschaap@dsdmail.net

44. Vermont

Michael E. Friel
Oak Grove School
15 Moreland Avenue
Brattleboro, VT 05301
Tel.: (802) 254-3740
mswfriel@myfairpoint.net

Principal Leadership Survey

Principal Characteristics

The purpose of this research is to investigate the responsibilities of "distinguished" principals that are most supportive of the achievement for the "at-risk" elementary student population. Note: Students "at-risk" refers to students who are not succeeding academically for a variety of reasons.

It is estimated that the survey will take no longer than 10-15 minutes of your time to complete and will follow an identical format for all participants.

***1. Gender:**

☐ Male

☐ Female

***2. Which category below includes your age?**

☐ 21-29

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50-59

☐ 60 or older

***3. Highest Degree Attained:**

☐ Bachelors Degree

☐ Masters Degree

☐ Doctorate Degree

***4. How many years have you served as an administrator/principal?**

☐ 0-5

☐ 6-10

☐ 11-15

☐ 16-20

☐ 21+

***5. How many years have you served as principal of this school?**

☐ 0-5

☐ 6-10

☐ 11-15

☐ 16-20

☐ 21+

School Characteristics

***6. About how many students attend your school?**

☐ 0-249

☐ 250-499

☐ 500-749

☐ 750-999

☐ 1000+

***7. School grade level(s)? Please check all that apply.**

☐ Prekindergarten Students

☐ 3rd Grade Students

☐ 7th Grade Students

☐ Kindergarten Students

☐ 4th Grade Students

☐ 8th Grade Students

☐ 1st Grade Students

☐ 5th Grade Students

☐ 2nd Grade Students

☐ 6th Grade Students

***8. How do you classify the community your school is located in?**

☐ Rural

☐ Suburban

☐ Urban

Principal Leadership Survey

***9. Approximate percentage of students on free or reduced lunch:**

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0-10 | <input type="radio"/> 41-50 | <input type="radio"/> 81-90 |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-20 | <input type="radio"/> 51-60 | <input type="radio"/> 91-100 |
| <input type="radio"/> 21-30 | <input type="radio"/> 61-70 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 31-40 | <input type="radio"/> 71-80 | |

***10. Approximate percentage of student body representing each of the following ethnic groups: Note: (Must total 100 %)**

African American	<input type="text"/>
White / Caucasian	<input type="text"/>
American Indian	<input type="text"/>
Nonwhite Hispanic / Latino	<input type="text"/>
Asian / Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

***11. Has your school met AYP requirements during the school year 2009-2010?**

- ☐ Yes. Through meeting benchmark goals
- ☐ Yes. Through Safe Harbor.
- ☐ No.

***12. Has your school met AYP requirements during the school year 2010-2011?**

- ☐ Yes. Through meeting benchmark goals.
- ☐ Yes. Through Safe Harbor.
- ☐ No.

***13. What percentage of your student body do you think are "at-risk" for academic failure? Note: Students "at-risk" for academic failure refers to students who are not succeeding academically for a variety of reasons.**

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0-10 | <input type="radio"/> 41-50 | <input type="radio"/> 81-90 |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-20 | <input type="radio"/> 51-60 | <input type="radio"/> 91-100 |
| <input type="radio"/> 21-30 | <input type="radio"/> 61-70 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 31-40 | <input type="radio"/> 71-80 | |

Principal Leadership Survey

* 14. Which grade level(s) are most "at-risk" for academic failure?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prekindergarten Students | <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Grade Students | <input type="checkbox"/> 7th Grade Students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten Students | <input type="checkbox"/> 4th Grade Students | <input type="checkbox"/> 8th Grade Students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1st Grade Students | <input type="checkbox"/> 5th Grade Students | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd Grade Students | <input type="checkbox"/> 6th Grade Students | |

* 15. Select 3 variable(s) that best explain why students are "at-risk" for academic failure?

Please rank them with 1 being the highest rating.

Socio-economic Disparities	<input type="text"/>
Underfunded school	<input type="text"/>
Language issues	<input type="text"/>
Peer groups that are involved in drugs, crime, and violence	<input type="text"/>
Have not acquired the necessary foundational skills	<input type="text"/>
Family issues	<input type="text"/>
None of the above	<input type="text"/>

Leadership Survey

Note: Students "at-risk" for academic failure refers to students who are not succeeding academically for a variety of reasons.

Principal Leadership Survey

***16. Directions: For each item below, please check the box that best reflects which leadership responsibilities and behaviors you perceive as significant for the academic achievement of "at-risk" students?**

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Willing to actively challenge the status quo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establishing strong lines of communication with teachers and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adapting leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and being comfortable with dissent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating and operating from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involving teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Principal Leadership Survey

***17. Directions: For each item below, please check the box that best reflects which leadership responsibilities and behaviors you perceive as significant for the academic achievement of "at-risk" students? CONTINUED...**

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Ensuring the faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and making the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspiring and leading new and challenging innovations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establishing a set of standard operating procedures and routines.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Leadership Survey

Note: Students "at-risk" of academic failure refers to students who are not succeeding academically for a variety of reasons.

Principal Leadership Survey

***18. Directions: For each item below, please check the box that best reflects the degree to which educational accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act have had on your effectiveness to carry out leadership responsibilities and behaviors while addressing the academic achievement for "at-risk" students.**

	Increased Greatly	Increased	No Difference	Decreased	Decreased Greatly
Consciously challenges the status quo, Is comfortable leading change initiatives with uncertain outcomes; Systematically considers new and better ways of doing things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is easily accessible to teachers and staff, Develops effective means for teachers and staff to communicate with one another, Maintains open and effective lines of communication with teachers and staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promotes cooperation among teachers and staff; Promotes a sense of well-being; Promotes cohesion among teachers and staff, Develops a shared vision.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is comfortable with major changes; Encourages people to express opinions that may be contrary to those held by individuals in positions of authority; Adapts leadership style to needs of specific situations, and can be directive or non-directive as the situation warrants.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Holds strong professional ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and learning; Shares ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and learning with teachers, staff, and parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Principal Leadership Survey

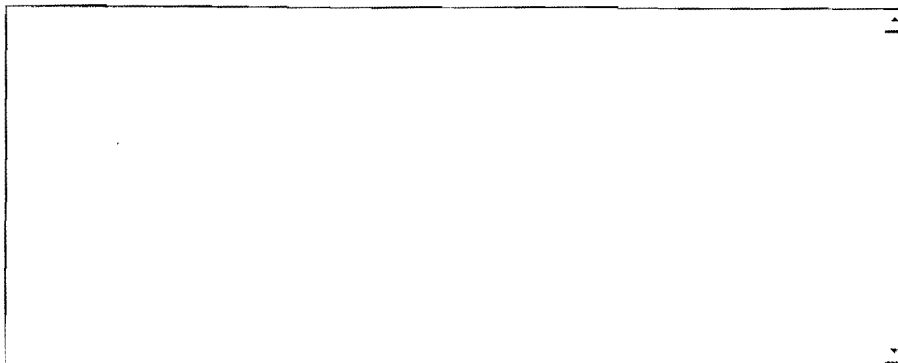
*** 19. Directions: For each item below, please check the box that best reflects the degree to which educational accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act have had on your effectiveness to carry out leadership responsibilities and behaviors while addressing the academic achievement for "at-risk" students. CONTINUED...**

	Increased Greatly	Increased	No Difference	Decreased	Decreased Greatly
Provides opportunities for input from teachers and staff on all important decisions; Provides opportunities for teachers and staff to be involved in policy development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stays informed about current research and theory regarding effective schooling; Continually exposes teachers and staff to cutting edge ideas about how to be effective.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is knowledgeable about assessment practices; Provides conceptual guidance for teachers regarding effective classroom practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspires teachers and staff to accomplish things that might seem beyond their grasp; Portrays a positive attitude about the ability of teachers and staff to accomplish substantial things; Is a driving force behind major initiatives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides and enforces clear structures, rules, and procedures for teachers, staff, and students; Establishes routines regarding the running of the school that teachers and staff understand and follow.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

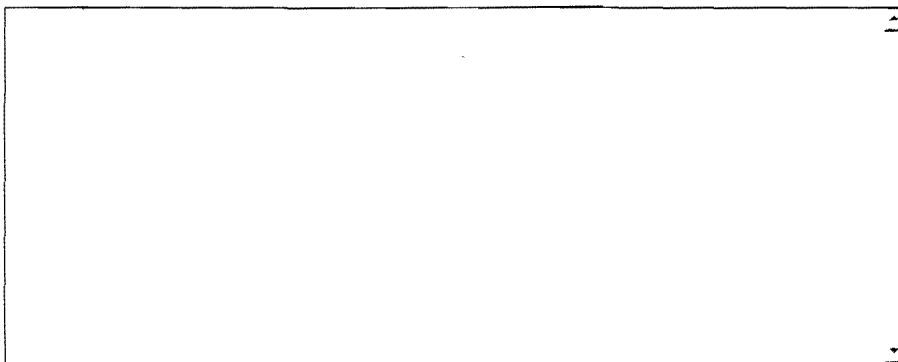
Your Recommendations

Principal Leadership Survey

20. What have you been doing as a school leader to improve the educational achievement for "at-risk" students in your school?

A large rectangular text box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide their answer to question 20. It has a small upward-pointing arrow in the top right corner and a small downward-pointing arrow in the bottom right corner.

21. What recommendations can you provide to other school leaders who are grappling with the educational outcomes for "at-risk" students in their school?

A large rectangular text box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide their answer to question 21. It has a small upward-pointing arrow in the top right corner and a small downward-pointing arrow in the bottom right corner.

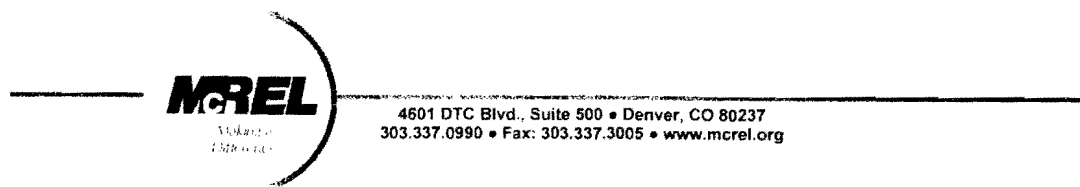
***22. Contact Information**

Name:

State:

Email Address:

Appendix C
McREL Permission



Mirvetk Tonuzi
290 Ridge Street
New Milford, NJ 07646

Permission to Use McREL Material

February 28, 2012

Permission is hereby granted to Mirvetk Tonuzi to reprint in the dissertation that she is writing the following material which was published by McREL:

Figure 3: Principal leadership responsibilities: Average r and 95% Confidence Intervals from *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement* by J. Timothy Waters, Robert J. Marzano, and Brian McNulty.

The table should be marked as to the source of the material and include the statement "Reprinted by permission of McREL." The bibliography should include a full citation as follows:

Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. A. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

We understand that the report containing this data will not be sold or distributed. It is for satisfying program requirements only. This permission is limited to the use and materials specified above. Any change in the use or materials from that specified above requires additional written permission from McREL before such use is made.

Please send McREL a copy of the completed dissertation for our records.

Sincerely,

Maura McGrath
Knowledge Management Specialist

Appendix D
Valenti Permission

Mirvetk Tonuzi
290 Ridge Street
New Milford, NJ 07646
Tel. #: (201) 952-6577

February 17, 2012

Dr. Michael Valenti, Principal
White Rock Elementary School
2 Francine Place
Oak Ridge, NJ 07438

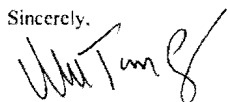
Dear Dr. Valenti:

This letter is a follow-up to our telephone conversation. As you may recall, I would like your permission to replicate your study as I work to complete a doctoral dissertation at Seton Hall University. If permission is granted, the title of my study would read "Leadership Responsibilities Associated With The Academic Achievement Of "At-Risk" Students: A Study Of The Perspective Of National Distinguished Elementary School Principal In An Era Of Ubiquitous Educational Accountability."

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation. These rights will in no way restrict replication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me in the enclosed return envelope. Thank you kindly for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Mirvetk Tonuzi

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:



Dr. Michael Valenti

Date

Appendix E
IRB Approval



OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

March 13, 2012

Mirvetk Tonuzi
290 Ridge St.
New Milford, NJ 07646

Dear Ms. Tonuzi,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your research proposal entitled "Leadership Responsibilities Associated with the Academic Achievement of At-Risk Students: A Study of the Perspectives of National Distinguished Elementary School Principals in an Era of Ubiquitous Educational Accountability" and has approved it as submitted under exempt status.

Enclosed for your records is the signed Request for Approval form.

Please note that, where applicable, subjects must sign and must be given a copy of the Seton Hall University current stamped Letter of Solicitation or Consent Form before the subjects' participation. All data, as well as the investigator's copies of the signed Consent Forms, must be retained by the principal investigator for a period of at least three years following the termination of the project.

Should you wish to make changes to the IRB approved procedures, the following materials must be submitted for IRB review and be approved by the IRB prior to being instituted:

- Description of proposed revisions;
- *If applicable*, any new or revised materials, such as recruitment fliers, letters to subjects, or consent documents; and
- *If applicable*, updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions and IRBs.

At the present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Barbara Strobert

Please review Seton Hall University IRB's Policies and Procedures on website (<http://www.provost.shu.edu/IRB>) for more information. Please note the following requirements:

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or adverse reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to immediately notify in writing the Seton Hall University IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

Amendments: If you wish to change **any** aspect of this study, please communicate your request in writing (with revised copies of the protocol and/or informed consent where applicable and the Amendment Form) to the IRB Director. The new procedures cannot be initiated until you receive IRB approval.

Completion of Study: Please notify Seton Hall University's IRB Director in writing as soon as the research has been completed, along with any results obtained.

Non-Compliance: Any issue of non-compliance to regulations will be reported to Seton Hall University's IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

Renewal: It is the principal investigator's responsibility to maintain IRB approval. A Continuing Review Form will be mailed to you prior to your initial approval anniversary date. **Note:** No research may be conducted (except to prevent immediate hazards to subjects), no data collected, nor any subjects enrolled after the expiration date.

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

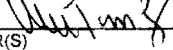
All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: _____

Leadership Responsibilities Associated With The Academic Achievement Of At-Risk Students;
A Study Of The Perspectives Of National Distinguished Elementary School Principals In An Era
Of Ubiquitous Educational Accountability

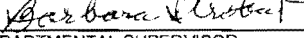
CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making **this application**, I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

Ms. Mirvetk Tonuzi  2-21-12
RESEARCHER(S) OR PROJECT DIRECTOR(S) DATE

**Please print or type out names of all researchers below signature.
Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.**

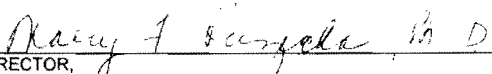
My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials and consider them to meet IRB standards.

Dr. Barbara Strobert  2/21/12
RESEARCHER'S ADVISOR OR DEPARTMENTAL SUPERVISOR DATE

Please print or type out name below signature

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the in March 2012 meeting.

The application was approved ☒ not approved ☐ by the Committee. Special conditions were _____ were not ☒ set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

 3/13/12
DIRECTOR, SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH DATE

Appendix F
Letter of Solicitation

March, 2012

Dear Principal :

I am currently enrolled at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, in the Ed.D. program as a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy. In order to fulfill the requirements of my program studies, I would like to invite your participation in a survey focused on the leadership practices of select principals that positively impact the academic achievement of "At-Risk" students.

The title of this study is "Leadership Responsibilities Associated With The Academic Achievement Of "At-Risk" Students: A Study Of The Perspectives Of National Distinguished Elementary School Principals In An Era Of Ubiquitous Educational Accountability". The purposes of this research are to (a) investigate the responsibilities of "distinguished" principals that are most supportive of the achievement of the "At-Risk" elementary student population, (b) contribute to the growing body of knowledge linked to the leadership responsibilities and behaviors demonstrated by "distinguished" principals that positively impact achievement of "At-Risk" students.

Data collection will be will be conducted by sending school leaders recognized as National Distinguished Principals during the years 2009, 2010, and 2011 by the National Association of Elementary School Principals a self-administered survey. It is estimated that the survey will take no longer than 10 -15 minutes of your time to complete and will follow an identical format for all participants. Here is a link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx> . This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

The survey, to which you are invited to participate via this letter, will begin by asking you to identify the most important leadership responsibilities and behaviors developed by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), you perceive as significant to the academic achievement of "At-Risk" students. Next, you will be asked how educational accountability measures implemented by the No Child Left Behind Act have had on your effectiveness to execute the leadership responsibilities and behaviors identified by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2005) in addressing the academic achievement of "At-Risk" students. The last part of the survey is comprised of demographic questions intended to produce specific data about you and your school.

Participation in this study is voluntary. By completing the survey instrument, you are consenting to participate in the research study. The inability or refusal to participate or to discontinue participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any point. The survey will become part of the analysis of the data of this study.

You will be identified by participant number only. The researcher will maintain complete confidentiality regarding your participation. Participants will be identified as Principal Participant # 1, #2, #3, and so on.

Data will not be stored electronically on hard drives of laptops or desktop computers. If stored electronically, data will be stored only on a CD or USB memory key. Data will be secured in a locked file cabinet. The researcher and the researcher's advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, College of Education and Human Resources, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, will have access to the data. No other individuals will have access to the research data. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (201) 952-6577 or through e-mail at mirvetk.tonuzi@student.shu.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mirvetk Tonuzi
Ed.D. Program
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
Jubilee Hall - Fourth Floor
South Orange, NJ 07079

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

Appendix G

Open-Ended Responses to Principal Leadership Survey

Question Number 20

Question # 20:

What have you been doing as a school leader to improve the educational achievement for "At-Risk" students in your school?

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
We offer tutoring every day during the school day for 45 minutes in reading and math. We have some students assigned to our computer lab before school starts each day and they practice Success Maker software. Parents come in to do paired reading and computer time for the lower grades.		√		√	√
We have established an "Operation Push" intervention program during afterschool that targets a specific group of students. The students are selected for this program based on whether the data from certain assessments demonstrates that the students can be motivated to achieve success during the school year.	√	√	√		√
Provides staff to lead reading intervention and math intervention. Provides weekly Professional learning community time to analyze data and design plans for meeting individual needs.	√	√			√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
We provide intervention before, during, and after school for students who are at risk. We use the Leveled Literacy Intervention program for struggling students and provide intervention groups during the day to move students toward proficiency. These students are monitored weekly to note their progress and parents are involved with the LLI program through take-home readers and other directions from the program. We have monthly professional intervention team meetings to discuss students who are "At-Risk" and to make sure they are progressing and their personal needs are being met as well.	√	√	√		√	√
School-wide assessment tools–Dibels, SMI math–Assessment results used to inform instructional practice. IPI (Instructional Practices Inventory) Results used to inform instructional practice and make adjustments to the depth of knowledge given to our students and raise the DOK engagement levels. Use standardized testing to help with student grouping. Use student data notebooks to help students set goals based on identified skill needs.		√	√			√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
<p>We have created clearly defined action plans and accountability structures that ensure focused attention and deliberate effort on critical aspects of instruction, assessment and intervention. Data have become a part of everything we do. Students' progress and performance is frequently measured and consistently monitored by RTI teams, Child Study Teams, guidance counselors, teachers and administrators. We have also worked to engage parents and students in the use of data to evaluate student growth and to identify the need for remediation. In addition, we have worked diligently to expand our "pyramid of interventions" and create new programs and practices that provide additional time and targeted instruction to students who evidence "gaps" or deficits in their learning. A three part action plan was designed and implemented to address the factors that contribute to failure – attitude (students who are able but unwilling to work), ability (students who are willing but struggle to learn) and attendance (students who fail behind because they don't come to school). In short, a wide array of actions have been initiated to closely, carefully and consistently measure and monitor student outcomes. Collaboration at the building level involves all stake holders for that student.</p>	√	√		√	√	√
					√	

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
As the instructional leader of a high performing elementary school, I feel that one of the most important qualities that an effective leader must possess is the ability to see the best in others and awaken that potential. Developing a professional learning community to meet the educational needs of students is a systematic and continuous process that requires the development of an entirely new teaching and learning culture that focuses on significant research findings about best practices and strategies. Teachers, while they do not have all the answers, are in a better position than anyone else to research, formulate, and implement solutions of their own devising. In a short span of time, teachers, parents, and students have woven the fabric of a culture that is inviting, encouraging and consistently strives for excellence. The transformation at Taft was not easy, but it has taken hold and staff members have been brought into a mind set and culture which sees change as not something to be feared, but as a tool to do what all good teachers have always wanted—to help children learn.	√				√	√
Provides staff to lead reading intervention and math intervention. Provides weekly Professional learning community time to analyze data and design plans for meeting individual needs.	√	√				√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
Provide training for teachers to increase students' academic success Increase tutorial support Drop in on classrooms on a continuous basis Provide cutting edge benchmark assessment tools and materials for intervention	√		√			√
First of all, the extent to which I carry out leadership in my school is based on ethical considerations, regardless of the outside pressures exerted based on NCLB policies/mandates. We have worked to understand the impacts of poverty and second language acquisition on the lives of our students and their families. Based on these research-based understandings, we align our efforts to address and minimized those impacts. We promote GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) and other efforts that build background knowledge and comprehension with students. We differentiate instruction, especially in reading, through a prescriptive-diagnostic RTI (Response to Intervention) model along with very specific staff development to prepare teachers and paraeducators to implement these programs well. We address behavior proactively, and positively, in all aspects of the student day. Our focus is to help all students be ready to fully take advantage of the educational opportunities we present.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Co-teaching, intervention blocks, direct instruction, and monitor achievement gaps			√			

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
Fostering relationships with all stakeholders is extremely important when dealing with children of poverty. Care givers may not trust schools due to their negative experiences from growing up and a general distrust of outsiders, teachers/staff may not know how to relate to economically disadvantaged because their own upbringing does not match, community members must be encouraged and enlisted to provide continued support in implementing a vision that all children can learn and succeed. The most important relationship to foster is working with students and teaching them to believe in themselves!	√				√	
Implemented research based programs in math and reading during connections classes. Differentiated instruction in classes through weekly administrative meetings with staff. The staff models what they will be teaching and how. Meeting individually with students. Setting high expectations and goals for staff and students.					√	√
Implemented more frequent assessments to gage student growth. Utilize student growth data to guide instructional decisions. Implemented a Response To Intervention plan to address student needs. Implemented Character Education program to address social and behavioral issues Developed opportunities and programs for teaching remedial skills		√	√	√		√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
We have increased support between school and home and have encouraged more involvement of traditionally noninvolved parents. Resources including computer enrichment programs have been made available to students during non-school hours. After school programs have been expanded even in tough economic times to help meet the needs of "At-Risk" students. Positive behavior programs have helped to focus students while at school. We will be implementing the "Leader In Me" program for the 2012-2013 school year to further address these concerns.				√	√
We have added a Literacy Coordinator position that assists my work with early education curriculum. We established Data Team work for assessment review, and we have added PLC and Book Review groups.		√			√
1. High Quality Professional Development regarding strategies impacting all learners along with monitoring fidelity of implementation to ensure strategies are utilized correctly. 2. Implementation of an acceleration period for K-5th grade to focus on areas of concern to strengthen weaknesses or provide enrichment. 3. Tutoring is provided after school for one hour. 4. Parent information sessions are provided throughout the year at varying times.	√	√		√	√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
Implemented systematic programs for learning and achievement that apply to all students. Instructional systems are research based, and intervention systems use on-going progress monitoring to measure student progress. Teachers work in Professional Learning Communities to plan instruction, assessments (formative and summative), and to plan interventions. The use of relevant data is central to all discussions. The philosophy that all students can learn and achieve at high levels permeates the school environment.	√	√	√			√
Providing training for the staff on a regular basis. Having teachers share strategies that are working on a weekly basis during faculty meetings.						√
High expectations, implement best practices and provide staff development aligned curriculum and expectations include parents and communicate regularly with them review data ongoing looking at new, innovative programs to implement – Leader in Me, LEGO education					√	√
Parent education and outreach, “At-Risk” counseling and support services, targeted interventions, bringing the community in to the school, high standards and expectations					√	√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Program
<p>Our outreach counselor does a tremendous job developing a positive relationship with our “At-Risk” students and serves as the liaison between the student and teachers and the student and home. We have set up small classes of 5-7 students who work on academic skills at their level of instruction and we have hands-on work-study classes where students focus on the application of "real-life" skills and tasks. Community speakers come in periodically to speak about current "hot" topic. We also have a computer based program that progresses through academic levels with a curriculum and modality that students find more motivating. The variety of programs available for middle school students is much less than for high school students based on their age and funding allocations. With our discipline policy, we try to create as clear a link as possible between choices and actions “At-Risk” students take and the consequences that result both positive and negative.</p>						√
<p>About 7 years ago, we adopted an RTI/MTSS model of school improvement. This drives everything we do.</p>				√		
<p>Keeping staff informed as to current research and best practices. Taking a proactive approach to learning and behaviors.</p>	√					

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
<p>I have tried hard to inspire teachers IN SPITE OF NCLB legislation. I recognize that this law has resulted in our being much more aware of the data, particularly the achievement of our low-performing students; however, much of my "calling" has been to encourage teachers to not feel discouraged by numbers. Teachers are, by nature, dismissive of their data when it is good and devastated by poor data. I try to swoon over good reports and to say, "it's just one test on one day," when it is not what they expect. Building a low-threat culture; using the medical model (We're looking at the patient, not the doctor as we analyze poor performance (illness) together) encouraging visits to each other's classes to see successful practices and holding monthly data team meetings with each of the grade levels are our starting points. We use a 3-tier system of supports with our RTI process, and believe in having clear, well-understood procedures and routines in both behavior and academic areas.</p>				√	√	
<p>Establishing progress monitoring strategies for all students and creating systematic, mandatory interventions for "At-Risk" student has been the most beneficial strategy for supporting "At-Risk" learners.</p>			√			√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
At my current school, achievement is already high because families have a high expectation of academic achievement. The challenge has been to help teachers realize that some students are "at risk" and need extra attention and help even though it is a small minority. Because of this, I have worked with grade level teams to assess and provide "at risk" students with intervention/learning opportunities that were not present before. Even though students are achieving at this school, the overall teaching strategies are not in line with current effective teaching knowledge. It has been a challenge to help teachers realize there are more effective ways to teach, that effective teaching will reduce the number of "at risk" students.	√					√
We have used individualized instructional plans for each of our students for many years now. NCLB provided good reading training for our staff during the Reading First Initiative, but after that went away, PD has been limited. Rural districts have a difficult time finding good funding sources that would help us maintain a good level of PD when compared to middle to large districts in our state. Most of our decisions are data based and are shared with all staff members to ensure good "buy-in" before decisions are made to change curriculum or to provide PD opportunities.	√	√				√
We continue to attack the issues in special education to accelerate the learning of those students.						√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Program
<p>We have structured our schedule to meet the needs of all students in every core content area. Every student receives a daily 40 minute second dose of small group literacy instruction that is based on their individual literacy needs, which have been identified from diagnostic assessments. We a daily 30 minute math intervention for students that are struggling with math as identified from diagnostic assessments. We have about 55% of our students that come to us not speaking English as their first language. We utilize an ESL intervention program for our K-2 grade students. We identify their level of English acquisition through an assessment and then place them into appropriate intervention groups where they receive appropriate leveled instruction for 45 minutes each day. We provide four after-school tutoring sessions throughout the year that are focused on meeting the individual needs of students in literacy. Each session has (16) 1-hour tutoring sessions.</p>		√				√
<p>Implemented a Response to Intervention (RTI) program. Initiated in-school counseling by contracting with a local psychologist to address social/emotional issues that arise. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts, our basic skills instruction has been cut buy 50% which prevents many “At-Risk” students from getting the level of support that they need.</p>				√		

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
We have changed our "teams" to Professional Learning Communities that analyze data gathered on the learning of academic standards. Teachers are experienced at determining which students need interventions to be successful on grade level benchmarks, and those that need additional challenge to remain engaged in their learning.	√	√			
We all work together and identify all children as early as possible who may be at risk and write Personal Educational Plans (PEP) for each student at either levels 1, 2, or 3 Response To Intervention (RTI) and provide additional assistance outside of the regular classroom for students who are levels 2 or 3 on a daily basis with highly trained teachers. In addition, the classroom teachers are highly skilled to assist these children through our ongoing professional development and teachers working in professional learning communities to assist each other. All of these children are formatively assessed in reading and math and instruction is differentiated based on these assessments. As the year progresses children who are achieving success are phased out of our program and those who are not receive more intense levels of interventions including identification as learning disabled with and IEP written.		√	√		√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Program
Striving to utilize formative assessment protocols that teachers believe in & will foster the collaborative discussions that analyze practices and program decisions. Establishing practices that support teacher to teacher conversations around teaching & learning. Working to create an effective and efficient Response to Intervention/ Instruction model.		√	√	√		
We have had a lot of professional learning using Ruby Payne and empathy training for the teachers. This has helped our teachers to understand our population is changing and that we no longer have the students who can perform with a "dummy teacher." We need to constantly strengthen our rigor in classes and raise our expectations for ALL students. We need to be compassionate towards those who have lack of exposure, but not allow it to be an excuse so we can help get them to grade level expectations and beyond.	√	√	√			
Making sure teachers and parents are in concert and connected. Teachers meeting regularly with parents keep them informed as to what is being done in class/school to support their child and what they MUST do at home. We have a partnership that clearly communicates 'no help from home equals no advancement for their kid.' We cannot and will not do this alone.					√	

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
<p>We use Title I and RTI strategies more effectively to assist struggling students to learn the needed concepts. We also have Data Dialogs with each grade level on a regular basis to discuss what students are in need of help and how can we address these needs. We have Reading and Math Goal Teams that look at the individual grade goals and school programs to see how we can improve them. We have an Instructional Coach that work with all the teachers helping them with individual students and/or how to modify strategies for student success in the core areas. We have a school wide reading program to recognize the amount of reading students do at home with their families. We have links available on our school website to assist students with Math and Reading activities. I hold a family Reading Night and a family Math night to spotlight what we learn at the various grades in these subjects so the parents can learn new math practices, how to read with their child at home, and ask questions. We have an ESL teacher at every grade level to work with students who are learning English as a Second Language. Our monthly newsletters focus on the core standards stated in layman's terms to better communicate the goals with the families.</p>	√	√	√		√
<p>We provide more one on one work with at risk students, more before and after school tutoring and peer tutoring.</p>					√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
Viewing data as a normal part of the school process and for making immediate decisions about how to respond to the needs of our learners. Maintaining and regularly reviewing high expectations for all learners. Teaching on grade level standards to all students including special education students. Celebrating successes along the way with students, staff and families. Classroom visits with instructional feedback (days blocked on the calendar to do this). Instructional focus at faculty meetings. High quality professional development. Hiring well.	√	√	√			
We work collaboratively as a school team in high performing Professional Learning Communities to identify the strengths and weaknesses of every students. We do this by analyzing our students' data on a regular basis. Students are engaged in flexible skill groups at least three times a week to work on skill deficiencies. We firmly believe that all students can learn. It is our responsibility to ensure that all students learn. I strongly encourage teachers to incorporate critical thinking, higher level questioning, cooperative grouping, and multiple learning styles into their daily instructional routine.	√	√	√			√
Before and after school programs. Increase parent involvement. Better communication. Establish a culture and climate that is safe and welcoming where relationships are established early					√	√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
Providing daily intervention on specified skills for "At-Risk" students		√	√		
We address the individual needs of each child. We develop relationships with our students through the use of Adult Mentors (who are often a staff member in the school or a parent - trained in mentoring). We support any struggling student with the use of systematic and proven reading or math interventions. Teachers work with students before and after school as well as during an enrichment block in order to meet the needs of our struggling students. We incorporate brain-based research in our teaching for example thoughtful movement activities are interspersed in all of our classrooms throughout the learning day to help keep students engaged and on-task.		√	√		√
Looking at data Letting data drive instruction		√			
We are fundamentally changing our approach to supporting children and families with significant needs.				√	
Increased use of data analysis to guide instruction and determine students needing interventions. Looking at student levels of engagement in classroom activities to increase involvement in higher level thinking skills activities.		√	√		

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
We have been using data more effectively to break down the information to implement intervention strategies to improve student performance.		√				
We have been working to rebuild our curriculum and align it more closely to the Common Core Standards and the Nebraska State Standards. We have also made a major commitment to training our regular classroom teachers in becoming better at understanding and teaching English Language Learners in the general education classroom.	√		√			
Know those students by name, identify their needs, and teach well.					√	
Keep in mind that children are the reason we do what we do. Hire, support, and encourage the best staff, who care deeply about students and their successes. Embrace change that makes a difference in student success. Plan for, and monitor the results of your efforts to impact student success. Protect your staff from things that can get in their way to be most effective for their Learners. Build a "team" concept with people who believe that all kids can learn, and that the relationships we can make with children, parents, and our teammates are the most important reasons we are in schools.			√			√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Programs
Early intervention programs, increased parent involvement, teacher professional development, diff. Instruction, arts integration, use of technology, and increased literacy.	√				√	√
Building school community Establishing high expectations for everyone Providing alternative instruction in an inclusive manner Providing each child with the opportunity to form a strong bond with an adult Providing all staff, professional and support, with ongoing, planned opportunities for growth Providing all staff with support for what they are asked to do each day Meeting regularly with "At-Risk" students to build confidence and help them make good choices	√				√	√
If a student in our school experiences difficulty, it does not fall to a single teacher to solve the problem: we have a school-wide system of timely, directive, systematic interventions in place to address their needs. We have developed a pyramid of interventions designed specifically to prevent students from falling through the cracks. Our students have learned that if they do not perform they will be answering to a coordinated team of staff members who will insist they put in extra time and get the help necessary to succeed.			√			
Better job of identifying those at risk students and find interventions to address the weakest areas.			√			√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Response to Intervention	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention Program
RTI, many different programs and assessments to continue seeking interventions that help increase student achievement.		√	√			
We have implemented a program called Intervention 101 that all elementary teachers take part in. The program is for students who for some reason are falling behind and is both after school and before school. Our goal is to help the students see growth in basic reading, math and science skills. Students can request to be in the program for as long as they want, parents can request or teachers can request that parents send students. The amount of time is totally dependent on the needs of the students. Careful records are kept and students take part in keeping those records. They take great pride in seeing their own progress.		√	√			√

Appendix H
Open-Ended Responses to Principal Leadership Survey
Question Number 21

Question 21:

What recommendations can you provide to other school leaders who are grappling with the educational outcomes for “At-Risk” students in their school?

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
I would suggest that these leaders target specific groups of students who are at or near the cusp of proficiency in the subject needed to make gains. Select your best teachers to have buy-in to work with these students during lunch, afterschool or during their planning on consistent days. Explain to the students the importance of being present daily and on time. Recognize these teachers who volunteer and give small incentives during quarterly awards programs.		√		√	√
You have to stay involved with the process and provide a clear and focused plan to help “At-Risk” students improve. You must continually be assessing the effectiveness of the interventions and change them as needed for individual students. Never give up!		√		√	√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
School leaders need to develop action plans that target attitudes and behaviors of every member of the school community. They need to cause people to decide that in this school, our work is predicated on the practices described in Blankstein's book, "Failure is Not an Option" and that we are willing to do "Whatever it Takes," as described in the DuFour text to ensure that this happens.				√	√	
Hire the best staff! Create systems in your building that goes across all grade levels. Involve and engage parents and community.	√			√		√
I would recommend the following: * Develop a framework for reform that encompasses TQM principles (customers, counting, continuous improvement, collaboration, innovation, shared leadership) and the Effective School Research (the benchmark for effective schools). * Have a thorough knowledge of how the educational system works by reading and studying the research * "Grow teachers" which necessitates an understanding of "Crucial Conversations" * Read Covey, Collins, and literature from business * Understand the difference between 1 st order and 2 nd order change * Be patient, don't take things personal, and truly look for a win/win and	√	√		√	√	√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Get as many staff involved and on-board as you possibly can that truly care about each child that they work with.	√			√		
Take a good look at your student and family population. Are you aware of the challenges your students grapple with on a daily basis, and what can your school do to help address those challenges? Is your homework policy a help or hindrance to student academic growth? Do you have metrics that align with the real work you are doing in your school, or are you reliant on a metric that is not capable of measuring what you are addressing? Build consensus on the staff around the true mission of your work connected directly to what students need. Build a "no excuses" culture around your core values for student learning. Buffer your staff from unfair comparisons. Celebrate your accomplishments and call out those comments that are not accurate reflections of the work you do.	√		√	√		
Involve parents, identify these students and make sure they are getting targeted instruction based on effective assessment tools. Develop a culture of high expectations that keeps students at the center of the decision making process.				√		

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
The critical component to reaching “At-Risk” students is to simply care about them. A faculty that truly students to succeed will have success when they do not simply blame society for the problems that they are presented with in dealing with “At-Risk” students.				√		
Spend your time and effort on building relationships first and make the commitment to work hard and never give up on our children.				√		
Keep focused on a positive climate where students succeed. Challenge students and staff with high expectations. Work with staff on achieving mastery with students in academics before moving to next level. Treat students with respect as individuals and show that you care about them.	√			√		
Focus on developmentally appropriate good teaching practices, not on data. This is particularly important for young children — they should not be tested to death — older children shouldn’t either, but I’m most concerned with ages 3 — 7.				√		

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Professional development is key	√					
Focus on creatively using money to support students academically. Look forward to the years when the school district provides money for summer enrichment or extended school day enrichment. Use the money to create an exploratory learning program to meet the students social, emotional and academic needs. Seek grants/corporate sponsorships to provide enrichment programs for “at risk” students if funding is not provided.				√	√	√
Membership in NAESP to be knowledgeable about cutting edge research as well as growth through conferences, publications, and networking Suggestions for professional development training	√					√
Develop a systems based instructional and intervention system that has a researched based core curriculum. From there develop interventions and purchase materials that are good for all students—not one that is developed for minorities or “at risk” students. Empower your teachers as leaders. Follow the PLC model of collaboration and organization. Develop an environment of inquiry and open collaboration between classified staff, certified staff, and administration.	√			√	√	

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
<p>The key to me - is knowing your students.</p> <p>- Attend all RTI meetings and schedule regular data analysis meetings with all grade levels to discuss student progress/ or lack there of. Analyzing data WITH teachers provides a great deal of insight as to where teachers and students are.... what the needs are.... what is working.... what is not working... 2. Parent communication is a key element.</p> <p>Parents need to be involved and be part of the TEAM making decisions about the child. Building relationships with the student and parent. 3. Transitioning students from one grade level to another.... need good communication and good data trail - so that what one teacher learns/gains during the year can be shared and continued the next year...without losing a 'quarter' at the beginning of the year... 4. Frequent and quality assessments (Short cycle assessments, formative assessments)</p>		√		√		
Follow the Reading First instructional model.					√	
Must have a strong core curriculum with best practices and high expectations. Use the items #20 as must dos in the school				√	√	
Communicate and meet with teachers and provide them the necessary supports						

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
While continuing to look for more interesting or motivating programs and activities you need to hold students accountable for their actions. Wipe the slate clean at the end of each school day and each day is a new day to learn and do better. Ultimately it is the positive relationship that your teachers develop with these "At-Risk" students that will make a difference just as it does for teachers and other students.			√	√	
Our school district has the saying, "Learning First!" Being focused on the whole child, and on each child learning every day is more important than the call for NCLB accountability. We have a huge population of "at risk" students because we have taken on four self-contained special education units--more than 40 of our 790 students have significant learning and behavioral challenges (in addition to the normal mix of special education kids) that they and their families deal with everyday. Having them at our school does not help our test scores, but it helps our students grow up being more compassionate and aware of others. Our wonderful teachers and kids give students with disabilities and struggles opportunities to learn alongside normally-developing peers. My advice is to look at the big picture, doing what's best for kids, and, incidentally, give the test—just don't take it too seriously.			√		

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Use data to make decisions. Constantly be evaluating the effectiveness of your educational programming for all students. Let the data tell you what to do.		√	√			
This is a difficult one because I truly believe that until we battle with the social issues of poverty, drug abuse, and poor parenting skills that our jobs as educators will become even more difficult. It seems that our federal government has found that it is much easier to just place blame on the public school system than it is to try and "fix" the societal woes mentioned above. Plus, like anything dealing with our federal and state governments, it comes down to money, and it is less expensive and less painful at the voting booths to not spend tax payer money on solving the social issues that we contend with on a daily basis. It is amazing to me how out of touch our politicians and policy makers in public education are in regard to the problems that we face each and every day. So, the only recommendation I can suggest would be for educators at all levels to get more involved in the politics and policy agendas so that the American public is more aware of the root causes of public education's decline in this country.				√		√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
True achievement can not be done alone. You need to involve your entire staff and school community. Set high expectations. Provide professional development. Establish learning communities data and designing effective instructional practices together.	√	√		√		
Research Join Networking with other administrators				√		√
Creating a collaborative environment with shared accountability through Professional Learning Community training has made the most significant impact on the success of "At-Risk" students in my career.	√					
I think a continuous model of school improvement that analyzes curriculum, assessment, and instruction is paramount to the success of students. Additionally all members of the educational team (school, parent and student) must take ownership of the learning and goal setting for every student. Staff need to be able to have hard conversation about what works and what doesn't work. EVERYONE must be held accountable for the learning. NO excuses!!!!!!!		√	√	√		

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
<p>The structure of your school day and the use of your resources; people and budget, absolutely must be focused on meeting the needs of ALL students. We structure our day and our resources to provide a forty minute block of small group literacy instruction for all students. We do this by flooding this 40-minute flexible grouping block with all of our resource people and Para-professionals. We also, structure the day, so that each grade-level has the same schedule. We then can use the cluster-grouping model to meet the needs of all students. We also create like schedules for two grade-levels, so that they can group students across levels to meet needs; 2nd and 3rd, 4th and 5th. We know that most of our students that are "at risk" need extra time. We try to create that extra time throughout the day, after school and in the summer, so that they have additional time and support to gain those foundational skills.</p> <p>I feel that every Principal must assess the school they are in to determine what needs to be done to help students. The three components that need to be looked at are overall teacher effectiveness, overall parent expectations/support, and the overall educational attitude of students. As we seek to improve those areas, educational outcomes with increase.</p> <p>Research Join Networking with other administrators</p>		√		√	
			√		√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Know that academic gains are incremental; therefore, do not be discouraged if significant improvement is not noted immediately. Become proficient in gathering and analyzing student data. Teachers must be directed to use formative as well as summative assessment and be instructed on how to use the information to drive instruction. As an administrator, do your research when you are selecting programs for implementation! Don't just jump on the band wagon and opt for a program that a neighboring district is using. Be sure that you are aware of the research which drives the program. Be aware that the most popular program may not meet the needs of your students.		√	√			
Encourage teacher leadership through Professional Learning Communities and quick specific interventions to support student learning.	√				√	√
Once a staff settles on a formative assessment model that enhances the analysis of instructional practices at least several times a year- the foundations for deep discussions about teaching & learning can happen- no blame, no excuses!		√	√			

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
<p>The most important thing is to hire the best possible staff, and provide on going professional development. The principal must be a servant leader and support teachers by getting them the supplies, materials and technology they need to be most effective to reach at risk students. In addition, classroom teachers need ongoing support when they are trying to teach at risk students. This is done by having the support of a team that will help the teacher design instruction, provide additional instruction outside the classroom and to communicate and encourage parents to provide more help. Moreover, these children who are struggling must be treated in a positive loving way and encouraged and praised for their success.</p>	√			√		
<p>Children must learn to love reading and school by how they are treated and how the school models a love for learning. Teaching children is as much about the "heart" as it is the "head" and we as educators must be the ones who help children to become excited about learning and to be willing to work hard with a loving supportive teacher cheering them on.</p>						

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Build relationships with the students and the families. Give your teachers the necessary tools to be empathetic toward situations, but not allow it to excuse students from high expectations. Encourage the "At-Risk" student more.			√		√
I recommend very highly to join NAESP and other professional organizations such as NCTM in order to network ideas with other principals. Go to a national convention to be on the "cutting edge" of what is happening not just in your own area but throughout the country. Beef up your own curriculum knowledge base so you know what you are talking about as you function in the role of Instructional Leader of your school. Enlist community resources such as nearby businesses, grandparents, and other available sources of possible tutors, financial support for incentives such as tee shirts, prizes for reading or math contests. Visit homes of struggling students whenever possible to discuss ways to help their specific child be successful. Build in some "fun" activities for the staff who are working themselves into the ground. Help them maintain the joy of making connections with kids and the love of teaching. Celebrate successes and maintain a positive learning environment . . . "The little Engine that Could "type philosophy..."I think I can I think I can to I knew I could....I knew I could!"	√		√		√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
No two schools are alike in the student population and the community. There are many effective ideas and best practices out there but not everyone works for every school or faculty. I have found that if we try too many new programs at once then we don't do anything effectively, so we try something that we all like, master it before we move on to something else.					√	
The regular analysis of data is a must! Teachers must use their data to guide their daily instruction. I believe that it is important for the principal to be at as many of the weekly PLC meetings as he/she can. In addition, I believe the principal must know the curriculum, research new and innovative ideas, and provide resources for teachers to meet the needs of such diverse populations/skill abilities.	√	√		√	√	√
Find a quality mentor. Stay involved in your state and national associations for continued professional development and last legislation.						√

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Research the DuFour's work on Professional Learning Communities	√					
Create an ethos within the school where parent participation is welcomed and expected. We work with parents and support them in their efforts to assist their children at home.				√		
I believe the most important piece for any "At-Risk" student is to ensure that there is at least one caring adult who is involved in this child's life who believes in them and will support their emotional development and help them to explore their passions. Then make sure that there are solid strategies in place, as early as possible, to increase background knowledge and develop skills in math and reading to set the foundation for their future learning.				√	√	
Make sure all decisions are made with the belief that students come first.						√
Understand that it is not so much the child at school; but familial needs that we are addressing. Although this is outside of the scope of education, it is the only way to effect change with impoverished families.					√	

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Be involved in local, state, and national principals' associations to have access to top quality professional development, to advocate for public schools, to build networks of colleagues that can provide advice/resources.						√
Focus on the student data and look at it collectively. Using PLCs and other teams will really bring data to life and have teachers look beyond their own classrooms to identify student needs for success.	√	√		√		
There is no quick fix you must layout a process over a period of years to get where you eventually want to be as a school and/or district.			√			
Adopt a school wide approach to helping students succeed. It is not a "down the hall" solution. Every teacher must take ownership in the school vision of acceleration and remediation for each student and deliver that acceleration and remediation in a timely manner (as soon as it is determined the skill needs reteaching or expanding). Back up the expectation with training, collaborative planning, and lots of instructional dialogue.	√	√				

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Be explicit, focused, and deliberate.		√				
Visit other successful schools with like populations, help faculty understand why and how to help students, equip parents and teachers to work together, and be creative in strategies. Don't give up.				√		√
Build a strong school community that has consistent expectations of children. Involve parents and hold them accountable along with their children. Communicate and then communicate some more. Offer a variety of approaches to instruction so that a match can be made. Establish a strong relationship with each child and at least one adult. Be visible and have lunch with these kids....build a bond, teach them to make good choices in a responsible way.				√		
Timely, directive, systematic interventions are the key to helping at risk students but one size does not fit all. An intervention plan should recognize the unique context of the school. Faculties should create their own plans rather than merely adopting the program of another school. Engaging staff in the process of exploring and resolving the question, "What will we do when students do not learn in our school?" creates far more ownership in and commitment to the resulting plan than adoption of someone else's plan.	√				√	

Respondent Comments	STAFF PD/ Professional Learning	Student Data Review	Monitor Achievement	Build School/Commu	Provide Intervention	OTHER
Use every single adult in the building to work with all students.				√		
Challenge the status quo, be courageous, and seek the assistance and support of good people. Hire people that want to "get on the right bus with you."						√
Read Naturally is a great program for students to gain confidence in their reading ability. They are very attentive to watching their graphs show improvement.					√	
Keep growing and be the leader of change, through others. Don't let your ego get in the way of doing the right thing and involving others. Don't be afraid of making a mistake, admit when you do, and learn from it. Collaboration is the key to engaging the power of others. Find out how this happens and do it..						√

Appendix I

Approval For Successful Defense

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Doctoral Candidate, **Mirvetk Tonuzi**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Fall Semester 2012**.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
 (please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor:
 Dr. Barbara Strobert *Barbara Strobert* 10/22/12

Committee Member:
 Dr. Eunyong Kim *Eun Kim* 10/11/12

Committee Member:
 Dr. Anthony Colella *Anthony Colella* 10/11/12

External Reader: _____

The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.