OVERCOMING PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT STATUS:
A STRENGTH BASED APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2012
OVERCOMING PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT STATUS:
A STRENGTH BASED APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

A Dissertation

by

Anita Marie Benitas

Approved by Dissertation Committee:

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Student: Anita Marie Benitas

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this dissertation is suitable for shelving in the library and credit is to be awarded for the dissertation.

_________________________, Graduate Coordinator
Caroline S. Turner, Ph.D. Date
DEDICATION

In honor and memory of my grandmother, Anita, I dedicate this Dissertation and Doctorate Degree to you. Your love and dedication to family taught me the true meaning and value of life. Today, like every day of my life, you continue to provide me with inspiration and motivation. Because of you, I believe that good can be found in everything, and sometimes you just have to look a little harder, but it’s there.

I will never stop seeking the good in people or in life, because like you, I know, you will always find what you’re looking for. Your belief in me throughout my life is part of the reason that I have achieved as much as I have in this lifetime. Like God, you believed in me, before I even believed in myself.

Because of you, I will always know that the best and most beautiful things in life can not always be seen or touched, but they can always be felt in the heart, and you will always be in my heart.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One does not complete the construction of a dissertation study single handedly in some dark basement surrounded by books, journals, half full coffee cups and dim lighting. Rather, for most, a dissertation is a compilation of work resulting from many years of direct and indirect study, conversations with colleagues and the perusals of numerous sources of literature. This study is no exception and I owe a great deal of gratitude to all of my colleagues who have entertained those conversations, provoked new trains of thought and challenged closely guarded beliefs. I would like to thank the members of the first Educational Leadership cohort at CSUS for their friendship, support and the knowledge and experiences that they shared with me. The completion of this study would not have been possible without the commitment and support from Justo Robles, the manager of the Instruction and Professional Development Department for the California Teachers Association. I would like to thank Dr. Yale Wishnick for encouraging me to think outside the box, to poke the system and to challenge the status quo. I learned as much, if not more, from our conversations as from any book. I would also, like to thank Dr. Carlos Nevarez for his support and guidance, he provided me with valuable insight that was indispensable to my understanding of the whole picture of educational research, and Dr. Edward Lee and Mr. Tad Kitada were instrumental in assisting me to organize my thoughts and ideas into a coherent and comprehensible fashion. In addition, I would like to thank William and Lendine Nelson, your encouragement and inspiration solidified my pursuit of higher education. It was Lendine
Nelson’s expertise and dedication to the fine literary details of this study that made this journey successful. I must not forget, my beloved aunt Sylvia Gutierrez who worked by my side for hours on end and instilling in me the idea that I can do whatever I set my mind to and that quitting is never an option. I would also like to thank my father, Richard. His belief in me throughout my life is part of the reason that I have achieved as much in this lifetime as I have. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Carolyn. Without her unwavering support I don’t know if I would have had the courage, fortitude or perseverance to begin this endeavor, let alone complete it. The successful completion of this study is as much attributable to her belief in me as it is to my own efforts.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

• Bachelor of Science: International Marketing, University of California, Davis, 1990

• Masters of Art in Education: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, California State University Sacramento, 2006

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• Program Consultant, California Teachers Association, Institute for Teaching

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Fields of Study

Strength-based school improvement, strength-based program improvement, teacher driven change, appreciative inquiry, positive deviance, English language learners, language acquisition and reading proficiency.
Abstract

of

OVERCOMING PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT STATUS:
A STRENGTH BASED APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

by

Anita Marie Benitas

During the last several years, this researcher has often ponder why it is that some of California’s public schools receiving Title I federal funds are able to successfully exit and move beyond their Program Improvement (PI) status. Conversely, other public schools in California receiving Title I federal funds maintain their program improvement status for several years; and they exhibit little hope of ever exiting program improvement status and entering the “Land of Promise” a land without interventions, sanctions, and consequences.

California has been confronted with a significant increase in the number of public schools receiving Title 1 federal funding, as well as, a significant increase in the number of public schools in program improvement. As the timeline approaches to meet the goals set under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, California is faced with an eminent urgency for new legislation and policies to be created and implemented to address the momentous issues of the state’s increasing number of public schools in program improvement.

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The purpose of this study was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will assist in identifying any conditions, factors, processes or elements that may have contributed to a Title I federally funded California public urban elementary school’s ability to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status. More specifically, this researcher sought to develop a series of suggestions that could prove to beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001. Answers to the following research questions were sought: 1) What instructional and non-instructional practices or programs were used to drive the school improvement process in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status? 2) What perceptions about a school’s environment and interpersonal relationships exist within an urban elementary school schools culture that promotes positive systemic school change? 3) What role does leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel have in an urban elementary school’s that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

The Center on Education Policy (2011), an independent nonprofit organization, has been monitoring national AYP data going back to 2005. On April 28, 2011, they released a report entitled *How Many Schools Have Not Made Adequate Yearly Progress?* The report findings sustain the findings of various other studies: An estimated 38 percent

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1 The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at [http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp)
of the nation’s public schools did not make AYP in 2010. This marks an increase from 33 percent in 2009 and it is the highest percentage since NCLB took effect.

Since the early years of NCLB implementation, various analysts have predicted that the number of schools not making AYP would increase rapidly in future years and would eventually include a majority of the nation’s schools (Olson, 2002; Olson 2005; Wiley, Mathis & Garcia, 2005; University of California Riverside, 2008). According to State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson, “4,600 or 80 percent of the state’s schools that receive federal Title I funds will be in improvement status for the 2011-2012 school year” (Lambert, 2011, p. 2).

This mixed-methods research study was directed towards a California public urban elementary school with a large at-risk population of English Language Learners located just fifteen minutes from downtown Los Angeles. This study was guided by two strength-based theoretical models “Appreciative Inquiry” (inquiry framework) and “Positive Deviance” (behavioral framework). Strength-Based or Asset-Based theoretical models focus on successes, “what is working” rather than failures “what is wrong or broken” (Hammond 1996; Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009). Strength-based or asset-based pedagogical models are framed around personal, social, or community assets and focus on unique talents, strengths, qualities and positive experiences.

Millions of dollars have been spent to study what our schools are lacking, what our schools are doing wrong, and what teachers are not doing right, yet the number of schools entering program improvement continues to increase every year. The time has
come to stop focusing on what our schools are not doing right and to start focusing on what they are doing right.

This study suggests that in order to effectively meet the needs of the ever changing and evolving world, educators, educational leaders, policymakers, and legislators must begin to move beyond, simply treating the symptoms of program improvement; they must begin to investigate and understand the factors that create and influence successful systemic school improvement.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that the true answers to the program improvement dilemma can be sought; if future researchers can move beyond problem solving, and break free from the bondage of the traditional deficit model of school improvement. By continuing to examine the schools that have been able to succeed in beating the odds by successfully exiting and moving beyond their program improvement status, future researchers could prove to be the catalysts in a strength-based movement; thereby, creating a paradigm shift in the future of educational research.
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Chapter 1
IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

During the last several years, this researcher has often pondered why it is that some of California’s public schools receiving Title I federal funds are able to successfully exit and move beyond their Program Improvement (PI) status. Conversely, other public schools in California receiving Title I federal funds maintain their program improvement status for several years; and they exhibit little hope of ever exiting program improvement status and entering the “Land of Promise” a land without interventions, sanctions, and consequences.

The purpose of this study was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will assist in identifying any conditions, factors, processes or elements that may have contributed to a Title I federally funded California public urban elementary school’s ability to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status. More specifically, this researcher seeks to develop a series of suggestions that could prove to beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001.2

In conversations with various other educators and researchers throughout the state of California, this researcher discovered that this dilemma was not unique to either Northern or Southern California or to urban or rural schools. In fact, these same concerns

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2 The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp.
were shared by virtually everyone, and everyone seemed to have been searching for similar answers without much success.

In California, Program Improvement (PI) is the formal designation given to public schools receiving Title I federal funding that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years in the same content area (English or Math), or on the same indicator (Academic Performance Index (API) or Graduation Rate) for any numerically significant subgroup (CDE, AYP Report 2010). The goal under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, is that 100 percent of students will test proficient in English/Language Arts and Mathematics by the year 2014 (See Appendix H, AYP Targets). Title I funded schools that do not make AYP targets each year are identified for program improvement (EdSource, 2009). As the timeline approaches to meet the goals set under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the data collected by the California Department of Education and EdSource has brought forth an eminent urgency for new legislation and policies to be created and implemented to address the momentous issues of the state’s increasing number of public schools in program improvement. The AYP provisions under NCLB were adopted to create more consistency in accountability across states. Under current law, most experts say that nearly every school that receives federal aid would, sooner or later, be deemed a failure, except where individual states dramatically lower academic standards (Blume, 2011).

The Center on Education Policy (2011), recently released a background paper entitled State Policy Differences Greatly Impact AYP Numbers which states that “Substantial variations exist among states not only in testing and accountability policies,
but also in academic content standards, test content and difficulty, and minimum subgroup size, to name just a few” (p. 18). The key findings reported that in most of the states analyzed, the number of schools failing to make AYP increased substantially in the years when the state’s achievement targets went up. Furthermore, in some states, changes in the number of school not making AYP were largely attributed to changes in the cut scores defining “proficiency” performance on state tests. In South Carolina, the decision to lower cut scores appears to have been a major reason behind a dramatic increase in the number of schools making AYP. Although several states have lowered their cut scores to deal with the demands of NCLB accountability, at least one state, New York, recently raised its cut scores, resulting in a large increase in the number of schools failing to make AYP.

In the fall of 2009, 79 schools left program improvement, while 685 entered the program. Out of the 903 schools in the fifth year of program improvement during 2008-2009, only ten schools were able to exit program improvement status in 2009-2010. Schools that were in program improvement the longest were the least likely to leave (EdSource, 2010). In 2009-2010 there were 9,917 public schools in California and 6,065 of those schools received Title I federal funding (EdSource, 2010). Of the 6,065 public schools in California receiving Title I federal funding during the 2009-2010 school year, 2,783 were designated as program improvement schools. Thus, in 2009-2010, nearly one third or 28 percent of all California schools were in program improvement status, and 62 percent of those schools were facing corrective action (Year 3) or restructuring (Years 4-5) (EdSource, 2010).
Under the NCLB Act of 2001, AYP growth targets will continue to increase annually until 2014, making it difficult for schools to escape identification for program improvement. Furthermore, the escalating AYP growth targets will make it nearly impossible for schools currently in program improvement to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status. According to State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson, “4,600 or 80 percent of the state’s schools that receive federal Title I funds will be in improvement status for the 2011-2012 school year” (Lambert, 2011, p. 2).

It is worth noting that AYP is a requirement under Title I of the federal NCLB Act. States, districts and schools that participate in Title I, commit to the goals of NCLB (CDE, AYP Report, 2010). However, districts and schools that do not receive Title I funds are not subject to NCLB program improvement sanctions, interventions, or consequences; even if they do not make AYP (EdSource, 2009).

California has been confronted with a significant increase in the number of public schools receiving Title I federal funding, as well as, a significant increase in the number of public schools in program improvement. Based on data collected and compiled by EdSource (2003-2011) the number of schools receiving Title I funding has increased from 5,711 in 2003-2004 to 6,142 in 2010-2011. This is an increase of 431 schools in eight years, and it suggests that approximately 62 percent of all public schools in California are currently receiving Title I funding. This data also indicates that the number of Title I schools in program improvement has increased from 1,626 in 2003-2004 to 3,169 in 2010-2011. This is an increase of 1,543 schools in eight years. What is more
alarming is the number of Title I schools that are at risk of being identified for program improvement based on AYP growth targets.

State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson contends that “Even more are expected to fail AYP over the next few years as targets rise, and as such, the federally imposed labels cease to provide any meaningful information to stakeholders who deserve a more comprehensive understanding of a school’s performance” (Lambert, 2011, p. 2).

Since the early years of NCLB implementation, various analysts have predicted that the number of schools not making AYP would increase rapidly in future years and would eventually include a majority of the nation’s schools (Olson, 2002; Olson 2005; Wiley, Mathis & Garcia, 2005; University of California Riverside, 2008).

The Center on Education Policy (2011), an independent nonprofit organization, has been monitoring national AYP data going back to 2005. On April 28, 2011, they released a report entitled How Many Schools Have Not Made Adequate Yearly Progress? The report findings sustain the findings of various other studies: An estimated 38 percent of the nation’s public schools did not make AYP in 2010. This marks an increase from 33 percent in 2009 and it is the highest percentage since NCLB took effect. While many assumed that the AYP provisions on NCLB would make it easier to make meaningful comparisons across states, the report cautions that AYP results are not comparable between states because of variations in states’ test, uniformity in the cut scores for proficiency performance, demographics, and other factors. Hence, one could presume that meaningful comparison of AYP results across states is virtually impossible.
In 12 states and the District of Columbia, at least half of the public school did not make AYP in 2010. In the majority of the states at least one-fourth of the schools did not make AYP. No clear pattern was evident in the four largest states, which together enroll more than one-third of the nation’s students. The estimated percentage of schools that fell short of AYP in these states were 86 percent in Florida, 61 percent in California, 37 percent in New York and five percent in Texas.

For the 2011-2012 school year, there are an estimated 3,649 schools that will be receiving Title I funding that are at risk of being identified for program improvement based on AYP growth targets (CDE, Schools at Risk Data Files, 2011). The data collected by the CDE’s Program Improvement Data files supports the findings by EdSource. In fact, the CDE Program Improvement Office indicates that as Title I funded schools in program improvement continue to grow, so will the struggle to provide federally mandated support to the schools currently identified for program improvement.

Data Table 1. indicates that California schools receiving Title I funding are on the rise, as is the number of Title I funded schools in program improvement.

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3 Twelve states plus D.C. had 50 percent or more of their public schools not make AYP in 2009-2010. These states are listed from highest to lowest: D.C., Florida, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Missouri, California, Arkansas, Massachusetts, Maine, Delaware, Nevada, Illinois, and Minnesota.
Table 1

*California Title I Schools in Program Improvement*

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<td>776</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>874</td>
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<td>PI Years 3–5</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>687</td>
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<td>Title I</td>
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<td>867</td>
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<td>PI Years 1–2</td>
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<td>Yearly Total All Schools in PI</td>
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<td>1,599</td>
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<td>2,240</td>
<td>2,204</td>
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<td>2,783</td>
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EdSource (April 2008)

Statement of the Problem and Guiding Question

The purpose of this study was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will assist in identifying any conditions, factors, processes or elements that may have contributed to a Title I federally funded California public urban elementary school’s ability to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status. More specifically, this researcher sought to develop a series of suggestions that could prove to beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that
are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001.\textsuperscript{4} Answers to the following research questions are sought:

1. What instructional and non-instructional practices or programs were used to drive the school improvement process in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

2. What perceptions about a school’s environment and interpersonal relationships exist within an urban elementary school schools culture that promotes positive systemic school change?

3. What role does leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel have in an urban elementary school’s that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

Theoretical Framework

In establishing a framework around which to build the critical components of this study, this researcher reviewed previous research on program improvement and discovered that the majority of the studies conducted were somewhat similar in their purpose of examining the program improvement dilemma. While similar in intent, all of the studies differed in various ways: including how they were conducted, the subgroups selected, and, in some respects, the findings or conclusions reached by the researchers. Only three major theoretical themes seemed to be followed by the majority of researchers: (1) the problems or flaws with the state and federal accountability systems,

\textsuperscript{4} The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp.
(2) deficits in available funding and resources, and (3) the deficits of students attending schools in program improvement status. However, no research could be identified that examined the program improvement dilemma on a local school site level that utilized a strength-based theoretical theme to pursue investigations into the area of program improvement in California public schools receiving Title I federal funding. For this reason, this researcher decided to base the theoretical framework in this study on a strength-based theoretical model using a strength-based theoretical lens.

The traditional approach to program improvement is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. Many problem solving models are traced back to Dewey (1910), who claimed five stages to problem solving: perceiving a difficulty, defining the problem, suggesting possible solutions, analyzing implications of solutions and testing validity of solutions. Problem-solving research was revolutionized in the 1960’s when researchers turned from studying the conditions under which solutions are reached to the process of problem solving (Chi, Glaser & Rees, 1982). This approach focuses primarily on the identification of the needs and the external inputs necessary to meet those needs or to solve a problem. The problem solving model is often driven by what is wrong or broken; thus, the process begins with the perception that there is a problem and something needs to be fixed; and when one searches for problems one often finds them. According to Hammond (1998), by paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them. This approach is consistent with a historical attitude in American Business that sees human systems as machines and people as interchangeable parts. Hence, we
believe we can fix anything and there is a right answer or solution to any organizational problem or challenge.

The Deficit Thinking Model is based on the notion that lower achievement in schools is due to a problem with the student rather than considering the role of the school itself; its instructional practices, its organizational structures, or the diversity in the cultures, beliefs, language and learning styles of its students. As such, the theory contends that poor schooling performance is rooted in the students’ alleged cognitive and motivational deficits (Valencia, 2010). According to Valencia (1997), Deficit Thinking has a long standing existence and a powerful influence on educational practice.

Valencia (1997) identified six characteristics of deficit thinking: blaming the victim, oppression, pseudoscience, temporal changes, educability, and heterodoxy. A more comprehensive review of Valencia’s characteristics of deficit thinking will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

Strength-Based or Asset-Based theoretical models focus on successes, “what is working” rather than failures “what is wrong or broken” (Hammond 1996; Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009). Strength-based or asset-based pedagogical models are framed around personal, social, or community assets and focus on unique talents, strengths, qualities and positive experiences. Strength-based school improvement represents a major shift from traditional school reform approaches where the responsibility for change lies in the hands of a few individuals. Fundamental to this approach is the assertion that meaningful and sustainable school improvement is more likely when school-community stakeholders think together, work together, are excited about the changes they want to make, and have
a clear plan for action. This study utilized two strength-based theoretical models “Positive Deviance” (behavioral framework) and “Appreciative Inquiry” (inquiry framework) to investigate the area of program improvement at a California public urban elementary school receiving Title I federal funding. The theoretical framework which guided this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Diagram of Strength-Based Theoretical Framework
The Strength-Based Positive Deviance (PD) model builds on positive behavior, bottom up interventions and learning through actions, it is a model used for social and behavior change (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010). The driving force behind Positive Deviance is the identification of outliers who defy the norm and succeed when others are failing. Positive Deviance (PD) is a developmental approach that is based on the premise that solutions to community problems already exist within the community and the people of the community are the experts (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010). The Positive Deviance approach; thus, differs from traditional "Deficit Thinking" or “Problem-Solving” approaches in that it does not focus primarily on the identification of deficits, needs, or the external inputs necessary to meet deficits, or needs. Instead, it seeks to identify and optimize existing resources and solutions within the community to solve community challenges (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010).

In addition, it is worthy to note that the Positive Deviance methodology utilizes a four step process- Define, Determine, Discover, and Design. A more comprehensive review of Positive Deviance and the four step process will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

The Strength-Based Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model involves the art and practice of asking questions about “what works” and how to do more of “what works” instead of the traditional “Deficit Thinking” or “Problem Solving” model of identifying and eliminating problems or gaps. The Appreciative Inquiry model provides a critical new way of thinking about organizational change and improvement, yet it is deeply rooted in the historical values of Organization Development (Cooperrider, Sorensn, Yaeger &
Whitney, 2005). Appreciative Inquiry suggests that human organizing and change at its best is a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The assumption of AI is simple: Every organization or community has something that works right, things that give it life when it is vital, as is effective and successful (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008). Appreciative Inquiry is the study of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best, and it is based on the assumption that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams are themselves transformational (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most effective, alive, and constructively capable in economics, ecological, and human terms. Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008).

In addition, it is worthy to note that the Appreciative Inquiry methodology incorporates a 4-D Cycle- Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. A more comprehensive review of Appreciative Inquiry and the 4-D Cycle will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

This researcher could not identify any research that examined the program improvement dilemma on a local school site level that utilized a strength-based theoretical theme to pursue investigations into the area of program improvement in a California public urban elementary school receiving Title I federal funding. For this
reason, this researcher decided to base the theoretical framework in the study on strength-based theoretical models utilizing a strength-based theoretical lens.

Definition of Terms

In initiating the development of this dissertation topic, this researcher came to the realization that the field of education utilizes a plethora of acronyms and buzz words, and a significant aspect of this research project is to provide clear and concise information for educators, researchers and practitioners. Therefore, it is this researcher’s belief that it is important to establish key definitions for oneself and the reader as to what is meant by the terms utilized throughout the remainder of this study.

Annual Measureable Objective (AMO). The NCLB Act of 2001 mandates that all students perform at the proficient or above level on statewide assessments in English and Math by 2014. California’s AMO’s are the minimum percentages of students who are required to meet or exceed the proficient level on the state assessments used for AYP. The AMO’s will continue to rise every year so that by 2014, 100 percent of students in all schools, districts, and numerically significant subgroups must score at the proficient level or above.

At Risk of Being Identified As A Program Improvement School. A Title I school is at risk of being identified for program improvement when, for each of two consecutive years, the Title I school does not make AYP in the same content area (English-Language Arts or Mathematics) school-wide or for any numerically significant subgroup, or on the same indicator (API or high school graduation rate) school-wide.
At Risk Population. A population of students who have a high risk of failure due to socioeconomic factors.

API. Academic Performance Index (API) is part of California’s Public School Accountability Act of 1999 (PSAA). The purpose of the API is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools. It is a numeric index (scale) that ranges from a low 200 to a high 1,000. A school’s score on the API is an indicator of a school’s performance level. The statewide API performance target for all schools is 800. A school’s growth is measured by how well it is moving towards or past that goal. A school’s base year API is subtracted from its growth API to determine how much the school improved in a year.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Approach / Theoretical Model. A co-constructive strength-based inquiry process that involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. The AI Model is deeply rooted in the historical values of Organization Development and provides a new way of thinking about organizational change and improvement. The AI assumption is that every organization or community has something that works right, things that make it effective and successful. The driving force behind the AI approach is its focus on “what works” and how to do more of “what works.” The AI process consists of the 4-D Cycle- Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. There are five principles that underlie the AI methodology: The Constructionist Principle, The Principle of Simultaneity, the Poetic Principle, the Anticipatory Principle, and the Positive Principle.
Asset-Based Approach/Model/ Theoretical Lens. Strength-Based or Asset-Based theoretical models focus on successes, “what is working,” rather than failures “what is wrong or broken.” Strength-based or asset-based pedagogical models are framed around personal, social, or community assets and focus on unique talents, strengths, qualities and positive experiences.

AYP. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a federal accountability requirement mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which requires each state to ensure that all schools and districts make AYP. AYP is a series of annual academic performance goals established for schools and districts. Schools and districts are required to meet or exceed criteria in the following four areas: Participation Rate, Percent Proficient, API, and Graduation Rate in order to make AYP.

AYP Growth Targets. The NCLB Act of 2001, mandates that all schools receiving Title I funds meet or exceed all establish AYP Growth Targets. Growth Targets exist in four areas: participation rate, percentage proficient (also referred to as Annual Measurable Objectives or AMOs). API and graduation rate are additional indicators.

CAT-6 Survey. The California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition Survey (CAT-6 Survey) is a standardized norm referenced test that measures academic achievement in reading, language, spelling, and Mathematics for students in grades 2-12. A standardized, national norm referenced test compares a student’s scores to scores from a sample of students to be representative of the nation as a whole. When a student scores at the 62\(^{nd}\) percentile, it means the student’s score was equal or better than 62 percent of the students in the norm sample who took the same test under the same standard conditions.
**CBEDS.** California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) is an annual data collection in October which collects the following data elements from California public schools kindergarten through twelfth: enrollment, graduates, dropouts, vocational education, alternative education, adult education, course enrollment, classified staff, certificated staff, teacher shortage and demand.

**CDE.** California Department of Education (CDE) oversees the state’s diverse and dynamic public school system that is responsible for the education of more than seven million children and young adults in more than 9,000 schools. The CDE and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction are responsible for enforcing educational law and regulations, and for continuing to reform and improve public educational school programs.

**CAHSEE.** Beginning with the Class of 2006, all public school students are required to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to earn a high school diploma. The tests are designed to assess skills in English and Algebra 1.

**Consequences.** Schools that do not meet the performance targets and quantifiable educational goals established under the accountability system of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 are targeted for a succession of consequences that become more severe with each year that a school does not make AYP.

**Corrective Action.** Under program improvement, if a school fails to make AYP for three consecutive years they are identified for “Corrective Action.” After a school has been targeted for “Corrective Action” they are required to select one or more of the following Corrective Actions: (1) replace the school staff; (2) institute and fully
implement a new curriculum and provide appropriate professional development; (3) significantly decrease management authority at the school level; (4) appoint an outside expert to advise the school; (5) extend the school year or the school day; or (6) restructure the internal organizational structure of the school.

*CST.* The California Standards Tests (CST) are individual subject tests in English-Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and History-Social Science that are administrated to students in California as part of the STAR testing program. These tests are used in calculating AYP. Except for a writing component that is administered as part of the grades four and seven English-language arts tests, all questions are multiple choice. These tests were developed specifically to assess students' knowledge of the California academic content standards. The State Board of Education adopted these standards that specify what all California children are expected to know and be able to do in each grade or course. CST scores are reported as one of five performance levels from advanced to far below basic. Only the results of the California English-Language Arts and Mathematics Standards Tests are used to determine the progress elementary and middle schools are making toward meeting the federal No Child Left Behind adequate yearly progress requirement of having all students score at proficient or above on these tests.

*Deficit Thinking Approach/Model.* The Deficit Thinking Model is based on the notion that lower achievement in schools is due to a problem with the student rather than considering the role of the school itself, its instructional practices, its organizational structures, or the diversity in the cultures, beliefs, language and learning styles of
students. As such, the theory contends that poor schooling performance is rooted in the students’ alleged cognitive and motivational deficits.

**Entering Program Improvement.** The NCLB Act of 2001 requires that all school meet AYP criteria annually. Schools that receive Title I funds will enter program improvement, if they do not meet AYP criteria for two consecutive years in specific areas. A School or district could have potentially 46 different criteria to meet in order to make AYP.

**Ethnographic Interview.** This is an interviewing technique that is used to gather qualitative data regarding the behaviors of people in their natural settings. The data is collected by means of open-ended interviewing questions, listening and observing.

**Ethnically Diverse.** To have an ethnic make-up which is identified as something other than white.

**Exiting Program Improvement.** A school will exit program improvement if it makes AYP for two consecutive years. A school exiting program improvement will not be subject to Title I corrective actions or other NCLB sanctions.

**Growth Targets.** The NCLB Act of 2001, mandates that all schools receiving Title I funds meet or exceed all establish AYP Growth Targets. Growth Targets exist in four areas: participation rate, percentage proficient (also referred to as Annual Measurable Objectives or AMOs). API and graduation rate are additional indicators.

**Interventions.** Schools that do not meet the performance targets and quantifiable educational goals established under the accountability system of the No Child Left
Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 are targeted to implement various intervention programs designed to help improve the performance of students in struggling schools.

**LEA.** Local Educational Agency (LEA) is a term used to define a school district or county office of education.

**Maintaining Program Improvement Status.** A school that begins the school year in program improvement and meets all AYP criteria for that school year will maintain the same program improvement status for the next school year. The school must continue to offer the interventions begun during Year 1.

**NCLB.** The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is the largest federal program for promoting equity and excellence in education and it reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act of 1965.

**Over Representation.** Possession of a larger than average number of students when compared to other districts within the state of California.

**Problem-Solving Approach/Method.** This approach focuses primarily on the identification of needs and the external inputs necessary to meet those needs or to solve a problem. The problem solving model is often driven by what is wrong or broken; thus, the process begins with the perception that there is a problem and something needs to be fixed. Many Problem Solving models are traced back to Dewey, who claimed five stages to problem solving: perceiving a difficulty, defining the problem, suggesting possible solutions, analyzing implications of solutions and testing validity of solutions.
Positive Deviant. Is an awkward, oxymoronic term used to categorize the outliers (those who defy the norm and succeed when others are failing). The concept is simple: look for outliers who succeed against all odds. An individual who lives and works under the same constraints as everyone else, yet finds a way to succeed against all odds. An individual or group that demonstrates special or uncommon behaviors and strategies.

Positive Deviance (PD) Approach/Model. A powerful approach for change that is used to bring out sustainable behavior and social change by identifying solutions that already exist in the system. The PD methodology consists of four basic steps- Define, Determine, Discover, and Design that applies experiential learning methods and skilled facilitation to address an intractable adaptive challenge. The people of the community are the experts in the PD approach. PD is best understood through action and is most effective through practice. Adaptive change lies at the heart of the PD approach. The PD process is a tool for adaptive work and it emphasizes practice instead of knowledge, the “How” instead of the “What” or “Why.”

Program Improvement (PI). Program improvement is a formal designation for Title I funded schools and LEAs. The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that California schools and LEA’s receiving Title I funds meet or exceed a series of annual academic performance goals. Schools that receive Title I funds will be identified for program improvement, if they do not meet AYP criteria for two consecutive years in specific areas. A School or district could have potentially 46 different criteria to meet in order to make AYP.
Program Improvement Status. Is based on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

There are four status levels: Entering Program Improvement, Advancing in Program Improvement, Maintaining Program Improvement Status, and Exiting from Program Improvement.

Safe Harbor. Is a provision under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 for alternatively meeting Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) targets and can be applied in the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports. If a school, district, or subgroup does not meet its AMO criteria in either or both content areas (English or Math) but shows progress in moving students from scoring below the proficient level or above on the assessments, it may make AYP. A school, district or subgroup can make Safe Harbor provisions if (1) the percentage of students below proficient decreases by 10 percent over the prior year; (2) they have a “Yes” or blank in the “Met 2010 AYP Criteria” column for participation rate for the assessments in English and Math; (3) demonstrate at least a one-point growth in the API or have a Growth API of 680 or more; and the school or district meets the graduation rate criteria, if applicable. Like other alternative methods, there is no limit on how many times a school or district may make AYP using Safe Harbor. No distinction is made regarding how schools and districts make AYP, only whether or not AYP is met.

Sanctions. Schools that do not meet the performance targets and quantifiable educational goals established under the accountability system of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 are targeted for a succession of sanctions that become more severe with each year that a school does not make AYP.
School Climate. School climate reflects the physical and psychological aspects of a school. It is a school’s physical and social environment. It is the feelings and attitudes about a school expressed by students, teachers, staff and parents.

School Culture. School culture reflects deeply imbedded shared ideas, beliefs, values, and behaviors that characterize a school. A school culture drives the thinking and guides the actions of stakeholders within a school’s community.

State Board of Education (SBE). The State Board of Education (SBE) is the governing and policy making body of the California Department of Education. The SBE sets kindergarten through twelfth grade educational policy in the areas of standards, instructional material, assessment, and accountability. The SBE has eleven members appointed by the Governor and the authority to grant waivers of the Educational Code.

Strength-Based Approach/ Model/ Theoretical Lens. Strength-Based or Asset-Based theoretical models focus on successes, “what is working,” rather than failures “what is wrong or broken.” Strength-based or asset-based pedagogical models are framed around personal, social, or community assets and focus on unique talents, strengths, qualities and positive experiences.

Restructuring/Restructuring Plan. Under program improvement, if a school fails to make AYP for four consecutive years they are required to work with its district, parents and school staff to prepare a plan for restructuring the governance of the school. The plan must include at least one of the following alternative governance options: (1) closing the school and reopening the school as a charter school; (2) replace all or most of the staff, which may include the principal; (3) contract with an outside entity to operate
and manage the school; (4) state receivership; and (5) implementation of any other major restructuring of the schools governance arrangement that makes fundamental reforms and leads to improved student achievement. After a school has not made AYP for five consecutive years they are required to implement the restructuring plan.

*Title I.* Is a program under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 20001 that provides funding to help educate low-income children. The primary goal of Title I is for all students to be 100 proficient in English Language Arts and Mathematics by 2014.

*Urban School.* A school located in a metropolitan area or inner city with a large ethnically diverse student population.

**Limitations of the Study**

It will be important to clearly delineate through the findings of this study that only one public urban elementary school site in California was examined. In confining the sample size to include only one of the seventy-nine schools that successfully exited and moved beyond their program improvement status in 2009-2010, it is not intended that the results and subsequent conclusions be used as a formula for other schools to emulate, but rather to serve as suggestions to be considered for use by other schools and districts in program improvement.

Furthermore, although the literature that was examined encompassed all theoretical themes of program improvement, the actual study focused on one urban public elementary school in California that was able to exit and move beyond its program improvement status in 2009-2010. Therefore, while the demographics of the sampling of students, parents and educators from this particular study may be reflective of other
program improvement schools, each school and community has its own characteristics, which may affect the impact of each variable.

Recognizing that the literature review may not be as encompassing as desired, due to a lack of available research, this researcher made every effort to provide a well-rounded base of information, other sources such as surveys were conducted, and these sources will be explained in further detail in subsequent chapters.

Literature

Many of the studies and articles reviewed by this researcher were related in some aspect to program improvement. However, through the course of the literature review, it became evident to this researcher that there was a lack of research available that examined the program improvement dilemma on a local school site level utilizing a strength-based theoretical lens. Therefore, not all of the studies, articles or journals reviewed by this researcher were directly focused on program improvement, but rather on those variables controlled within an educational organization which are perceived to influence school improvement. A more encompassing review of the literature reviewed for this study will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

Significance of the Study

California public schools are measured primarily by state and federal accountability systems. The accountability requirements resulting from the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has created rigid expectations for students, teachers, schools and districts, and ignited an eminent urgency to address the momentous accountability issues facing California’s public schools in program improvement. The
alarming data figures collected and compiled by EdSource and the California Department of Education on schools in program improvement, combined with this researcher’s conversations with other educators surrounding the struggles of California’s public schools to exit and move beyond program improvement status, convinced this researcher that there was a need to pursue further investigation into the area of identifying the conditions, factors, processes or elements which are perceived to influence or drive the school improvement process and contribute to systemic school change. In an effort to make this study distinct from other studies on program improvement, this researcher was inspired to look beyond the traditional “Deficit Thinking” or “Problem Solving” theoretical models that have been utilized to investigate program improvement in the past. Thus, this researcher was immersed in unchartered territory. On a journey that few researchers have ever undertaken. Hence, for this study, this researcher utilized a non-traditional “Strength-Based” or “Asset-Based” theoretical lens to examine why one California public urban elementary school was able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.

The findings of this study will provide valuable information to educational leaders trying to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status or escape identification as a school in program improvement. Given the continued growth of schools being identified for program improvement, additional interest in this data may be expected from a wider audience for validating the impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 on schools receiving Title I funding. The finding of this study could
also be beneficial to the estimated 3,649 public schools in California that are at risk of being identified for program improvement.

To effectively meet the needs of the ever changing and evolving world, educational leaders, policymakers, and legislators must begin to move beyond simply treating the symptoms of program improvement; they must begin to investigate and understand the factors that create and influence successful systemic school improvement. The significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them (Albert Einstein, n.d.).

Summary

Under the NCLB Act of 2001, AYP growth targets will continue to increase until 2014. NCLB requires 100 percent of students nationwide to become proficient in English-Language Arts and Mathematics by 2013-2014. As AYP growth targets continue to increase there will be fewer and fewer schools that are able to escape identification for program improvement, and the continued increase of AYP growth targets will make it nearly impossible for schools currently in program improvement to successfully exit program improvement and move beyond their program improvement status. Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, all schools that receive Title I funding and do not make AYP growth targets can be identified for program improvement.

California’s public schools are measured primarily by accountability systems; personal relationships have become brittle or non-existent. State and Federal accountability systems are obsessed with testing and have lost sight of the immeasurable, such as human spirit, innovation, and creativity; these are the casualties of the
accountability age. Clearly, it is time for the paradigm in education to shift and to begin to utilize a strength-based lens to examine our schools, student learning and accountability mandates. Unfortunately, most of us have little sense of our talents and strengths; instead, guided by our parents, by our teachers, by our managers, and by psychology’s fascination with pathology, we become experts in our weaknesses and spend our lives trying to repair these flaws, while our strengths lie dormant and neglected (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

Our schools are complex, living adaptive systems that are interconnected; and interdependent; and they are composed of many parts, which are joined together and constantly trying to adapt to their changing environments in order to survive and thrive. Given the projected number of schools receiving Title I funds that are at risk of being identified for program improvement, and California’s current funding cuts to education, as well as, the state’s budget deficit; the future of public education in California is in dire straits. We must continually choose between deep change or slow death (Sparks, 2001).

“The great organization must not only accommodate the fact that each employee is different, it must also capitalize on these differences” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 34). Most organizations today were established on linear, mechanical principles; organizations were viewed as machines, producing goods and services. Science abandoned the mechanical view of the universe almost 100 years ago. Nevertheless, most public schools are still operating on a worldview that is left over from the machine age and is 100 years out of date. This is the Information Age, and nonlinear, complex adaptive systems are the best way to understand systems involving people. If public
education is to overcome extinction in California, it must transition from the Industrial Age into the Information Age. The paradigm for public education must shift from the machine model of the industrial age, which was predicated on linear thinking, control and predictability to a nonlinear, complex adaptive system, which is predicated on nonlinear thinking, distributed control and human creativity. The world is simply too complex and fast changing for linear models to work (Plexus Institute, 2004).

To date, no research is available that utilizes a strength based theoretical lens to formally study the factors, conditions, processes, or elements present in Title 1 funded schools in California that have successfully overcome their program improvement status. By examining the organizational structures of schools that have been able to overcome their program improvement status, educators may be able to identify the organizational systems that exist in schools that have the potential to promote positive systemic school change and influence student learning. If organizational structures resist too long, these structures may become obsolete or extinct. If organizational structures learn how to learn, educational leaders can adapt to the forces of change and go with the flow (Lewin, 1999).

Outline of the Study

A more encompassing review of the literature reviewed for this study follows in the subsequent chapter. The literature review provides an overview addressed by topic of the research reviewed by this researcher. Grouping by topic was done due to the fact that several commonalities were found throughout the research study, enabling this researcher to group nearly all of the studies into a few sub-groupings.
Following the literature review, this researcher provides an overview of the methodology used throughout the course of this study in Chapter 3. Included is a rationale as to why specific types of information gathering were used in lieu of other methods, as well as an insight into the thought pattern used in the creation of questions and sample groups. Chapter 4 is used to present the results and findings of this study. Included within this chapter are the reflections on the methodology used and its apparent success in eliciting meaningful responses from the sample groups. Additionally, this researcher addresses whether or not the findings of the research are congruent with similar studies conducted previously by others.

The final chapter of this study addresses whether or not the guiding questions were appropriately answered through this study. In addition, limitations, which may or may not have played a role in the overall findings of the study, are acknowledged, as well as their possible significance to the results of the findings. Finally, questions for further study and guidance as to how the results of this study could be used by other practitioners and educational leaders are addressed within Chapter 5.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

To establish a foundation from which to implement a study design focused on addressing this researcher’s study questions, this researcher performed a balanced study of previous literature which reviewed various studies related in some aspect to program improvement. Although the emphasis of this study was directed towards program improvement, other components of the literature reviewed focused upon those variables controlled within an educational organization which are perceived to influence school improvement. This literature review provides an overview by topic of the research reviewed by this researcher. Grouping by topic was done due to the fact that several commonalities were found throughout the research literature, and this researcher was able to group nearly all of the research into a few sub-groupings.

First, this chapter begins with an overview of the problem addressed by this study; followed by a historical overview of three major legislative policies which have impacted the education of students in California public schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, its reauthorization as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001; and California’s Public School Accountability (PSAA) Act of 1999 will be included in this section. Following the historical overview, this researcher will address the impact of the NCLB Act of 2001 on education and its influence in shaping accountability practices. Secondly, a major themes section will be provided that examines the variables controlled within an educational organization which are perceived to
influence school improvement. The four variables addressed in this section are Professional Development, Parent Involvement, School and Community Relationships, and Leadership. Thirdly, this chapter will identify the characteristics of the Deficit Thinking model and its relationship to education. The final section of this chapter will highlight the two major Strength-Based Models of Positive Deviance and Appreciative Inquiry, followed by a summary of the findings revealed through the literature reviewed.

The purpose of this study was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will assist in identifying the conditions, factors, processes or elements that drive the school improvement process, influence student learning, and promotes systemic school change. More specifically, this researcher seeks to develop a series of suggestions that could prove to be beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001.\(^5\)

**Overview of Problem**

In 2001, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has brought many significant changes to schools nationwide. With the passage of the NCLB Act of 2001, President George W. Bush effectively established leveraged federal spending on education in creating a targeted

\(^5\) The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at [http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp).
benchmark goal of “proficient” in the subjects of English/Language Arts and Mathematics for every child in grades 2-11.

NCLB required each state to produce and implement a system of accountability which would not only evaluate each child’s knowledge and proficiency level, but which would also establish a series of escalating benchmarks culminating with the achievement of 100 percent proficiency for all students in English/Language Arts and Mathematics by the year 2014 (United States Department of Education, 2007). School districts would be held accountable for reaching those benchmarks and faced with the possibility of encountering various sanctions, interventions and consequences imposed upon individual schools or entire districts that failed to reach the targeted benchmark goals for two consecutive years.

In California, Program Improvement (PI) is the formal designation given to public schools receiving Title I federal funding that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years in the same content area (English or Math), or on the same indicator (API or Graduation Rate) for any numerically significant subgroup (CDE, AYP Report 2010). Title I funded schools that do not make AYP targets each year are identified for program improvement (EdSource, 2009). As the timeline approaches to meet the targeted benchmark goals set under the federal NCLB Act of 2001, the AYP growth targets will continue to increase and there will be fewer and fewer schools that will be able to escape identification for program improvement; hence, the escalating AYP growth targets will make it nearly impossible for schools currently in program improvement to successfully exit program improvement and move beyond their program improvement status. California State
Schools Chief Tom Torlakson stated, “4,600 or 80 percent of the state’s schools that receive federal Title I funds will be in improvement status for the 2011-2012 school year” (Lambert, 2011, p. 2). This harsh reality has brought forth an eminent urgency for new legislation and policies to be created and implemented to address the momentous issues of the State’s increasing number of public schools in program improvement. California State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson also contended, “relief is needed immediately before more schools suffer from another year under inappropriate labels and ineffective interventions” (Lamber, 2011, p. 1).

Before plunging into the literature reviewed for this study, it is necessary for this researcher to acknowledge that there have been several important legislative policies that have been implemented over the past fifty years which have resulted in the increased involvement of the state and federal government in the education of children. However, for the purpose of this study, this researcher will focus on the passage of ESEA in 1965, its reauthorization as the NCLB Act of 2001, and California’s PSAA Act of 1999. This researcher believes that providing a historical overview of legislative policies in conjunction with the literature reviewed is important. By providing a clear narration of the history of where we have been, it may afford a clearer insight and understanding of the current educational environment we are faced with today.

Historical Overview of Legislative Policies

In an attempt to create a truly literate nation, legislative policies and funding sources which recognize the rapid growth of ethnically diverse and educationally disadvantaged students have been created and implemented.
Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965 (Title I)

The Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965, designed by the Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel, was passed on April 9, 1965. Less than three months after it was introduced, this piece of legislation constituted the most important educational component of the 'War on Poverty' launched by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Through a special funding (Title I), it allocated large resources to meet the needs of educationally deprived children, especially through compensatory programs for the poor.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was developed under the principle that children from low-income homes required more educational services than children from affluent homes. As part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I funding allocated one billion dollars a year to schools with a high concentration of low-income children. This was the beginning of Head Start, a preschool program for disadvantaged children, aiming at equaling equality of opportunity based on ‘readiness’ for the first grade. Head Start was originally started by the Office of Economic Opportunity as an eight-week summer program, and it quickly expanded to a full-year program; the Follow-Through program was created which complemented the gains made by children who participated in the Head Start Program, and a variety of guidance and counseling programs were also expanded.

Following the enactment of the bill, President Johnson stated, “this will help five million children of poor families overcome their greatest barrier to progress: poverty” (Lazerson, 1987, p. 48). President Johnson also contended that there was no other single
piece of legislation that could help so many for so little cost: "for every one of the billion dollars that we spend on this program will come back tenfold as schools’ dropouts change to schools’ graduates” (Lazerson, 1987, p. 48-49). Interestingly, it seems that the increased accountability resulting from the passage of the ESEA Act of 1965 changed the focus from simply identifying those conditions which seemed best at predicting student achievement to more specifically identifying who is responsible for student success.

After the 1960s, there was a renewed focus on measuring the variables and characteristics that leant themselves best to predicting future success in the schooling environment (Ebbesen, 1968; Gabel, Graybill, & Connors 1977; Harper, Guidubaldi, & Kehle 1978; Kifer, 1975; Lueptow, 1975). In any case, the Elementary and Secondary School Act is an example of a political strategy (Lazerson, 1987).

After President Kennedy's assassination, Johnson decided to respond to civil rights pressures and religious conflicts over education by linking educational legislation to his 'War on Poverty'. In a 1964 memo, the Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel outlined three options. The first was to provide general aid to public schools, but he argued that this could generate a negative reaction from Catholic schools. The second was to provide general aid to both public and private schools, but this, besides the constitutional obstacles, would create a negative reaction from the National Education Association (NEA) and large sectors of the Democratic Party who objected to federal aid to religious schools. The third option, the one that eventually was followed, was to withdraw the idea of general aid and emphasize the educational aid to poor children, because this could endorse the support of most groups (Graham, 1984).
According to Spring (1993), the Elementary and Secondary School Act had at least three major consequences for future legislative action. First, it signaled the switch from general federal aid towards categorical aid, and it tied federal aid to national policy concerns such as poverty, defense and economic growth. Secondly, it addressed the religious conflict by linking federal aid to educational programs directly benefiting poor children in parochial schools, and not to the institutions in which they enrolled. Thirdly, it relied on the State Department of Education to administer federal funds (promoted to avoid criticisms of federal control) resulting in an expansion of state bureaucracies and larger involvement of state governments in educational decision-making (Spring, 1993).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001

The NCLB Act of 2001 is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, and it is the largest federal program for promoting equity and excellence for students with special needs. On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the NCLB Act into law; which not only reauthorized the ESEA, but also sought to increase the levels of performance by students by raising the standards of accountability for states. While some states have been vocal in their protest of NCLB, failure to comply with the requirements established by NCLB could result in a loss of funding from the U.S. Department of Education. Specifically, NCLB requires states to establish an accountability system to measure student growth in areas such as English Language Arts and Mathematics as well as create a set of benchmarks measured by the AYP measurement tool that would compel school districts and individual sites to reach
the increasing standards with complete compliance by 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Additionally, the state benchmarks established by the states must be reached not only by districts and individual schools, but also by any sub-group of students considered to be significant, which in California equates to any sub-group comprised of over fifty students or 15 percent of the total student enrollment at a particular site. Examples of sub-group categories include groupings made up by ethnicity, low socio-economic status, English language proficiency levels and designation as special education. Therefore, it is possible, and in some cases indeed likely, that one particular student could be included in multiple sub-groupings. Currently, the NCLB Act of 2001 has been a significant push from the federal government in its attempt to guarantee academic achievement for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Over the past several years, California has embarked on a comprehensive public school reform effort that is based on a simple but profound proposition: to prepare each student to meet or exceed world-class standards for academic excellence. At the heart of this reform movement is a commitment, by both individuals and institutions, to increase academic expectations and the achievement of each student in every California public school. NCLB sets several key performance goals for states: all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers by 2005-2006; all students will attain "proficiency" in English/Language Arts and Mathematics by 2014, including students with disabilities and English learners; all English learners will become proficient in English; all students will learn in schools that are safe and drug free; and last but not least, all students are expected
to graduate from high school. In this regard, California was well-positioned to comply with the spirit of NCLB. However, funding and state budget deficits have impacted this reform movement.

More recently, on September 23, 2011, the Obama administration announced a waiver program that would allow states to opt out of some provisions of NCLB. Regulatory relief would come from a waiver dispensed by the U.S. Department of Education, which is overseen by Education Secretary Arne Duncan. On September 23, 2011, President Obama issued this statement:

    To help states, districts and schools that are ready to move forward with education reform, our administration will provide flexibility from the law for a real commitment to undertake change”. The purpose is not to give states and districts a reprieve from accountability, but rather to unleash energy to improve our schools at the local level. (Blume, 2011, p. 1)

States will have to move quickly if they choose to apply for the waiver. The deadline for notification to apply to the U.S. Department of Education is October 12, 2011. The waiver application must be signed by the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, and the State Board of Education president. States can apply by November 14, 2011, if their applications are prepared, or they can wait until February 2012, for the second wave if they need more time to align and develop plans. Two provisions for obtaining a waiver are likely to spark debate, particularly in California. One is the push to use student data as part of a teacher’s evaluation. In California, teacher evaluation methods must be negotiated with bargaining units and the California Teachers Association which represents 325,000 educators has not shown support for the provision.
The other provision is the designation of each state’s lowest performing 15 percent of schools for the aggressive, often controversial, measures now in place.

The White House has outlined how states can get relief from provisions from NCLB. States can request flexibility from specific NCLB mandates that are stifling reform but must meet certain requirements to do so. The requirements they must address are as follows: the transition of students, teachers and schools to a system aligned with college and career ready standards for all students; the development of differentiated accountability systems; and the development of comprehensive principal and teacher evaluation and support systems (CTA Quick Points, 2011).

According to a (2011) News Release, the President of the 325,000 member California Teachers Association issued this statement about President Obama’s new proposals regarding states seeking relief from the flawed No Child Left Behind Act:

Today’s recognition by the Obama administration that public schools and students need quick relief from the burdens caused by No Child Left Behind and its regulations, like labeling students and schools based on one test on one day during the school year, is a welcome recognition of what educators have been saying for years. We also appreciate his call for adequate resources for students, schools and teachers.

Unfortunately, the administration’s waiver proposal process swaps one federal, top-down mandate for another and continues to hold states and local schools hostage to the same unproven reforms of the Race to the Top competition. We need thoughtful discussions about what our kids need to succeed. We know that one-size-fits-all federal mandates don’t work and that parents and educators in local communities must be involved in determining what works best for their students. We look forward to working with the administration and Congress on real long-term solutions built on reforms proven to help students and schools. (CTA, News Release, 2011, p. 1)
Educators seem pleased to see acknowledgment of the burden that NCLB is placing on schools and districts, and the waiver process does allow for some flexibility; unfortunately, it primarily swaps one top-down federal mandate for another. It also provides no additional funding to pay for the mandates. State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson made this statement, “the waiver requirements don’t come with any federal funding, making them difficult to implement” (Lambert, 2011, p. 1).

Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999

In 1999 California passed the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) in an attempt to develop a system of monitoring student achievement and holding districts accountable for improved growth. The PSAA incorporated the Standardized Testing and Reporting system (STAR), the California Achievement Test (CAT) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) as tools for measuring levels of student achievement. Additionally, the Academic Performance Index (API) was created as a method to measure student growth and to establish benchmark scores for each site to achieve (CDE, 2005). However, although both the AYP and API are based upon a five-step scale indicating student achievement levels of Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic, the API is different from the AYP which only awards points for students who score Proficient or Advanced. Instead, the API awards points to schools on a graduated scale with a student who is Far Below Basic improving to Below Basic receiving more points than a student moving from Basic to Proficient. Based on those two sets of criteria, it is incumbent upon schools to not only address the needs of the students who are scoring at the lowest levels, but to also push those students who are
achieving at basic levels without achieving mastery. In partial support of the goal of raising student proficiency in Math and Language Arts, the vision of the California Department of Education (CDE) states that it seeks to provide “all students with the knowledge and skills to excel in college and careers, and excel as parents and citizens” (CDE, 2008, p. 1). However, it is still to be determined whether or not placing such an emphasis on the subject areas of Math and Language Arts detracts from those other job skills and character education pieces that are necessary for the fulfillment of the CDE stated vision.

Accountability under the NCLB Act of 2001

The implementation of the federal NCLB Act of 2001 has prompted school and districts across the country to scramble in attempts to address the requirement of having all children proficient in English and Mathematics by the year 2014. While compliance with NCLB is not mandated, it is required in order to receive federal funding sources such as Title I and III. Under NCLB, states are required to operate a two-level education accountability system. One level is focused on school performance, and the other is focused on district performance. Two separate accountability calculations are made for schools and districts, which means that a district can fail to make AYP in the aggregate and be in program improvement, even though all schools in the district made their AYP. The reason for this occurrence, is that districts are held accountable for certain student subgroups whose performance was not tracked by the school level accountability rules because there were too few students in the subgroup at each school to meet the minimum subgroup size of 100 or more for reporting under the NCLB Act. Local education
agencies (LEA’s) and schools that fail to make AYP toward proficiency goals can be identified for program improvement and be subjected to various sanctions, interventions, consequences and corrective action measures.

Schools are assessed by measuring AYP against the set goals for proficiency levels on a school-wide basis as well as by “significant” sub-categories. In California, a “significant” sub-category is defined as one which makes up at least 15 percent of the student body (CDE, 2005). Currently, sub-categories are composed of groups that are socio-economically disadvantaged, ethnic, second language learners and those assessed to have a learning disability. By including socio-economic status and ethnic groupings as categories, an attempt is made to address those students who have been historically regarded as “at-risk.” Holding schools accountable for the success of students who have been identified as having learning disabilities or who are English learners, to meet the targeted benchmarks of proficiency by the year 2014, as mandated by the NCLB Act, has proven to be quite challenging. In fact, many of the schools and district in program improvement have acknowledged that it is often the performance of these sub-categories or groups that play a role in their inability to meet the targeted benchmark goals of proficiency set forth by NCLB.

As of 2001, forty-one state agencies reported that only 18.7 percent of students identified as English learners had met the requirement for English/reading proficiency (Kindler, 2002). For California, this dilemma is a reality as many schools and districts are heavily populated with English learners. The process for becoming identified as an English learner is relatively simple: whenever a child is registered at a school, the parents
are required to fill out a Home Language Survey which assesses the primary language of
the parents and which languages are spoken at home. If any language other than English
is listed, the student is administered the California English Language Development Test
(CELDT) within 30 days to assess their proficiency in English. If the student does not test
at a specified level, they are considered to be English learners. This process is
problematic as it relates to NCLB in that the entire sub-category, by definition, will never
meet the requirement of 100 percent proficiency established by NCLB. Furthermore, this
process specifically identifies a group of students based solely upon their parent’s
language ability and a single test score. While it could be argued that this is necessary to
assist those students who may not have the necessary support at home to attain
proficiency in English, many students who do not speak any language other than English
are also scoring below the required targeted benchmark without having a specific
subcategory created for them.

Although the conceptualization of NCLB is admirable in what it attempts to
address, the reality is that many schools and districts are failing to meet the requirement
of having English learners proficient in English. In 2006, over 5 million students in
grades K-12 or approximately 10 percent of all K-12 students were identified as English
learners (National Clearinghouse, 2008). Even though schools may exempt their English
learners from the test results for three years, it is unreasonable to hold schools
accountable for bringing students to levels of proficiency after only three years when
studies show that students do not gain levels of proficiency until after five to seven years
of study (Collier & Thomas, 1989).
New procedures need to be established in order to acknowledge the fact that not all students will meet the goal of proficiency in English by 2014. Most English learners do not have the necessary support at home to assist them in developing their English skills. Other students are very transient and are constantly changing from one program to another, thus preventing them from being able to learn in a systematic fashion rather than changing programs every year. Furthermore, students who are continually changing programs are many times not in one location long enough for the school staff to progress through the intervention programs needed prior to determining a need to test the child for possible learning disabilities.

The Center on Education Policy (2008) recently released a report entitled *From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act* in which it addresses its findings regarding the impact of NCLB from surveys and case studies. In all, there are too many variables for schools to contend with to come up with a system which would ensure that truly no child is left behind in attaining an education. Schools which are currently failing to meet the targeted benchmarks of NCLB have additional requirements imposed upon them without the additional funding or support needed to meet their shortcomings. A new mechanism of goal setting needs to be established in order for those in positions of actualizing the results to have a reasonable hope of attaining the desired outcomes. Few, if any educators will declare that they believe 100 percent of all students, regardless of all other conditions, will ever be able to reach the targeted levels of proficiency established by NCLB by the year 2014.
According to UCLA’s National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST):

The most serious problem is that the NCLB expectations for student achievement have been set unrealistically high, requiring that by the 2014, 100 percent of students must reach the proficient level or above in Math and Reading. Based on current improvement levels and without major changes in the definition of adequate yearly progress (AYP), almost all schools will fail to meet NCLB requirements within the next few years. (Linn, 2005, p. 47)

A study conducted by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (2006) states that only 24 to 34 percent of students will meet the proficiency target in reading and 29 to 64 percent will meet the Math proficiency target by 2014. Another study conducted by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (2006) goes on to say that NCLB did not have a significant impact on improving reading and Math achievement across the nation and state, and it has not helped the nation and states significantly narrow the achievement gap.

*Program Improvement under the NCLB Act of 2001*

Under the federal NCLB Act of 2001, all schools and LEAs that do not make AYP for two consecutive years are identified for program improvement. In California, Program Improvement (PI) is the formal designation for Title I funded schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years.

Both schools and LEAs receiving Title I federal funding can be identified for program improvement and corrective action measures. All schools and LEA’s that do not

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6 Federal funding resources for districts and schools serving disadvantaged student populations, including low performing and high poverty students. There are accountability provisions for the academic performance of all students and subgroups of students (ethnic groups, low income students, and students with disabilities).
make AYP for two consecutive years are identified for program improvement under NCLB. Program improvement schools and LEA’s must implement required program components and interventions.

According to the California Department of Education (2008), a Title I school will be identified for program improvement when, for each of two consecutive years, the Title I school does not make AYP in the same content area (English-Language Arts or Mathematics) school-wide or for any numerically significant subgroup, or on the same indicator (API⁷ or high school graduation rate); and a Title I LEA will be identified for program improvement when, for each of two consecutive years, the Title I LEA does not make AYP in the same content area (English-Language Arts or Mathematics) LEA-wide or for any numerically significant subgroup, and does not meet AYP criteria in the same content area in each grade span (grades 2-5, grades 6-8, and grade 10), or does not make AYP on the same indicator (API or graduation rate) LEA-wide. It is worth noting that the demographics of a school have a significant role in determining the school’s numerically significant subgroups and AYP targets. Furthermore, as the number of numerically significant subgroups increase, so do the number of AYP targets; thus, schools with more AYP targets are faced with more difficulties in meeting AYP growth targets; hence; they have a greater chance of being identified for program improvement.

Since the early years of NCLB implementation, various analysts have predicted that the number of schools not making AYP would increase rapidly in future years and

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⁷ The cornerstone of California's Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999; measures the academic performance and growth of schools on a variety of academic measures.
would eventually include a majority of the nation’s schools (Olson, 2002; Olson 2005; Wiley, Mathis & Garcia, 2005; University of California Riverside, 2008).

Requirements and Program Components under Program Improvement

Program improvement involves a succession of interventions, sanctions and consequences that become more severe with each year that a school does not make AYP. Under NCLB, schools that do not meet AYP for two consecutive years are identified for program improvement and are required to implement specific program components. Thus, implementation of program components for program improvement begins in the third year in which a school has not made AYP. There are various levels of program components that are required to be implemented over the course of five years. The program components to be implemented are determined by the identified year of program improvement status. After not making AYP for two years on the same indicator, a school enters Year 1 of program improvement.

Program Improvement Year 1

Schools identified for Program Improvement Year one must comply with the following program components: revise their school plan within three months (their plan must cover a two year period); and use 10 percent of their Title I school funds for staff professional development. Districts are required to provide technical assistance to the school; to set aside a minimum of five percent for professional development to meet highly qualified staff requirements; to establish a peer review process to review revised school plan; to notify parents of the program improvement status of school and to offer parents the opportunity to send their child to a higher performing public school of their
choice within the district’s boundaries with the district covering the cost of transportation.

*Program Improvement Year 2*

Schools identified for Program Improvement Year 2 must comply with the following program components: they must continue to implement its revised Title I plan and provide professional development. The district must continue to provide technical assistance and professional development to the school, as well as “Supplemental Educational Services” to low performing students from low income families. Typical services consist of state approved tutors, before and after school programs, weekend programs, and other out of school academic assistance.

*Program Improvement Year 3*

Schools identified for Program Improvement Year 3 must comply with implementing one or more critical changes or corrective actions: replacing members of the school staff; adopting and implementing new curriculum; relieving members of some responsibilities; extending the school day or school year; employing an outside expert to assist the school with achieving performance benchmarks in accordance with its school plan; or restructuring of the internal organizational structure of the school.

*Program Improvement Year 4*

If a school reaches year 4 of Program Improvement, it must work with its district to prepare a plan for restructuring the governance of the school.
**Program Improvement Year 5**

If a school does not make AYP for six consecutive years, the school enters year 5 of Program Improvement and must implement the restructuring plan, which includes at least one of the following: reopen the school as a charter; replace the staff and principal; enlist the assistance of a private management company; allow the state to take over control of the school; or implement some other major restructuring.

**Major Themes**

This section of the literature review examines the various studies related in some aspect to program improvement. Thus, the focus in this section is upon those variables controlled within an educational organization which are perceived to drive the school improvement process; influence student learning; and promote systemic school change. Studies such as those conducted by (Howell & Frese, 1981; Hunter, 1986; Lipka, 1991; Marks, 2000; Sadker, D., Sadker, M. & Cooper, 1973; Walqui, 2001) examined the impacts of school environments and teacher training on the achievement of individuals.

Other researchers such as (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Christie, 2005; Colombo, 2006; Epstein & Becker, 1981; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000) utilizing the lens of parent involvement to examine school improvement and student achievement; still others (Adams & Singh, 1998; Hunter, 1986; Lipka, 1991; Marks, 2000; Walqui, 2001) scrutinize the dilemma of school improvement by focusing on the role of the teacher as a guide.

Interestingly, some researchers, such as Lueptow (1975), focused on various environmental conditions of students that could not be controlled within an educational
organization, such as, their home environment, socio-economic status and parent education levels.

Professional Development

The authorization of the NCLB Act of 2001, which reauthorized the ESEA of 1965, has created new direction for states by creating rigid expectations for students, staff and schooling organizations. These requirements establish prerequisite criteria for staff to be considered “highly qualified,” raising benchmarks for students to be considered “proficient” and the implementation of sanctions for schools lacking progress in reaching those goals. The NCLB Act combines the historical tradition of students being responsible for their own actions, with the more recent trend of holding educators and educational institutions accountable for the failure of students who do not test proficient in English and Math and meet AYP targets.

The NCLB Act mandates that all teachers be “highly qualified” and demonstrate specific competencies related to their subject matter areas. Many studies have been conducted (Hunter, 1982; Portner, 2005) investigating the positive impacts that highly trained teachers have on the achievement of students. The 1980’s witnessed attempts at reforming the instructional methods with which students were educated (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Howell & Frese, 1981; Hunter, 1982). Madeline Hunter popularized a method of utilizing direct instruction to better serve the needs of students during a time when the nation was focusing upon a report published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk (1983). In some cases, the focus of student achievement began to shift from the individual’s success or failure to that of the
schooling system (Felice, 1981; Stager, Chassin, & Young, 1983). Teacher preparation programs, types of professional development and the reliance of outdated methods of instruction were targeted as the reasons for students failing to succeed at rates comparable to their international peers.

Nevertheless, many times whether a teacher is successful in the classroom or not depends more on the amount of support that they receive from colleagues than on the amount of training that they have undergone (Portner, 2005). Through mentoring and support networks, new teachers are able to develop skills that are not only directed towards their particular assignment areas, but towards developing as mentors within the classroom. While it is essential that teachers have a sound understanding of the curriculum, it is also important that they be able to relate to their colleagues.

*Parent Involvement*

Under No Child Left Behind families are empowered with new options; including the choice to attend a better performing public school and free access to supplemental educational services, such as tutoring and after school programs. To improve and increase parental involvement levels, it is critical that the school or school district identify exactly how it wants to involve families and ensure that the specified plan supports the expressed goals of the institution. Additionally, it is important to understand the limitations that parents may have in participating in certain types of activities. Single parent households, dual income households and lack of transportation all significantly impact the ability for families to play an active part in becoming more involved in the academics of their children (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Furthermore, whether due to their own
schooling experiences or lack of understanding of the American schooling system, some parents simply do not feel comfortable in the schooling environment (Colombo, 2006; Epstein & Becker, 1981; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Schools need to be able to address and understand the “affective filters” that parents may have when it comes to the schooling system. In order to create a culture for success and to ensure parent involvement, it is essential that schools create a welcoming environment for parents and offer various opportunities for engagement and interaction.

The belief that increased parent involvement positively impacts student academic achievement has spawned numerous studies related to the subject of how parent involvement can and should be increased (Boult, 2006; Olmstead, 1991). Interestingly, this renewed focus on parental involvement has provided a lens through which educators and researchers are redefining what is meant by the term “parent involvement.” Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis (2002) describe how relationships with parents need to include training on basic parenting; clear and regular communication; providing opportunities for parents to volunteer on campus; extension of learning activities to the home; and involvement of parents in the decision making process. These same ideas are present in Betty Boult’s (2006) guide of how to involve parents, while Sikes (2007) and Kyle, McIntyre, Miller, & Moore (2006) focus on connecting through Family Nights and the Arts.

Studies with similar intents have focused less on teaching parents how they can help their children at home and more on how helping teachers develop skills in areas such as literacy and technology transfers to increased academic support at home and higher
student achievement levels (Chen & Dym, 2003; Colombo, 2006; Lewis, 2002; Lueptow, 1975). Still other studies venture beyond the scope of studies conducted by Epstein (1981, 1982); Colombo (2006), Gaitan (2004) and others by not simply focusing on parent involvement, but rather addressing issues of mobilizing entire communities. Kathy Chadwick (2004) examines ways in which opportunities for involvement can extend beyond the school setting to that of the community.

Throughout all of the above studies, it is evident that the term “parent involvement” has expanded beyond the traditional meanings of parents participating on school-site councils, as chaperones for field trips or bringing in items for bake sales sponsored by the local Parent Teacher Association.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how parent participation actually impacts the school improvement process, or improves student achievement, or promotes systemic school change due to the number of variables involved. Teacher training, levels of communication between home and school, socio-economic status and other conditions all impact the types and levels of opportunities that parents have to participate on school campuses. Nevertheless, many studies have established a correlation between parent involvement, school improvement, and student achievement.

School and Community Relationships

To more efficiently address the needs of the communities associated with school systems, a re-examination is needed of how schools are prepared to take on the roles and responsibilities necessary to successfully build relationships that foster a culture for success. Michael Fullan dedicates a full chapter of his book Leading in a Culture of
Change (2001) to the importance of building and developing relationships both in the world of business as well as within the school structure. Through the strategic building of relationships within school districts, a more clearly defined definition of positions and goals is created thus allowing for more people to have a stake in the results of the organization. In several examples given by Fullan (2001) the administrator’s primary task is that of fostering the culture and relationships of the school in order to increase learning. Furthermore, Fullan (2001) acknowledges that in some districts there is a void of relationships even within the same school. A study conducted by McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) goes on to show how, within a single high school, departments which meet frequently and share both ideas as well as lessons typically perceived the school and the students in a more positive light, whereas, members of departments who met infrequently or who did not develop relationships among themselves maintained negative perceptions (Fullan, 2001).

Too often decisions made within the educational systems are made within a vacuum and without input from others. However well-intentioned these efforts may be, “no major educational problem is only a ‘within system’ problem” (Sarason, 1990, p. 39). Therefore, the need to develop networks between those within the system and those who directly affect or are influencing the system need to be established in order to effectively bring about change and improvement. The principle obstacle to this task is the fact that many site level and district level educators are not trained to directly manage or interact with those who are outside of the their direct sphere of influence (Christie, 2005; Heckman & Petersman, 1996; Lewis, 2002). It is not the intention of administrators to
neglect those not involved in the everyday school decision-making process; however, networking skills are not innate to all administrators.

To fully grasp those tasks and ideas which most effectively bring about improved relations between communities and the schooling environment, school administrators need to first understand that positive relationships are necessary to bring about desired changes in student and community attitudes regarding schooling, and secondly, the skills necessary to foster those relationships must be developed.

Schools typically deal with a countless numbers of communities within their own geographic boundaries. Among the many communities that schools deal with are groups of individuals made up of different cultures and ethnicities, which possess varying academic backgrounds, ideologies, language skills, and political stances. Nevertheless, each of these communities shares a significant relationship within the inter-workings of the school site and directly or indirectly affects the progress towards achieving the goals set by schools.

In some instances, schools are surrounded by communities made up of persons who may not be highly educated; however, this does not diminish the power and influence that those people may have in relation to the desired outcomes of the school. Stephen Ceci (1996) acknowledges this fact in his study on intelligence, where he discusses, among other things, how communities develop those skills and portions of knowledge which are necessary for them to lead productive lifestyles.

Paul Heckman and Francine Peterman (1996) have studied the impacts that communities can have on the school environment. As part of their study involving the
Educational and Community Change (ECC) Project, Heckman and Peterman facilitated an indigenous “reinvention” of schools by bringing community and school members together in an examination of curricula, instructional techniques and beliefs surrounding the education process at schools in Tucson, Arizona, and Santa Monica, California. While a departure from the traditional forms of change and reform within schools, the initial results from the ECC project show promise in positively impacting the educational process through parent and community involvement.

Leadership

All signs indicate that global interdependence is accelerating at a furious pace. Politically, economically, and environmentally, we are living in a world where leadership decisions anywhere now affect everything and everyone. Autonomous decisions have become a thing of the past (Lipman-Blume, 1996). Stogdill (1974) concluded that “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (p. 12). Leadership has been defined in terms of traits, behaviors, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupations of an administrative position (Yukl, 2006). Rost (1991) defines leadership as a multidirectional influence relationship between a leader and followers with the mutual purpose of accomplishing real change. Yukl defines leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish a shared goal. Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence
is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization (Yulk, 2006).

Within each community there is a recognized leader or leadership “team.” This person or persons may be someone who has been officially acknowledged as the leader or may not hold any official title at all. In fact, there may be someone who does hold an authoritative title, but who is not the recognized leader of the group or organization. Leadership is based on the ability to lead others towards a goal, vision or common need but may not necessarily be an assigned role. Furthermore, in some organizations, teams or groups of people are designated, appointed or self-selected as leaders, and share the responsibility of decision making such as with a board of directors or legislative body. It is critical for educational leaders to identify, acknowledge and build relationships with both official and ex-facto leaders in order to improve the educational experiences for students.

Educational leaders deal with the general public on a regular basis, establishing connections with far greater reaching communities. For example, in developing a relationship with a parent, whether positive or negative, that relationship is transmitted to others who associate with that parent through personal and professional networking, thus magnifying the possible influence of that relationship. Unfortunately, many new school administrators lack the political skills necessary to identify and navigate through the numerous relationships associated with the public school setting.

The focus of leadership is clearly on the process, not the person, and they are not assumed to be equivalent (Yulk, 2006). A person can be a leader without being a
manager and a person can be a manager without leading. Bennis and Naus (1985) propose that managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing. To fully grasp the difference between leadership and a manager or administrator we must have a clear understanding of leadership. Leadership is often juxtaposed with the concept of administration and is often used as a synonym, yet these terms are vastly different (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished (Richard & Engle, 1986). Leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaning and direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expanded to achieve this purpose (Jacobs & Jaques, 1990). Leadership is the ability to step outside the culture to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive (Schein, 1992).

Administration on the other hand, speaks to a top down, autocratic process.

Administration is based on the rule of law, due process, codes of appropriate behavior and a system of rationally debatable reason (Olsen, 2005). Each concept (i.e., leadership, administration) within itself has its strengths; however, when used in tandem, organizational effectiveness is enhanced (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

Most researchers evaluate leadership effectiveness in terms of the consequences of the leader’s action for followers and other organization stakeholders (Yulk, 2006). Nevarez & Wood, (2010) notes that, Leadership effectiveness calls for the use of multiple approaches. Thus, leaders should employ:

A bureaucratic approach, which focuses on rules, regulations, protocols, organizational hierarchy, and authoritarian rule; a democratic approach that centers on an inclusive and shared decision-making model; and a political approach utilizing political tactics to gain institution influence,
power, and control. Independent of each situation that arises, leaders should use all three approaches as a guide for identifying, implementing, and assessing practices. (Nevarez & Wood, 2010, p. 65)

The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (2004) released a report entitled *Listening to Teachers: Classroom Realities and the No Child Left Behind*, which analyzed the survey responses collected from close to 1,500 urban teachers on opposite sides of the country (California and Virginia). The survey collected opinions from teachers on the NCLB Act of 2001. The key finding reported, that “teachers did not believe that identifying schools that had not made AYP would lead to school improvement and that there is an urgent need for strong, committed, long-term leaders in poorly performing school” (p. 3-4). While opinion surveys have limits as a source of policy guidance, views of teachers, as well as other stakeholders are very important to the success of any educational reform effort, including NCLB.

Most behavior scientist and practitioners seem to believe leadership is a real phenomenon that is important for the effectiveness of organizations (Yulk, 2006).

**Deficit Thinking Model**

According to Valencia (1997), deficit thinking has a long standing existence and a powerful influence on educational practice and appears to have its origins as a social construct stemming from the rising tide of nonconformist thought of the 1960’s. Regarding the term itself, “Deficit Thinking,” it appears that this two-word phrase was invented by a small cadre of scholars in the early 1960’s, who launched an assault on the orthodoxy that asserted the poor and people of color caused their own social, economic and educational problems. In reference to deficit thinking models, scholars have typically
used related terms. For example, Boykin (1986) uses the term “Deficiency Approach,” Nieto (1996) uses “Deficit Theories,” and Swadener (1995) refers to the term “Deficit Model.” It is worthy to note, that in light of the changing nature of the scholarly and ideological spheres of society, it is possible to trace the evolving conformation of deficit thinking, as well as its impact on shaping educational practices (Valencia, 1997). For the purpose of this study, this researcher will employ the term “Deficit Thinking Model,” because it comes closest to what this researcher believes constitutes the notion that a mind-set is molded by the fusion of ideology and science. The Deficit Thinking Model is based on the notion that lower achievement in schools is due to a problem with the student rather than considering the role of the school itself, its instructional practices, its organizational structures, or its diversity in the cultures, beliefs, language and learning styles of students. As such, the theory contends that poor schooling performance is rooted in the students’ alleged cognitive and motivational deficits (Valencia, 2010). Valencia (1997) identified six characteristics of deficit thinking: Blaming the Victim, Oppression, Pseudoscience, Temporal Changes, Educability, and Heterodoxy.

In 1971, William Ryan offered social sciences “Blaming the Victim” which exposes the ideological base of deficit thinking (i.e., the more powerful blame the innocent). Ryan’s book was a reaction to deficit thinking and subsequent policies advanced in the 1960’s, a time at which the deficit thinking model hit its apex with respect to volume of literature, policy interventions and popularity (Valencia, 1997).
“Blaming the Victim” was an example of how deficit thinking translated into action. It first, identified how social problems were identified (by victims and blamers). Secondly, it provided an outline on how the disadvantaged and advantaged were different; thirdly, it identified that the differences between the disadvantaged and advantaged were the cause of the social problems. Finally, it outlined how governmental intervention was set into play to correct the differences (i.e., deficiencies). In reference to the above steps, Ryan noted, “all of this happens so smoothly that it seems downright rational” (p. 8). Ryan’s critique transcended deficit thinking in education and covered social programs in general:

In education, we have programs of ‘compensatory education’ to build up the skills and attitudes of the ghetto child, rather than structural changes in the schools. In race relations, we have social engineers who think up ways of strengthening the Negro family, rather than methods to eradicating of racism. In health care, we develop new programs to provide health information (to correct the suppose ignorance of the poor) and to reach out and discover cases of untreated illness and disability (to compensate for their supposed unwillingness to seek treatment). Meanwhile, the gross inequities of our medical care delivery system are left completely unchanged. As we might expect, the logical outcome of analyzing social problems in terms of deficiencies of the victims is the development of programs aimed at correcting those deficiencies. The formula for action becomes extraordinarily simple: change the victim. (p. 8)

Oppression is the cruel and unjust use of authority to keep a group of people in their place. The historical and contemporary bases of such oppression are seen in a range of contexts; for example, state constitutional statues, state educational agency policies, judicial outcomes, state legislation, and local school board policies. According to (Valencia & Guadarrama, 1996), a modern form of educational oppression, driven by

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8 Ryan did not use the term deficit thinking in his book. He did, however, refer to ‘defect’ situated within the victim (1971:7). In any event, it is very clear that the theory he was critiquing was the deficit thinking model (Valencia, 2007).
deficit thinking, is high-stake testing, which is defined as the exclusive, or near exclusive use of a test score to make a significant educational decision about students, teachers and schools. Such decisions can have desirable or undesirable consequences for students, teachers, and schools. That being said, a great deal rides on the results of certain test score. A significant gain or loss can result from test scores. High-stakes testing programs, which have now swept the country, are strategies founded on the invalidated premise that schooling outcomes such as reading performance and graduation from high school can be improved through built-in sanctions (Valencia, 1997).

Pseudoscience, which Blum (1978) defines as the process of false persuasion by scientific pretense. To some extent, the appeal of the deficit thinking paradigm among scholars, laypeople, and policymakers is influenced by the “Scientific Method” model. Many are familiar with the core of the scientific method that is, empirical verification. Science rest on the process of beginning with sound assumptions and clear hypotheses, and moves through the operation of collecting data with reliable and valid tools, and concludes with objective empirical verification of the initial hypothesis. On these distinctions between true and pseudoscience, Blum (1978) noted that all scientific work is guided by assumption, and the defense of one’s assumption becomes a likely source of bias. Particularly when controversial topics are being researched, some amount of bias is inherent in the position of the investigator.

Temporal Changes depend on the historical period. Low grade genes, inferior culture and class, or inadequate familial socialization transmit the alleged deficits. Deficit
thinking, though dynamic in nature, is shaped by the ideologies and research climates of the time, rather than shaping the climates (Valencia, 1997).

Educability contains descriptive, explanatory, and predictive elements. At times a prescriptive model is based on the educability perceptions of low-SES students of color. The deficit thinking model of educability typically offers a description of behavior in pathological or dysfunctional ways, referring to deficits, deficiencies, limitations or shortcoming of individuals, families, or cultures (Valencia, 1997). This means that educability sometimes offers a prescription in its approach to dealing with people in targeted populations.

The final characteristic identified by Valencia (2010), is Heterodoxy; historically, this deficit thinking model has rested on orthodoxy, and is based on the dominant, conventional scholarly and ideological climates of the time. Through an evolving discourse, heterodoxy has come to play a major role in the scholarly and ideological spheres in which deficit thinking has been situated.

Strength Based Models

Strength-Based or Asset-Based theoretical models focus on successes, “what is working”, rather than failures “what is wrong or broken.” Strength-based or asset-based pedagogical models are framed around personal, social, or community assets and focus on unique talents, strengths, qualities and positive experiences.

The Positive Deviance Model

The new science of Complexity evolved from general Systems Theory and a field of study known as Chaos Theory. It is sciences most recent attempt to explain how order
and innovation emerge in the world. It is the intellectual successor to the Systems Theory and Chaos Theory. According to Codyynamics (2003-04), complexity represents the middle area between static order at one end and chaos at the other. Thus, complexity is sometimes called the edge of chaos. If we think of static order as ice, and chaos as water vapor, complexity would be liquid water.

The traditional view of the natural world was made up of machine-like entities that one could understand by taking them apart and examining the components. Much has been learned about nature by this approach. However, the vast majority of nature is not amenable to being understood in this way, because most of nature is made up of what complexity scientists call non-linear, complex adaptive systems. These systems are created by a number of diverse and independent agents that are constantly changing and interacting with each other.

Complex adaptive systems are found in living organisms and organizations and have the ability to internalize information, to learn, and to modify their behavior (evolve) as they adapt to changes in their environments. Complex adaptive systems are pattern seekers. Complex adaptive systems interact with the environment, learn from their experiences, and adapt; yet, the defining feature of complex adaptive systems is emergence, and it is the emergent collective order that influences the behavior or interactions of the parts. In other words, schools are seen as human organizations with complex adaptive systems that have a great degree of unpredictability; thus, by examining the organizational structures of schools, one can identify the organizational
systems that exist in schools that have potential to promote positive systemic school change.

The idea of Positive Deviance has been around since the 1970’s; however, it was Jerry and Monique Sternin, staffers from “Save the Children,” who refined the concept of Positive Deviance for application in diverse settings. The Sternins pioneered the use of the concept as a model for social and behavioral change. Positive Deviance (PD) is a development approach that is based on the premise that solutions to community problems already exist within the community. The people of the community are the experts. PD is best understood through action and is most effective through practice. Adaptive change lies at the heart of the PD approach. The PD process is a tool for adaptive work and it emphasizes practice instead of the knowledge, the “How” instead of the “What” or “Why” (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010). The positive deviance approach, thus differs from traditional "needs based" or “problem-solving” approaches in that it does not focus primarily on the identification of needs and the external inputs necessary to meet those needs or solve problems. Instead it seeks to identify and optimize existing resources and solutions within the community to solve community problems (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010). Positive Deviance builds on positive behavior, bottom up interventions and learning through action.

The Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) was formed in 2001. Located at Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, the PDI is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) has been using the PD approach to address various disparate issues, such as Methicillin Resistant
On December 14, 2008, the *New York Times Magazine* celebrated Positive Deviance as one of its annual “Year in Ideas” selections. According to Gertner (2008), the translation of this idea into practice has altered the lives of millions of people on the planet. Specifically, the process has been used in thirty-one nations in Africa, ten in Asia, five in Latin America, and dozens of applications across the United States and Canada.

According to the Plexus Institute (2004), Jerry Sternin is quoted as saying:

> Positive Deviance embodies the promise of practicality, self-discovery, and respect. It means that the problems and the solutions share the same DNA, and therefore there is no rejection by the “Social” immune system defense response. When experts try to impose externally devised solutions, community resistance can be akin to bodily rejection of foreign tissue. Knowledge does not by itself change behavior, knowledge changes attitudes, and attitudes change practice. (p. 10-11)

In the book, *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World’s Toughest Problems* (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010), describes the Positive Deviance methodology as a four step process- Define, Determine, Discover, and Design. In the first step, members of the community define the problem and desired outcomes. In the second step, discussions are conducted with various groups in the community to learn about common practices and determine normative behaviors. In this phase, participatory learning and action activities such as, mapping, improvisation, Venn diagrams, and prioritizing take place. Step three is the discovery phase. This is the stage when the outliers, also referred to as the “Positive Deviants” in the community are identified.
These are individuals or groups that live and work under the same constraints as everyone else; yet, find ways to succeed against all odds. These individuals or groups exhibit the desired outcomes of the community; yet, defy the norms of the community. In this phase uncommon but successful practices, behaviors and strategies are identified by conducting in-depth interviews and observations. The fourth and final step is the design phase, which involves action learning, based on creating opportunities to practice and learn through doing in a safe environment with peer support. In this final step, community stakeholders apply the discovered existing Positive Deviant behaviors and strategies.

Over the last several years interest in the use of the Positive Deviance approach in the field of education has grown. While the origins of this method are outside education, its implication for schools seems clear. The New Jersey Board of Education in collaboration with the PDI and Plexus Institute⁹ has begun to use Positive Deviance to reduce gang violence in inner city schools. The approach has also been used in Misiones Province, Argentina, to improve primary school student retention. Most recently, the California Teachers Association’s (CTA) Institute for Teaching (IFT); supported by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has begun to use the Positive Deviance Approach to address high levels of high-school dropout rates in Merced, California.

The Appreciative Inquiry Model

Appreciative Inquiry was born at the Weatherhead School of Management, at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. It came about through the

⁹ The Plexus Institute is a non-profit organization devoted to fostering the health of individuals, families, communities and organizations through the use of Complexity science principles.
collaboration of David Cooperrider, then a graduate student, and his faculty mentor, Suresh Srivastva. While consulting with the Cleveland Clinic, they began experimenting with a variation of traditional action research techniques. Rather than conducting an inquiry into what was and what was not working in the organization, they focused on analyzing factors contributing to the organization’s effectiveness. Cooperrider’s 1985 dissertation offers the original conceptualization of the theory and practice of Appreciative Inquiry; the results were profound (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Energized by new ideas about human organizing, action research, organizational development, and change, Cooperrider and his colleagues began introducing Appreciative Inquiry as a theory and practice of organizational change. Since its inception in 1985, Appreciative Inquiry has spread around the world, gaining recognition as “today’s” most popular new approach to change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Over the past decades, Appreciative Inquiry has matured from a series of organizational experiments into a highly successful and sustainable philosophy and practice for positive change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Appreciative Inquiry is based on the notion that human system, individuals, teams, organizations, and communities grow and change in the direction of what they study. AI works by focusing the attention of an organization on its most positive potential, its positive core. By unleashing the energy of the positive core, an organization is able to transform and sustain success. According to (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008), the process used to generate the power of Appreciate Inquiry is the 4-D Cycle- Discovery, Dream, Design
and Destiny. The 4-D Cycle begins with the thoughtful identification of what is to be studied, the Affirmative Topics. Affirmative Topics are subjects of strategic importance, because human systems move in the direction of what they study; thus, the choice of what to study and what to focus the organization’s attention on is fateful. Once selected, these affirmative topics guide the 4-D Cycle. Discovery begins the 4-D Cycle. Discovery is an extensive, cooperative search to understand the “best of what is and what has been.” Discovery involves purposefully affirmative conversations among many members or all members of an organization. As part of the Discovery process, individuals engage in dialogue and meaning-making. This is simply the open sharing of discoveries and possibilities. Through conversations and dialogue, individual appreciation becomes collective appreciation; individual will evolves into group will, and individual vision becomes cooperative or shared vision.

At this phase, what makes AI different from other Organizational Development methodologies is that every question is stated in the affirmative. Dream is the second phase of the 4-D Cycle. Dream is an energizing exploration of “What might be.” The Dream phase is both practical and generative. This phase is a time for people to collectively explore hopes and dreams for their work, working relationships, their organizations, and the world. It is a time to envision possibilities that are big, bold, and beyond the boundaries of what has been in the past. Design is the third phase of the 4-D Cycle. Design is set in the co-construction of Provocative Propositions, which are statements that describe the ideal organization, or what the ideal organization should be. Provocative Propositions are inspiring statements of intention that are grounded in the
realities of what has worked in the past combined with what new ideas are envisioned for the future. This phase enhances the organization by leveraging its own past successes.

The final phase of the 4-D Cycle is Destiny. Destiny is a series of inspired actions that support ongoing learning and innovation, or “what will be.” The Destiny phase focuses specifically on personal and organizational commitments and paths forward. Hence, Destiny drives organizational change through innovation and action.

As an approach to organizational change, the principles that underlie AI are deeply grounded in scientific research. According to (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008), the following five principles inspired and moved the foundation of AI from theory to practice: The Constructionist Principle, the Principle of Simultaneity, the Poetic Principle, the Anticipatory Principle, and the Positive Principle. The Constructionist Principle places human communication at the center of human organizing and change; the power of language is not an individual tool, but rather the vehicle by which communities of people create knowledge and meaning. Furthermore, the Constructionist Principle suggests that words, language, and metaphors are more than mere descriptions or reality; they are words that create worlds. The Principle of Simultaneity holds that change occurs the moment we ask a question. The principle recognizes that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments; they can and should be simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention and the seed for change. The seed for change are the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future. Thus, questions set the stage for what is “found” and what is “discovered.” The Poetic Principle suggest; that organizations are like open books,
endless sources of learning, inspiration, and interpretation. Organizational life is expressed as a narrative, a grand story, coauthored by its various stakeholders. Each person or stakeholder group brings a different story, a different piece of the interpretive puzzle. The important implication at this phase is that one can study virtually any topic related to human experience in any human organization. The choice of what one studies is left up to the individual. One can study moments of creativity and innovation or moments of debilitating bureaucratic stress. The topic one chooses to study is fateful, and it determines what one discovers and learns. One has a choice. The Anticipatory Principle suggests that images of the future guide and inspire present day actions and achievements. Thus, success or failure hinges in part on the images one holds of the future. Organizations exist because the people who govern and maintain them share some sort of discourse or projection about what the organization is, how it will function, what it will achieve, and what it will likely become. Professor and theorist William Bergquist (1993) contends that “the continuation of any society depends in large part on the presence in society of a sustaining and motivating image of its own future.” The last principle is more concrete. Simply stated, the Positive Principle says that positive questions lead to positive change, and the momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding; attitudes such as hope, inspiration, and the sheer joy of creating with one another. Organizations, as human constructions, are largely affirmative systems and thus, are responsive to positive thought and positive knowledge. The more positive the questions used to guide, the more long lasting and effective the change (Bushe & Coetzer, 1994). People and organizations move in the directions of
their inquiries. These five principles are central to AI’s theoretical basis for organizing for a positive revolution in change. These principles clarify that it is the positive image that results in the positive action. Thus, the organization must make the affirmative decision to focus on the positive to lead the inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry borrows from the strengths of many other practices and Appreciative Inquiry has been described in a myriad of ways: a radically affirmative approach to change that completely lets go of problem based management (White, 1996). The most important advance in action research in the past decade (Bushe, 1991). A paradigm of conscious evolution geared for the realities of the new century (Hubbard, 1998). A methodology that takes the idea of the social construction of reality to its positive extreme (Gergen, 1994). A model of much needed participatory science, a “new yoga of inquiry” (Harman, 1990); and last but not least, as an offspring and “heir” to Maslow’s vision of positive social science (Chin, 1998; Curran, 1991).

The Appreciative Inquiry model provides a critical new way of thinking about organizational change and improvement, yet it is deeply rooted in the historical values of Organization Development (Cooperrider, Sorensn, Yaeger & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative Inquiry suggests that human organizing and change at its best is a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The assumption of AI is simple: Every organization or community has something that works right, things that give it life when it is vital, effective and successful (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008). Appreciative Inquiry is the study of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best, and it is based on the assumption
that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams are themselves transformational (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most effective, alive, and constructively capable in economics, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was directed towards a California public urban elementary school with a large at-risk population of English Language Learners located just fifteen minutes from downtown Los Angeles. This chapter outlines the methodology and depicts the principles of research that were utilized to conduct this study. As a methodology, this study involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data as well as the mixing of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of this research process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This chapter begins by introducing the purpose, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the research design and the setting. The sampling procedures and a detailed discussion about the response rate are also addressed in this section. Additionally, the measures taken to address the protection of human subjects and reciprocity are also presented in this section. This chapter also includes the components that specifically describe instrumentation and the various stages of data collection, data recording and data analysis. The final section of this chapter discusses the reliability, validity, limitations and transferability of this study.

This study focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both qualitative and quantitative data as a method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The mixed-methods design provided for a more comprehensive approach to collect, measure, analyze and interpret data. A mixed methods design is useful to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2003). A central premise of this study is that the
combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of the research questions of this study than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

In an effort to maintain the relevance of the study, two different surveys were utilized. The survey questionnaires constructed by this researcher consisted of both open-ended questions (qualitative data) and Likert scale questions (quantitative data). Although similar in focus, format, and style, the questions for each survey were tailored for the targeted sample group. Purposeful comprehensive sampling was employed in this study. Purposeful sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples (McMillian & Schumacher, 1993).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will assist in identifying any conditions, factors, processes or elements that may have contributed to a Title 1 federally funded California public urban elementary school’s ability to exit and move beyond its program improvement status. More specifically, this researcher sought to develop a series of suggestions that could prove to be beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001.¹⁰

¹⁰ The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp.
Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What instructional and non-instructional practices or programs were used to drive the school improvement process in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

2. What perceptions about a school’s environment and interpersonal relationships exist within an urban elementary school culture that promotes systemic school change?

3. What role does leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel have in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

Theoretical Framework

This study utilized two strength-based theoretical models “Appreciative Inquiry” (inquiry framework) and “Positive Deviance” (behavioral framework) to investigate the area of program improvement at a California public urban elementary school receiving Title I federal funding. Strength-Based or Asset-Based theoretical models focus on successes, “what is working” rather than failures “what is wrong or broken” (Hammond 1996; Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009). Strength-based or asset-based pedagogical models are framed around personal, social, or community assets and focus on unique talents, strengths, qualities and positive experiences.

The Appreciative Inquiry model provides a critical new way of thinking about organizational change and improvement, yet it is deeply rooted in the historical values of Organization Development (Cooperrider, Sorensn, Yaeger & Whitney, 2005).
Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008).

The Strength-Based Positive Deviance model builds on positive behavior, bottom up interventions and learning through actions; it is a model used for social and behavior change (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010).

Research Design

This study combined quantitative and qualitative methods (QUAN + QUAL) in order to capitalize on the strengths of each approach. Greene, Caracelli, & Graham (1989) and Creswell (2002) stated that a mixed-methods design provides a more comprehensive answer to the research questions of the study. They also argued that a research design that integrates different methods is more likely to produce better results in terms of quality and scope. According to Gay & Airasian (2003), the mixed-methods design goes beyond the limitations of a single approach because it integrates both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

In the last two decades, much debate has occurred on the usefulness of combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in the same study (Creswell, 2003; Curlette, 2006). While many researchers remain entrenched between quantitative and qualitative research methods, others advocate that these two methods are complementary (Johnson & Turner, 2003; Taskakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Thomas, 2003). In Curlette’s (2006) point of view, data collected by applying qualitative techniques can be used to support conclusions reached by performing tests on quantitative data and vice-versa. In
this regard, Frechtling, Sharp, & Westat (1997) stated that it is beneficial to the researcher to use a mixed-method study combining the two approaches in order to sharpen the understanding of the research findings. Hanson, Creswell, Plano-Clark, Petska, & Creswell (2005) stated that the use of “both forms of data allow researchers to simultaneously generalize results from a sample to a population and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena of interest” (p. 224). With the development and perceived legitimacy of both qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences, mixed methods research, employing the data collection associated with both forms of data is expanding (Creswell, 2003).

Creswell (2003) stated that mixed-method researchers have to be knowledgeable in both qualitative and quantitative designs and the understanding of both approaches generally requires more time and effort on the part of the researcher.

This researcher intentionally selected a mixed methods approach to this study as it was determined that this option would allow this researcher to provide for maximum participation among study groups. Likert scale surveys alone could leave many questions or ambiguities as to what participants really thought about the study focus, and open-ended surveys alone would have limited the possibilities for interested parties to participate in the study. In an effort to maintain the relevance of the study, two different surveys were utilized. The surveys were similar in scope, but individually tailored to each specific sampling group. Furthermore, in an effort to maximize response rates for each sample group, this researcher implemented incentives and provided the survey in both English and Spanish for parents whose primary language was other than English.
The English and Spanish Parent Surveys were identical in form and content. The web-based survey tool “Survey Monkey” was utilized to create the Likert scale survey questions (quantitative data) and open-ended survey questions (qualitative data) for all participants.

The QUAN + QUAL approach simultaneously occurred in all stages of this study, such as formulation of research questions, elaboration of the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings. A mixed methods design is useful to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2003).

*The Triangulation Design*

Creswell and Plato Clark (2007) affirmed that triangulation is one of the four types of mixed-methods research design. According to Mertler and Charles (2008), in this method, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and given equal emphasis, which allows the researcher to combine the strengths of each form of data. Patton (2001) advocated for the use of triangulation by stating that triangulation strengthens a study by combining different methods, which includes both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

The rationale behind this design is that this researcher equally values the two forms of data and treats them as such. Data is thereby merged, and the results of analyses are used simultaneously to understand the research questions through the comparison of findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

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11The other three types of mixed-methods design are Embedded, Explanatory, and Exploratory.
Cresswell & Plano Clark (2007) stated that during interpretation, this design helps “to directly compare and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings” (p. 62) in order to elaborate valid and well-substantiated conclusions about the problem under study.

Setting

District

In choosing a sampling population, this researcher concentrated efforts on one of the largest urban school districts in Los Angeles County, with a total of more than 35,000 K-12 students and 30,000 adult learners in eighteen elementary schools, six intermediate schools, four high schools and one adult school (Montebello USD, 2010).

Approximately, 92 percent of the district’s students are Hispanic, four percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, three percent are Caucasian and one percent is identified as other. Fifty percent of the students are English Language Learners and 81 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced price meals, identified by the poverty indicator established by the federal government.

Montebello Unified School District is an ethnically diverse urban school district with an overrepresentation of students that score at or below grade level. For the 2009-2010 school year, 40.8 percent of the district’s students scored below basic or below proficient in English Language Arts, as measured by the 2010 AYP percent proficient target of 56.0; and 45.5 percent of the district’s students scored below basic or below proficient target in Mathematics, as measured by the 2010 AYP percent proficient target of 56.4(CDE DataQuest, 2011).
During the 2009-2010 school year the district’s certificated staff had an average of 17.1 years of service and an average of 14.7 years in the district. It is worthy to note, that while the total of the district’s certificated staff members was 1,526, only 20 were first year staff members and only 31 were second year staff members. Thus, only 51 or 3 percent of certificated staff members’ district wide had two or less years of experience (CDE DataQuest, 2011). Approximately, 69.3 percent of the district’s certificated staff was classified as Hispanic and 52.6 percent of the district’s certificated staff had a Master’s Degree or higher (CDE DataQuest, 2011).

School

This study was directed towards a California public urban elementary school with a large at-risk population of English Language Learners located just fifteen minutes from downtown Los Angeles. When this study began in April 2010, approximately 665 students were enrolled in preschool through grade 4 with 65 percent of the students identified as English Language Learners and 92.5 percent of the students participating in free or reduced priced meals (CDE DataQuest, 2011). Approximately, 99.1 percent of the students enrolled were identified as Hispanic or Latino, .07 percent were identified as White non-Hispanic and .02 percent were identified as Asian (CDE DataQuest, 2011).

During the 2009-2010 school year, 97.7 percent of all school personnel were identified as Hispanic or Latino and 2.3 percent were identified as Asian, not Hispanic. Certificated personnel had an average of 16.9 years of service and an average of 14.8 in the district with only one certificated staff member having only two years of teaching experience. It is worthy to note that 51.7 percent of the certificated personnel possessed a
Master’s Degree or higher. Years of service and staff education for other non-certificated school personnel were not available through the California Department of Education; thus, it is not included. For the 2009-2010 academic year the student teacher ratio was 21.3 (CDE DataQuest, 2011).

Sampling Procedures

General Population

The populations utilized for this study were selected for their similarities in being identified as stakeholders. The stakeholders were either assigned as a teacher, other certificated school personnel (counselor, speech therapist, school nurse, bilingual program coordinator); or as classified school personnel (cafeteria workers, custodians, school secretaries, instructional assistants, librarian, and campus monitors); or they were identified as parent(s), guardian(s), or caretakers of a student(s) at a Title 1 funded, public urban elementary school in Montebello, California, that was able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status in the 2009-2010 school year.

A significant aspect of this research is to provide clear and concise information for educators, researchers and practitioners. Therefore, it is this researcher’s belief that it is important to establish key definitions for oneself and the reader as to what is meant by the terms utilized throughout the remainder of this study. Thus, for the purpose of this study the terms “School Personnel” or “Staff” are interchangeable, and will be utilized to define all teachers, other certificated school personnel (counselor, speech therapist, school nurse, bilingual program coordinator), as well as all classified school personnel (cafeteria workers, custodians, school secretaries, instructional assistants, librarian, and
campus monitors) and the term “Parents” will be utilized to define a parent, guardian, or any other caretaker of a child. Due to the varied nature of individual family units (one and two parent households, etc.) and the difficulty in establishing the family makeup of each individual student, for the purpose of this study, this researcher will define the “parent population” as a household with one adult. Thus, for this study, the possible sample size of parents is identified as 665 parents rather than the potential sample size of 1330 parents. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the possible sample size is reflective of the 665 students that were enrolled at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 academic school year, and not the potential number of parents in each of the students households.

School Personnel Population

This sampling population focused on the 50 staff members who were employed at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 academic school year.

Parent Population

This sampling population focused on the parents of 665 students. These parents had one or more student(s) enrolled in preschool, kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 academic school year.

These particular populations of staff and parent(s) were intentionally selected by this researcher to participate in the study due to the fact that they were either employed by Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 academic school year or had one or more students enrolled at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 academic school year. All staff assigned to Montebello Park Elementary, as well as, the parent(s) of
students enrolled at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 academic school year were provided the opportunity to participate in the study.

Montebello Park Elementary was intentionally selected by this researcher as the study site due to the fact that during the 2009-2010 school year California had 2,778 public schools in Title I program improvement and Montebello Park Elementary was one of 79 schools statewide to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status during the 2009-2010 school year (CDE, 2011). Program improvement involves a succession of interventions, sanctions and consequences that become more severe with each year that a school does not make AYP. Under NCLB, schools that do not meet AYP for two consecutive years are identified for program improvement and are required to implement specific program components.

It is worth noting that 18 out of 29 schools in Montebello Unified School District were in program improvement for the 2009-2010 school year. Montebello Unified School District with 12 elementary schools and 6 middle schools had been identified for program improvement. The status of the 18 schools in program improvement were identified as: Year 1 (six schools); Year 2 (one school); Year 3 (one school); Year 4 (two schools) and Year 5 (eight schools). The four high schools in the district were all able to escape program improvement status, due to the fact that they do not receive federal Title I funding. Adequate Yearly Progress is a requirement under Title I of the federal NCLB Act of 2001. States, districts and schools that participate in Title I must commit to the goals of NCLB (CDE, AYP Report, 2010). However, districts and schools that do not
receive Title I funds are not subject to NCLB program improvement sanctions, interventions, or consequences; even if they do not make AYP (EdSource, 2009).

Furthermore, Montebello Park Elementary was the only school in the Montebello Unified School district that was able to successful exit program improvement and move beyond its Year 3 program improvement status for the 2009-2010 school year (CDE, 2011).

*General Sampling Groups*

The sample groups were intentionally selected by this researcher to participate in the study due to the fact that they were either employed by Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 school year or they had one or more students enrolled in preschool, kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 school year.

*School Personnel Sample*

There was a possible sample size of 50 staff members. There were 47 respondents that completed the informed consent document and submitted a survey (94 percent response rate); three of the 50 surveys distributed to school personnel were not completed or returned to this researcher.

*Background Information Demographics of Staff Sample*

The staff sample group for this study consisted of 47 respondents. The following charts represent the demographic make-up of the staff sample group. Gender, age, and ethnicity of staff respondents are reported in Figures 2, 3, and 4.
Figure 2. Gender of Staff

The gender of staff is reported in Figure 2. Of the 47 staff respondents, 91.5 percent were female and 8.5 percent were male.
The age of staff respondents is reported in Figure 3. Of the 47 staff respondents, 32.6 percent were between the ages of 40-49; 19.6 percent were between the ages of 30-59; 15.2 percent were 60 or over; and 13 percent were between the ages of 20-29.
Figure 4. Ethnicity of Staff

The ethnicity of staff is reported in Figure 4. Of the 47 staff respondents, 97.8 percent were Latino or Hispanic; and 2.2 percent were Asian.

Parents Sample

With a possible sample size of 665 parents, survey questionnaires were completed by 568 parent respondents (85.4 percent response rate). Each of the parent survey responses was accompanied by a completed informed consent document with 231 students submitting parent survey responses completed in English and 337 students submitting parent survey responses completed in Spanish; 97 of the 665 parent surveys distributed were not completed or returned to this researcher.
**Background Information Demographics of Parent Sample Group**

The parent sample group for this study consisted of 568 respondents. The following charts represent the demographic make-up of the parent sample group. Gender, age, ethnicity, and educational level of the parent respondents are reported in Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8.

*Figure 5. Gender of Parents*

The gender of parents is reported in Figure 5. Of the 568 parent respondents, 85.4 percent were female and 14.6 percent were male.
Figure 6. Age of Parents

The age of parent respondents is reported in Figure 6. Of the 568 parent respondents, 61 percent were between the ages of 30-39; 27.7 percent were between the ages of 20-29; 9.7 percent were between the ages of 40-49; 1 percent was between the ages of 50-59; and .07 percent was under the age of 20.
Figure 7. Ethnicity of Parents

The ethnicity of parent respondents is reported in Figure 7. Of the 568 parent respondents, 98.3 percent were Latino or Hispanic; 1.4 percent was Caucasian or White; and .03 percent were Asian.
The educational level of parent respondents is reported in Figure 8. Of the 568 parent respondents, 40.1 percent were high school graduates; 30.6 percent had some college; 12.9 percent had other forms of education; 9.5 percent graduated from a trade or professional school; and 6.8 percent were college graduates.

**Criteria for Selecting Participants**

Purposeful sampling, a non-random method of sampling whereby the researcher selects information-rich cases for study, has been selected as the sampling method in this study. Information-rich cases are those that allow the researcher to learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of this study (Patton, 1990). Purposeful sampling allows this researcher to come to a stronger understanding about the results from this study by focusing in depth on understanding these perceptions. Patton (2001)
stated that it is better to focus on a small number of carefully selected participants rather
than gather standardized information from a large and statistically significant sample.

In the process of sampling selection, this researcher also applied criterion
sampling, a specific type of purposeful sampling, in order to select the subjects for this
study. In so doing, criterion sampling involved the selection of subjects who met the
predetermined criterion of importance predetermined by the researcher (Patton, 2001). In
this study, the applied criterion was the selection of stakeholders: the 50 school personnel
assigned to Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 academic year and the
parents of 665 students enrolled at Montebello Park elementary during the 2009-2010
academic school year.

According to Patton (2001), criterion sampling is useful for identifying and
understanding perceptions that are information-rich and which provide an important
qualitative component to the quantitative data by identifying themes that have emerged
from the surveys. Patton (1990) also stated that the purposeful and criterion methods of
sampling are strong approaches that assure the quality of the study.

Response Rates

An important issue in survey-based research is how to obtain satisfactory
response rates. Response rate is defined as the result of dividing the number of people
who were interviewed or surveyed by the total number of people in the sample who were
eligible to participate but declined to participate in the study. According to Atrostic and
Burt (1999), response rates appear to be declining overall since the 1990s. In a survey of
a population that aims to describe knowledge, perceptions, or behaviors, a 60 percent
response rate might be acceptable (Gay & Airasian, 2003), any data is better than no data, so there is no reason to reject a 60 percent response rate by itself. However, Nguyen (2007) argued that the higher the response rate, the more secure the reader would feel that the results are representative of the population being studied. Some studies suggest that a 50 percent response rate is usually considered adequate (Gay & Airasian, 2003; Rea & Parker, 1992), though some authors suggest that a 60 percent response rate is considered to be very good (Fowler, 1984; Nguyen, 2007) and a 70 percent response rate is considered to be recommended and acceptable (Babbie, 1990; Rea & Parker, 1992).

*Response Rate for the Surveys*

Staff survey data collection resulted in the acquisition of 47 surveys from a population of 50 staff members. There were 47 respondents that completed the informed consent document and submitted a survey 94 percent response rate; 3 of the 50 surveys distributed to school personnel were not completed or returned to the researcher. Figure 9 reports the response rate for the Staff Personnel Survey.
Parent survey data collection resulted in the acquisition of 568 surveys from a possible sample size of 665 parents. There were 568 parents that completed and submitted a survey 85.4 percent response rate. Each of the parent survey responses was accompanied by a completed informed consent document with 231 students submitting parent survey responses completed in English and 337 students submitting parent survey responses completed in Spanish; 97 of the 665 parent surveys distributed were not completed or returned to the researcher. Figure 10 reports the response rate for the parent survey.

![Staff Personnel Surveys](image)

**Figure 9.** Response Rate: Staff Personnel Survey Responses

Parent survey data collection resulted in the acquisition of 568 surveys from a possible sample size of 665 parents. There were 568 parents that completed and submitted a survey 85.4 percent response rate. Each of the parent survey responses was accompanied by a completed informed consent document with 231 students submitting parent survey responses completed in English and 337 students submitting parent survey responses completed in Spanish; 97 of the 665 parent surveys distributed were not completed or returned to the researcher. Figure 10 reports the response rate for the parent survey.
The survey response rates of 94 percent for staff and 85.4 percent for parents fell within the guidelines suggested by the literature related to survey response rate (Birdie, 1989; Fowler, 1984; Gay & Airasian, 2003; Gillham, 2000; Kiesler & Sproull, 1986; Parker, 1992), which considers a response rate of 70 percent recommended and acceptable.

It is worth noting that DeVaus (1996) goes on to suggest that a good sampling and survey design should lead to an 80 percent response rate and 90 percent response rate would be excellent. Thus, according to DeVaus (1996), the 94 percent response rate for the staff surveys and the 85.4 percent response rate for the parent surveys utilized in this study could be attributed to a good sampling and survey design.

![Figure 10. Response Rate: Parent Responses](image)

- Parent Population: 665
- Parent Sample: 568 (85.4%)
- Parent Respondents Spanish: 337 (59.3%)
- Parent Respondents English: 231 (40.7%)
Finally, according to Birdie (1989) and Mertens (2005), since respondents and non-respondents are part of a similar population, this study yields results that closely approximate the entire population which increases the credibility of its results.

Protection of Human Subjects and Ethical Issues

Before the beginning of data collection, the school district, and school site administrator gave permission to this researcher to conduct this study at Montebello Park Elementary school (see Appendix I, Permission Letter). This researcher followed the guidelines recommended by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at California State University. The committee approved this research as minimal risk for human subjects participating in this study.

This study involved school personnel who were employed at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 school year. Parent(s) who had one or more student(s) enrolled in preschool, kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grades at Montebello Park Elementary during the 2009-2010 school year were also involved in this study. Only respondents who agreed to participate by signing the informed consent document (see Appendix B and D); and after reading the Letter of Introduction (see Appendix A and C) were permitted to partake in the study. Honesty of information, results, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the course of this study. In an effort to minimize any anxiety and the possibility of coercion or undue influence, participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. Total anonymity of participants was protected by using coding and pseudonyms in the collection and maintenance of the records. The participants were informed that their names and individual performance would not be
reported. Only the results of the participants as a group would be reported. The final research report did not include any identifying information. According to Patton (1990), participants’ identities are kept confidential to protect them from harm or punitive action. Although the surveys were administered in a fashion which protected the anonymity of the respondent, they were coded, as to allow this researcher to identify how many parents and staff personnel respondents participated for the purpose of distributing inducements for participation.

Reciprocity

Some researchers (Creswell, 1998; Hammel, Carpenter, & Dyck, 2000; Patton, 1990) affirmed that there should be reciprocity in what participants give and what they receive from participation in a research project. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) affirmed that reciprocity should fit within the constraints of research and personal ethics and within the framework of maintaining the researcher's role as an investigator.

According to Creswell (1998), the term reciprocity is defined as something that is returned to participants of a study in exchange for the information collected from them. Hammel, Carpenter, and Dyck (2000) agreed with this perspective when they stated that one aspect that is central to the research process is the issue of reciprocity, “which implies give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power in the research process” (p. 116). In an effort to encourage a higher rate of participation, inducements were offered to participants. Students whose parents completed and submitted the surveys were provided with a Smencil (a scented pencil). School personnel that completed and submitted the surveys were given a $20.00 Target Gift Card. While the rewards for
completing the surveys were merely symbolic, token items, it is believed that they played at least a small role in increasing participation rates.

Instrumentation

In this mixed methods study, two surveys were constructed using Likert scale and open-ended questions, staff survey (see Appendix G), and parent surveys in both English and Spanish (see Appendix E and F). According to Sapsford (2006), one of the main benefits of a survey is its flexibility in dealing with different types of data. Other researchers such as Fowler (2001) go on to state that surveys are one of the most important forms of measurement in research. The questions for the two surveys utilized in this study were developed after reviewing other surveys which were previously used by other researchers. The questions and formats used in the surveys reviewed were studied to identify those characteristics which would make for a survey which could be successfully administered to the targeted population, maximizing the collection of critical data and sample size while mitigating other conditions such as time availability to complete the survey, attention span of target populations and the ease of sorting survey results. Thomas (2003) stated that “surveys are useful in revealing the current status of a target variable within a particular entity” (p. 44). The format of the survey was taken into account in consideration of both sub-groups, that being said, it was the intent of this researcher to make the surveys as user friendly as possible. In an effort to ensure that the survey questions did not lose meaning when translated into Spanish for parents who had a primary language other than English, careful attention was paid to the titling of the
various categories, wording of each question, sentence structure, and the vocabulary utilized.

The surveys were constructed after a thorough analysis of the format, vocabulary and layout of surveys previously conducted by various sources. Based upon the analysis of previous surveys, a questionnaire was developed to be administered to each sample with particular attention paid to the formatting of the questionnaire, length, clarity of direction, and word choice for each of the two sample groups. The web-based survey tool “Survey Monkey” was utilized to create the Likert scale survey questions (quantitative data) and open-ended survey questions (qualitative data) for all participants. Although similar in focus, format, and style, the questions for each survey were tailored for the targeted sample group. The surveys also had an extra category named open-ended responses in which each response was linked to a specific category that was linked to a specific research question.

The following instruments were developed in order to collect data for this study:

a) A Staff Survey that contained 27 Likert scale (quantitative data) and 20 open-ended questions (qualitative data).

b) A Parent Survey that contained 22 Likert scale (quantitative data) and 10 open-ended questions (qualitative data).

Items of the Surveys were divided into the following seven main categories and were linked to a specific research questions.

1. Background Information-Descriptive Data

2. Instructional Practices or Programs that drive the school improvement process.
3. Non-Instructional Practices that drive the school improvement process.

4. Perceptions about a school’s culture that promotes positive systemic school change.

5. The role of leadership in the school improvement process.

6. The effect of self-perceived value of school personnel in the school improvement process.

7. The general perceptions of parents in relation to school, testing, and school personnel.

**Likert Scale**

In this study, the Parent Survey consisted of 22 Likert scale questions, and the Staff Survey consisted of 27 Likert scale questions. A Likert Scale asks participants to respond to a series of statements that are based on a limited range of possible answers. Trochim and Donnelly (2007) stated that in a Likert scale, participants are asked to rate each of their responses on a 1 to 5 scale, in which 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. They also stated that there are different possibilities for the response scales such as 1 to 7, 1 to 9, and 0 to 4, which are odd-numbered scales that have middle value, which may be labeled as neutral or undecided. However, Trochim and Donnelly (2007) also stated that:

It is also possible to use a forced-choice response scale with an even number of responses and no middle neutral or undecided choice. In this situation, respondents are forced to decide whether they lean more toward the “agree” or “disagree” end of the scale for each item. (p. 137)
Open-Ended Questions

The survey instruments utilized in this study consisted of 10 open-ended questions for Parents and 20 open-ended questions for Staff. Open-ended questions are questions to which there is not one definite answer and they give participants an opportunity to respond to them in their own words and in detail. According to Fink (1995), the open-ended questions seek to explore the qualitative, in-depth aspects of a particular topic and the participants’ responses may be very useful because they often yield quotable material. Fink (1995) stated that the drawback to open-ended questions is that the responses are more difficult to catalogue and interpret.

Due to the nature of the questions involved within the surveys and the fact that respondents were being asked about their perspectives towards a subjective topic, this researcher did not consider administering post surveys. However, the results of this study may lead to additional research, which could amplify the results of this study. As an item for further research, upon completion of the study, one may choose to investigate how effectively the school and/or district was able to exploit the results of the research to impact the success of other schools who are faced with program improvement status.

Data Collection Procedures

General Procedures

Prior to initiating the research study, a great deal of time was spent planning the administration of the surveys in order to maximize participant response rates. Ultimately, it was determined to package both the staff and parent surveys, with all required introductory (see Appendix A and C) and informed consent documents (see Appendix B
and D) together in order for this researcher to more easily provide directions for completing the surveys and informed consent documents. By establishing a predetermined start (April 19, 2010) and end date (April 23, 2010) for the distribution, completion and submission of the surveys and informed consent documents, this researcher was able to maximize the probability of participation in a timely manner.

Prior to the administration of the surveys, this researcher had varying degrees of access to members from within each sub-group; hence, this researcher had members from within each sub-group review other surveys which had been used in prior research to gauge the effectiveness of both question type and survey format. Additional discussions were held over coffee, lunch breaks, and recess times in order to determine which questions were most effective and identify potential misunderstandings resulting from terminology and question formats. Discussion formats were unscripted and free-flowing and did not include examples of the actual surveys used.

Due to the fact that this researcher had varying degrees of accessibility to the respondent groups, the administration of the surveys was conducted differently for each sample group, yet consistent within each sub-group. An introductory letter with written instructions for completing the surveys along with informed consent documents were delivered to each sample group. Information regarding the purpose of the study, the importance of respondent integrity in responding to the questions, confidentiality of the survey results, and procedures for completing and submitting the surveys was also provided to each sample group. Surveys for both response groups were completed on paper and responses were coded to indicate sub-group relationships within each group.
Responses from both survey groups were later collected and the data was processed electronically in order to facilitate disaggregation of the survey results.

It is worth noting that this researcher considered administering the survey online. By administering the survey via the web-based survey tool “Survey Monkey,” this researcher would have far greater access to additional respondents in other areas and the processing of the data would have been expedited. However, in recognizing the limitations to computer access of many of the parents within the community, it was instead decided to administer the parent surveys via a paper format instead of online. Although it may have been possible to make internet connected computers available to parents on campus, it was not realistic to believe that the response rate would have been equal or higher than administering paper surveys. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the numbers of parents who possessed a computer at home to respond to the survey questions would be less than if the survey were administered via a paper format. Consideration was also given to providing school staff with the opportunity to complete the survey online. However, in recognizing that a computer lab was not available on site and that all staff did not readily have internet access, and that the sample size of staff respondents would be compromised, it was decided not to afford the online option to school staff; hence, the staff survey was administer via a paper format.

Additionally, in an effort to ensure that all parents were afforded the opportunity to participate in the study, the parent survey was provided in both English and Spanish.
Data Collection Timetable

Data were collected from April 19, 2010, to April 23, 2010, in a California urban elementary school, with a large at-risk population of English Language Learners, located just fifteen minutes from downtown Los Angeles. On April 2010, the survey instruments, introductory letters and informed consent forms were distributed to 50 staff members and the parents of 665 students. The data collection window for the study was from April 19, 2010, to April 23, 2010.

Collection of Quantitative Data

Staff respondents received a paper survey, informed consent form, and an introductory letter. The site principal also provided staff with an introductory letter (see Appendix I, Permission Letter) and personal instructions with a specified timeline of April 19-April 23, 2010, for completion and submission of the surveys and informed consent documents. Directions for how to ensure secure submission of their surveys and informed consent documents were also provided. Respondents were instructed to read and sign the informed consent document and complete the paper survey. Respondents were then instructed to place both completed documents in an attached envelope and seal it. Finally, they were then instructed to place both documents into the large red bag in the staff workroom at Montebello Park Elementary school by Friday, April 23, 2010.

Collection of Qualitative Data

Parental respondents received a paper survey and introductory and informed consent document; however, they were not given the directions personally by this researcher or by the site administrator; but rather in written format due to the fact that it
was impractical for this researcher to meet with each potential respondent individually. Consideration was given to providing an opportunity for this researcher to meet with each parent but was discounted due to the fact that not all parents would have been able to meet, thus possibly skewing the results of the responses. Additionally, it was decided to not administer the survey solely to those participants who would be able to attend such a meeting due to concerns that the sample size of the respondents would have been compromised. However, it was determined by this researcher that distributing the surveys in the students’ weekly take home folders would provide this researcher the opportunity to reach all parents. This method of distribution would allow parents to complete the surveys and informed consent documents and return them to their child’s classroom teacher, a process of data collection that was familiar to all parents. In an effort to ensure that the nature of the research and informed consent documents were comprehensible to all participants they were presented in both English and Spanish to parental respondents. The data was collected from parent respondents from April 19 to April 23, 2010.

Data Analysis Procedure

In this particular study, the qualitative data analysis consisted in examining parent and staff responses to the survey’s Likert and open-ended questions. The quantitative data analysis consisted in examining the Staff’s answers to the Likert scale survey questions.

While the surveys were largely quantifiable in the data they provided, open-ended questions were included on each survey. In following the lead of qualitative researchers who typically begin their analysis by first identifying documents and records that are part
of the situation they plan to study, this researcher identified those materials which might be relevant to the research study. “Once they have identified these materials they then determine which materials might be relevant to their research study (Gall et al., 1996).”

According to Cresswell and Plano Clark (2007), one of the procedures for mixed-methods data analysis is related to concurrent data analysis, in which both qualitative and quantitative data are merged because they are analyzed separately. Triangulation mixed-methods design is one of the approaches used for concurrent data analysis. In Figure 10 the triangulation mixed-methods design for the concurrent data analysis is presented.

The intent of the triangulation design was to gather both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and to integrate the two forms of data in order to have a better understanding of the research questions being asked. This design typically gives equal priority to quantitative and qualitative data, and analysis involves concurrent or simultaneous collection of data; and this integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in the results, interpretation, and conclusion phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).
Concurrent Data Analysis in Triangulation Mixed-Methods Design

In Stage 1, this researcher conducted separate initial data analysis for each of the qualitative and the quantitative database (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007), which included coding, theme development, and the interrelationship for the qualitative data analysis and descriptive analysis for the quantitative data analysis. Next, in stage 2, this researcher merged the two sets of data and used the triangulation mixed-method design in order to allow for a complete picture of the study. This researcher transformed the data by merging qualitative data into quantitative data.

Method of Data Analysis of Quantitative Data

Descriptive Univariate Statistics

In this study, descriptive statistics was used to describe the basic features of the survey data in quantitative terms. It also provided summaries about the samples and the
measures collected during the data collection window. Together with graphics analysis, descriptive statistics formed a basis of the quantitative analysis of data of this study and it helped the researcher to simplify large amounts of data in a sensible way by reducing the data into a simpler summary. In other words, the use of descriptive statistics helped the researcher to summarize the study’s collection of data in a clear and understandable way. This means that the primary goal of using descriptive statistics in this study was to describe quantitative data through the use of numbers by graphically representing this information in a comprehensible manner.

In order to analyze the results of this study, the researcher used the range to measure the dispersion of the values around the central value (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). Frequency distributions graphs were used to summarize the data in order to “present quantitative descriptions in manageable form” (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007, p. 264). In this regard, the features of the data for the research questions were described by using frequency distributions and range.

Frequency Distributions

Frequency distributions list all the values that a variable has acquired in the sample. In other words, they identify what number or percentage of respondents gave each answer to a specific question.

The Range

The range for each survey question, that is, the dispersion among the values in the distribution of each survey question was tightly clustered around the center of each distribution, which means that it is a good indicator of the central tendency of the data.
Bivariate Analysis Pearson Correlation

In this study, a Pearson Correlation was conducted to determine whether or not there were significant linear relationships between variables. Pearson’s r correlation coefficient assumes linear relationships where higher scores on X are linearly related to higher scores on Y (Muijs, 2004, p. 146). The correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of the relationship and its direction. The researcher’s primary goal of using Pearson’s r correlation coefficient was to gather information about the aspects of the linear relationships between variables used in this study. Summaries about the direction and effect of the relationships between variables, along with the statistical significance of the relationships provided the researcher with valuable information to construct recommendations and suggestions.

Direction of Relationship

A direction of relationship describes a linear relationship between two variables, a positive sign indicates a positive direction (high scores on X means high scores on Y), a negative sign a negative direction (high score on X means low scores on Y) (Muijs, 2004, p. 144). In a positive relationship this means as one variable increases, so does the other. In a negative relationship this means as one variable increases, the other decreases.

Strength of Relationship-Effect Size

Strength of relationship-effect size describes a linear relationship between two variables; correlation coefficients vary between -1 and +1. A perfect negative relationship is indicated by -1, a perfect positive relationship is indicated by +1 and 0 has no relationship (Muijs, 2004). Thus, the strength or effect size of .1 indicates a small
relationship between variables, a .3 indicates a medium relationship between variables and a .5 indicates a large relationship between variables.

“While correlation coefficients are highly useful, we do need to take a number of restrictions into account: correlation coefficients can be affected by outliers and restricted range, and correlation does not necessarily imply causation” (Muijs, 2004, p. 156).

Statistical Significance

The significance level is determined both by the effect size of the relationship or in the difference one has found in their sample; and by the sample size (Muijs, 2004, p. 78). As researchers, the goal in any study is to minimize the chance of making a type 1 error (a type 1 error basically means that the researcher identifies a level of significance that does not exist). In order to minimize the chance of making a type 1 error the researcher needs to be able to calculate how large the chance of making a type 1 error is. That chance of making a type 1 error is given a level of confidence, also referred to as a level of significance. The significance level can vary between 0 and 1.

The smaller our significance level, the smaller our chance of making a type 1 error”. “There are a number of standard values that are commonly used as cut-off points for the significance level. The most common is the .05 level. When we say that our significance level is less than .05, this usually means that our findings are significant (Muijs, 2004, p. 78).

The common significance levels in SPSS are identified as $p \leq .05$ (this suggests that the results are not due to chance, and have 95 percent confidence level); $p \leq .01$ (this suggests that the researcher has not made a type 1 error, and the results have a 99 percent confidence level); and $p \leq .001$ (suggests that the researcher would get the same results if the study was replicated, and the results have a 99.9 percent confidence level).
A Pearson Correlation was conducted to determine whether or not there were significant relationships among variables. To analyze data, quantitative analysis used descriptive statistics (averaging responses for each question), the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), frequency tables, cross tabulation queries, measures for central tendency (the median) and measures of variability. The quantitative survey results for staff were analyzed independently by this researcher utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a data analysis software program. By running frequency tables and cross tabulation queries, this researcher was able to discern which of the responses were most common and verify that the results were not skewed due to heavy response rates by one sub-group population within the sample grouping. The data tables provided this researcher with valuable information from which recommendations and suggestions were constructed, this information could prove to be beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001\textsuperscript{12}.

The quantitative data analysis of this study involved three major steps:

1. Data preparation, that is, data was logged in, checked for accuracy, and entered into the computer using SPSS, which is designed to analyze, display, and transform data (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007).

2. Data organization was developed and was documented into a database structure that integrated the various measures (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007).

\textsuperscript{12} The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from the California Department of Education at \url{http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tiststesum10.asp}. 
3. Descriptive statistics and graphical analysis, which describe basic features of the data analyzed in this study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007).

In this study, descriptive statistics and graphical analysis were used to examine the quantitative aspects of the data. The results from the Likert scale questions of the survey were analyzed by using the SPSS. Frequencies of distribution such as frequency tables and histograms (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007) were used to describe multiple variables such as non-instructional practices and programs, school environment, interpersonal relationships, self-perceived value of school personnel and demographic data. Frequency distribution tables were used for both categorical and numerical variables while intervals were used for continuous variables if they took a large number of values. The central tendency of a distribution, which “is an estimate of the center of a distribution of value” (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007, p. 266) was used to describe the mean, median, and mode of sets and values of the data that required this approach. Ranges, which are measures of dispersion in a frequency distribution (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007) were also used to describe the variability of the values.

Methods of Data Analysis of Qualitative Data

**Inductive Data Analysis**

Inductive analysis proceeds from the specific to the general. Understandings are generated by starting with specific elements and finding connections among them. To argue inductively is to begin with particular pieces of evidence and then pull them together into a meaningful whole. Inductive data analysis is “a search for patterns of
meaningful data so the general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made” (Hatch 2002, p. 161).

In this study, the researcher used inductive analysis for the open-ended survey questions from both parents and staff. In this regard, the researcher read the data looking for trends and patterns in order to identify themes to better understand the data within the confines of a thematic analysis. Next, the researcher coded the data using a numbering system based on similar categories and topics that emerged from the data as they aligned with the research questions. Each topic addressed in the data had a number assigned to it. After coding the data, the researcher spent some time describing the themes that emerged from qualitative data, and categories that surfaced in the data analysis. Next, the researcher classified all data related to the thematic pattern and related sub-themes. Finally, the researcher derived thematic categories that emerged from the qualitative data which were consistent with the literature review in order to describe the topic under study.

The qualitative components of the study consisted of in-depth, semi-structured open-ended response questions within the staff and parent survey questionnaires. The qualitative analysis included the coding of data to identify emergent themes. The open-ended response questions were analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and emergent categories of responses within the data. In analyzing the open-ended response questions, the process of open and axial coding was used. The coding process included identifying concepts embedded within the data, organizing discrete concepts into categories, and linking them to broad themes. This researcher read the data in search of regularities and
patterns, as well as, searched for discrepant evidence that did not readily align to emerging categories and themes in the data. An affinity diagram was used to reassemble and re-conceptualize the data for theme development.

The data analysis of this study occurred with data collection as recommended by Merriam (1998) and Cresswell (2003). In so doing, the qualitative data analysis of this study involved the following steps:

- Step 1: Prepare and organize data for analysis.
- Step 2: Read through data for trends and patterns.
- Step 3: Code data based on similar categories and topics.
- Step 4: Describe the people, settings, and categories.
- Step 5: Represent the themes and findings in a narrative passage.
- Step 6: Make meaning of and interpret the data.

This researcher prepared and organized the data for analysis. According to Trochim and Donnelly (2007), data preparation and organization enabled this researcher to assess what types of themes emerged from the collected data. The research questions for this mixed-methods study provided a framework to prepare and organize the data. Patton (2001) stated that data preparation and organization resulted in categories and themes that were aligned with the research questions so it was retrievable during intensive analysis that followed the data collection. The process of preparation and organization of the data in a rigorous and standardized way helped to secure the validity of the results of this study. In this context, consistency was very important in this process because it helped to shape the data into information.
Once the data were organized, by language and sample group this researcher input the data into “Survey Monkey” a web-based survey tool. This researcher then read the data looking for trends and patterns. Next, this researcher coded the data using a numbering system based on similar categories and topics that emerged from the data as they aligned with the research questions. Each topic addressed in the data had a number assigned to it. After coding the data, this researcher spent some time describing the district and school settings, themes consistent with the literature review, and categories that surfaced in the analysis. Following the coding, descriptions, and categorizing, this researcher represented findings by way of a narrative. Finally, this researcher derived categories and themes from the data consistent with the literature review to describe the topic under study.

Reliability and Validity

According to Fowler (2001), survey question reliability is defined as answers corresponding to what was intended to be measured. As emphasized by DeVaus (1996), reliability is the extent to which independent administration of the same instrument yields the same results under comparable conditions. In the area where human motivation, perceptions, attitudes, feelings and actions are measured, both interviews and surveys may be very effective (DeVaus, 1996). Whereas reliability is regarded to be the main requirement for the data-gathering instrument, validity is considered the main criterion by which the quality of the instrument is measured. Validity is the extent to which a specific measurement provides data that relates to the commonly accepted meaning of a particular concept (Babbie, 1990).
According to White (2000), validity simply means that the researcher’s conclusion is true and that it corresponds to actual lived reality. Babbie (1990) referred to validity as the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the meaning of the problem under consideration. In this study, validity and reliability were enhanced because a variety of data collection instruments were used. Data were broken down into separate parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions were asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data.

Limitations of the Study

Acknowledging that the sample size used in this study was limited due to the fact that all subjects were selected from only one site, this researcher believes that the high response rates among those eligible to participate mitigated the negatives incurred from the small sample size. The survey response analysis focused on identifying high-frequency responses from within each sub-group, but also in identifying whether or not any of the high-frequency responses were shared conditions between various sub-groups. Thus, while the sample size may be limited and unable to create plausible generalizations that could reasonably be utilized at similar educational institutions, the size permitted this researcher to concentrate on achieving a high response rate and allowed for analysis of a higher percentage of responses rather than on a randomly selected few.

It will be important to clearly delineate through the findings of this study that only one public urban elementary school site was examined. In confining the sample size to include only one of the 79 schools that successful exited and moved beyond their program improvement status in the 2009-2010 school year, it is not intended that the
results and subsequent conclusions be used as a formula for other schools to emulate; but rather to serve as suggestions to be considered for use by other schools and districts in program improvement.

Due to the convenience and access to the school site personnel, it is acknowledged that the percentage of staff members who participated in the study significantly outnumbered the percentage of respondents of the parent sub-group.

Furthermore, the percentage of parents who participated in the study may be skewed due to the fact that some parents had more than one child enrolled at the school site studied. Thus, some parents may have completed more than one survey. Also, the rate of return for the parent surveys could also be skewed by the fact that some parents may have chosen to submit one survey per family, rather than one survey per child.

When choosing literature to include in the review, this researcher utilized various forms of literature including published and electronic books, articles, handouts, journals, resource cards, governmental and educationally based organizational web pages in an attempt to access various points of view. The literature was used to provide a compass as to what has been studied in the past, and how it was studied by others to better design this study. This was done for various reasons, not least among them being the fact that this researcher was able to increase the number of reviews conducted as well as incorporate the various ideas based upon different schools of thought. Furthermore, this researcher was able to select articles which were not only relevant to the topic of inquiry but which also spanned from directly addressing a similar topic to addressing related topics. The selection of materials available was not as broad in range as this researcher would have
liked; hence, this researcher did not focus on one particular field of thought, since it was believed that it would be important to find additional resources which shared the basic focus but differed in settings and purpose.

For the purpose of this study, a variety of resources was utilized including published and electronic books, articles, handouts, journals, resource cards, governmental and educationally based organizational web pages. These were supplemented with other sources such as surveys and ethnographic interviews in order to provide as well rounded a foundation of information as possible. In addition, it is worthy to note that, while there were not many studies located which focused on program improvement, there were even fewer studies conducted that utilized a strength-based theoretical theme in any field of study, and not a single study was found that utilized a strength-based theoretical lens to examine the school improvement process.

Transferability

Transferability describes the process of applying the results of research in one situation to other similar situations. Readers note the specifics of the research situation and compare them to the specifics of an environment or situation with which they are familiar. To do this effectively, readers need to know as much as possible about the original research situation in order to determine whether it is similar to their own. Therefore, researchers must supply a highly detailed description of their research methodology. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), researchers must offer a detailed description of their methods in order to help the readers draw their own conclusions.
Data have been collected and analyzed as part of an effort to provide readers with sufficient information about the methodology of this study, so they may be able to make their own judgment and draw their own conclusions about its transferability. However, this researcher does not claim that the results of this study apply to other situations. Readers need to look at their own situation and decide about the relevance of these results.

Summary

The methodology, as outlined here, describes the important components of this study such as its purpose, research questions, and theoretical framework. This chapter introduces the research design which is a mixed-method research. The context of the study describes the population and the research site that was selected to participate in the study. Protection of human subjects and ethical issues are discussed. This chapter specifically outlines the process of the development of the data collection instruments which includes two surveys. This chapter also includes various stages of the data collection process and describes the components applied in data analysis as well as methods to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.
Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the data analysis, results, and findings of the two survey instruments utilized in this mixed-methods study. A brief description of the purpose and the research questions that guided this study are followed by a detailed discussion about the data analysis, results, and findings of the quantitative and qualitative data as they relate to the three research questions generated at the onset of this study. Additionally, this chapter addresses the thematic categories that emerged from the data in accordance to each respective research question.

Over the course of the past several years, this researcher was immersed in an investigation to identify the conditions, factors, processes and elements that have contributed to a Title I federally funded California public urban elementary school’s ability to exit and move beyond its program improvement status. Having spent the last seven years working with districts and schools identified for program improvement, the question of why some schools are able to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status while other schools plunge further into the required program components of program improvement is of particular interest to this researcher.

For this reason, this researcher set out to capture the perceptions of key stakeholders in the school improvement process, namely parents and school personnel as related to their school’s environment, interpersonal relationships, and self-perceived value. The role of leadership, as well as instructional and non-instructional practices and
programs that influenced the school improvement process is also discussed. While it is acknowledged that site and district level administrators play significant roles in the establishment and implementation of educational goals and strategies, this researcher purposefully concentrated this study on revealing the perspectives of other stakeholders within the schooling system; thus, providing parents and staff a voice with which they could express their feelings regarding those conditions which they perceived to play a significant role in their school’s ability to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status. It is the belief of this researcher, that the traditional approach to the school improvement process often leaves the key stakeholders such as parents and staff voiceless with very limited opportunities to share their perceptions, experiences and expertise. Therefore, in order to ensure that the perceptions of other stakeholders resonated clearly and without influence from the researcher throughout the study, this researcher determined it to be the best course of action to limit the roles and opinions of other school and district level administrators throughout the course of this study.

Over the course of conducting this research, the researcher has explored the dilemmas surrounding the struggles of California’s public schools to exit and move beyond their program improvement status, as well as, the monumental accomplishment of one California urban elementary school’s ability to exit and move beyond its program improvement status. It is hoped that the results and findings of this study, combined with the researcher’s utilization of a non-traditional strength-based theoretical lens to investigate the program improvement dilemma, will offer the researcher, educational leaders, policymakers, and legislators new insight and possible options which lend
themselves towards promoting those conditions and experiences which are perceived by parents and school personnel to promote positive systemic school change.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will assist in identifying any conditions, factors, processes or elements that may have contributed to a Title 1 federally funded California public urban elementary school’s ability to exit and move beyond its program improvement status. More specifically, this researcher sought to develop a series of suggestions that could prove to be beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001.13

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What instructional and non-instructional practices or programs were used to drive the school improvement process in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

2. What perceptions about a school’s environment and interpersonal relationships exist within an urban elementary school culture that promotes systemic school change?

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13 The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-11. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp.
3. What role does leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel have in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

Data Analysis

Prior to presenting the data analysis and findings relevant to addressing the research question of this study, this researcher will present a brief synopsis of the methods of data analysis that were utilized. In this particular study, the quantitative data analysis consisted in examining the Staff’s answers to the Likert scale survey questions. While the surveys were largely quantifiable in the data they provided, open-ended questions were also included in each survey. The qualitative data analysis consisted in examining parent and staff responses to the survey’s Likert and open-ended questions.

Descriptive univariate statistics, graphical analysis and bivariate analysis were used to examine the quantitative aspects of the data. This researcher also utilized inductive analysis for the open-ended survey questions from both parents and staff. In this regard, the researcher read the data looking for trends and patterns in order to identify themes to better understand the data within the confines of a thematic analysis.

A triangulation design was utilized in this study to gather both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and to integrate the two forms of data in order to have a better understanding of the research questions being asked. This design typically gives equal priority to quantitative and qualitative data, and analysis involves concurrent or simultaneous collection of data; and thus integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in the results, interpretation, and conclusion phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).
Data Findings

Background Information of Staff Sample Group

The findings of this study indicated that a large majority of the staff had at least five years of experience working with the district. This suggests that the research site was supported by a group of individuals who were familiar with each other, the students and the parents. Additionally, it was also found that over 90 percent of the staff resided 20 miles or less from the research site. This suggests that the staff members lived within the immediate surrounding community. The staff sample group for this study consisted of 47 respondents. Figures 12 and 13 represent the staff respondents years of employment with the district, and the distance of their residence from their place of employment.

![Bar Chart: Staff Years of Employment]

**Figure 12. Staff Years of Employment**

The years of working experience in the district for staff is reported in Figure 12. Of the 47 staff respondent, 83.7 percent had more than 5 years of working experience in the district; 9.3 percent had 1-2 years of working experience in the district; 4.7 percent
had less than one year of working experience in the district; and 2.3 percent had 3-4 years of working experience in the district.

Figure 13. Staff Miles from Place of Employment

The distance from the staff’s residence to their place of employment is reported in Figure 13. Of the 47 staff respondents, 38.3 percent resided less than 5 miles from their place of employment; 36.2 percent resided 10-20 miles from their place of employment; 17 percent resided 5-10 miles from their place of employment; and 4.3 percent resided 20 or more miles from their place of employment.

Variables Explored for Significance

In this study, seven variables were explored for significance.

1. School Environment, The environment at Montebello Park Elementary can best be described as?

2. Self- Perceived Value of School Personnel, How do you feel about the following statements?
3. Interpersonal Relationships, How would you describe your relationship with the following: “Principal”?

4. Interpersonal Relationships, How would you describe your relationship with the following: “Staff”?

5. Interpersonal Relationships, How would you describe your relationship with the following: “Parents”?

6. Non-Instructional Practices, How would you describe your role in the change process?

7. Non-Instructional Practices, Do you feel knowledgeable about the things going on at your site?

Significance was found in two variable relationships. A detailed discussion on the significance found in the two variable relationships is presented in the following section: School Environment and Self-Perceived Value of School Personnel Variables

The School Environment and Self-Perceived Value of School Personnel variables were found to have $r (47) = .431$, $p < .001$; and an effect size of .43 between medium and large. This suggests that there is a medium to large positive linear relationship between the two variables. Thus, as the self-perceived values of school personnel increases; the perceived school environment improves. The confidence level of $p < .001$ indicates that the researcher has not made a type 1 error and a 99.9 percent confidence level exists; thus, if one were to give the survey 100 more times one would get the same results. Hence, other researchers would get the same results if they replicated the study.
Interpersonal Relationships “Principal” and Interpersonal Relationships “Staff”

Variables

The Interpersonal Relationship “Principal” and the Interpersonal Relationship “Staff” variables were found to have $r (47) = .452$, $p<.001$; and an effect size of .45 large. This suggests that there is a large positive linear relationship between the two variables. Thus, as the principal’s interpersonal relationships increase; the interpersonal relationships of staff improve. The confidence level of $p<.001$ indicates that the researcher has not made a type 1 error and a 99.9 percent confidence level exists; thus, if one were to give the survey 100 more times one would get the same results. Hence, other researchers would get the same results if they replicated the study.

In this study, significance was not found with the following three variables:

1. Interpersonal Relationships, How would you describe your relationship with the following: “Parents”?

2. Non-Instructional Practices, How would you describe your role in the change process?

3. Non-Instructional Practices, Do you feel knowledgeable about the things going on at your site?

The non-significance finding with the interpersonal relationships “parents” variable could suggest that the relationships between, parents and school staff is not as developed as it could be, and further work should be pursued in an effort to build stronger relationships between these stakeholders. It could also suggest that the relationships
between parents and school staff are not as significant as the relationship between the principal and staff when it comes to a school’s environment.

The non-significant finding in regards to the role in the change process variable could signify that not all respondents perceived their particular roles in the change process to have the same level of significance as other key stakeholder in the school’s community. For instance, custodial and cafeteria staff may have perceived their roles in the change process to have less of an impact in comparison to the roles of the principal and teaching staff. It is also a possibility that some respondents may have perceived their contributions to the positive systemic change that had transpired at the school site to be limited; thus, not as highly instrumental to the school’s ability to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.

Finally, the non-significant finding in regards to feeling knowledgeable about the things going on at the site variable could suggest that the respondents were cognizant of the reality that not all school stakeholders receive the same level of information. For instance, the principal is privy to information that encompasses the day to day operations of the school site, and the teachers are privy to information that deals with instructional practices. This type of information is not always shared with parents. It is also a possibility that information is just not shared or disseminated in a timely or efficient manner; thus, information is not reaching all the school stakeholders.

The Data utilized to address the three research questions of this study are based on the open-ended and Likert scale, and survey questions from both the parent and staff surveys. Seven thematic categories emerged from the data and were linked in accordance
to their relationship to each of the respective research questions. The findings as they relate to the three research questions, the seven thematic categories, and the survey questions will be presented throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Research Question 1

What instructional and non-instructional practices or programs were used to drive the school improvement process in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

Survey Categories and Related Survey Questions

Category 2. Instructional Practices or Programs that Drive the School Improvement Process.

Question 34: Was data used to change instruction?

All of the 27 certificated teacher respondents reported that data was used to change their instruction. Data from the CST’s were utilized to identify students who were performing at the basic level and were a bandwidth away from proficiency. Identified students were then targeted by analyzing student’s areas of needs. The data was then used to develop direct instructional lessons and set achievement goals for students. Assessments were aligned with CST alike assessments and the achievement goals were then shared with students and parents. Students and parents were made aware of the goals that needed to be met by the end of the school year and they were held accountable for student learning.

Question 30: What are the three most important changes in your instructional strategies and practices that have occurred to improve student learning and achievement?
Teacher respondents reported that developing focused standard based direct instructional lessons were key in their ability to move their students up a bandwidth from basic to proficient on the performance scale of the CST’s. They also reported that focused goals for each grade level, and weekly collaboration with grade level colleagues, regarding lesson planning strategies, was instrumental in their success. Frequent monitoring of student’s academic progress, focused teaching, and focused learning were also reported as important changes in their instructional practices. Focused small group instruction, thinking maps and the incorporation of more interactive hands on activities in their lesson were used to keep students focused and be more engaged.

Frequent communications and sharing of information about progress on assessments with parents was also noted as an important change in practice. Some teachers found another effective strategy for improving student learning and performance by encouraging the parents of students who were performing poorly to volunteer in the classroom. Providing students with test taking skills and test taking strategies was also identified as a newly implemented practice that had a positive impact on student performance.

*Question 27:* Have you participated in any professional development at your school site or district? If you answered yes, what type of professional development have you participated in at your school or district?

All or 100 percent, of the certificated teacher respondents reported participating in professional development; and all reported received professional development in standard based direct instructional lesson planning. Teacher respondents also reported that
receiving professional development in Thinking Maps, Writing from the Beginning, the standard based Cycle of Effective Instruction, and CPEC-ELD/Science (English language development is embedded in science).

The effectiveness of relevant professional development to drive the school improvement process was also reflected in staff comments. For example, one staff respondent remarked,

“The most memorable professional development I’ve had was a seminar on direct instruction. The lessons demonstrated were precise and students were involved. This type of professional development has provided me with the skills necessary to improve my craft and to have a direct effect on student learning in my classroom. This has dramatically increased student learning. The improved test scores are evidence of that.”

**Question 20:** What are the three most successful program(s) or activities that are offered or provided to students at Montebello Park Elementary? Why are they successful?

Both staff and parent respondents reported ICES (a teacher supported afterschool program was very successful) as the number one program offered to students. The ICES program provides a safe and structured environment for students after school. Tutoring, assistance with homework, and organized physical sports activities are part of the program. This program also provides for a small teacher student ratio which supports more one-on-one assistance for students. Parents also mentioned that it provided them with an excellent alternative to unstructured afterschool childcare.

The Saturday Achievement Academy was ranked as the second best program by both staff and parents. The Saturday Achievement Academy is offered twice a month for 4 hours, and it provides academic support to students in the form of studying tips, CST
test preparation, and test taking strategies. Parents are provided parenting classes and English as a Second Language classes. Parents are also provided with an opportunity to practice and use their English speaking skills.

The Monty Dollar Rewards program, which provides affirmation of good student behavior; the first grade Olympics, which empowers students and encourages parental involvement through parent volunteerism; and the Bilingual Program, which provides instruction in a student’s primary language, were all ranked as the third best program by respondents.

**Question 21: What are the three most important factors that contributed to your schools ability to implement the change process?**

Teacher respondents reported that the consistent use of direct instructional lessons, the consistent reviewing of student performance data, and the consistent reassessing and sharing of what practices were working with colleagues was instrumental in the change process. One staff respondent reported,

> “The school plan which identified clear goals and objectives ensured that everyone was clear on their role in the change process. Keeping students and parents accountable for student learning and working together as a cohesive team towards the same goal of educating, supporting, and encouraging students was critical to the school improvement process.”

Teachers reported that grade level collaboration, uniform curriculum, the focus on standard based instruction, the implementation of direct instruction lessons, and data driven instruction played a key role in the school improvement process. The willingness of teachers to change and learn to use data to develop and direct instruction assisted in improving test scores and provided evidence of student learning. The teacher learning
cooperative (TLC), which was used in the CPEC–ELD embedded Science Program, allowed teachers to provide students with more interactive hands-on activities and this improved student focus and engagement. Frequent communication and sharing with parents about their students’ progress helped to establish a strong sense of community and support from parents. Keeping parents and students informed about year-end achievement goals, assisted in creating an environment of success and making all stakeholders (teachers, parents and students) accountable for learning.

*Category 3. Non-Instructional Practices that Drive the School Improvement Process.*

**Question 18: If you have a question or a problem who would you talk to?**

The data showed that parent respondents felt 97.6 percent comfortable talking to their child’s teacher about their child’s grades, homework, and behavior. If a problem existed with their child’s teacher or other staff member, parents felt 67.6 percent comfortable in discussing the issue with the principal. However, 34.1 percent of parents reported that they would discuss the issue personally with teachers or other staff members.

**Question 17: How often do you meet or correspond with your child’s teacher and principal?**

Parent respondents reported that they met with their child’s teacher sometimes 68.2 percent, and often 30.5 percent. They also indicated that they corresponded with their child’s teacher in writing sometimes 54.7 percent, and often 16.2 percent. Parents also reported that they would talk to their child’s teacher sometimes 60.1 percent, and often 26.4 percent.
Parent respondents reported meeting with their child’s principal sometimes 42.7 percent, and often 4.4 percent. Parents also reported talking to their child’s principal sometimes 39.9 percent, and often 4.4 percent.

**Question 20: How is school information shared with you?**

Based on parent responses, nearly all school information is sent home to them with their child 98.2 percent. Parents also reported that 92.8 percent of school information is often sent to them in the mail as well. Some parents, 87 percent, also reported receiving phone calls with information about their child’s school.

**Question 19: The school keeps me well informed?**

In this study, the data showed that 91 percent of parents agreed that they felt well informed about their child’s academic progress, and 95 percent felt that they were well informed about important parent meetings. Parents even agreed, 80 percent, that they were well informed about the school’s goals. One parent respondent reported, “Teachers, support staff, parents and students are made to feel that we are a part of what goes on at our school”. However, when it came to things happening at the district level, only 70 percent reported that they felt well informed. This researcher was not surprised to find that in regards to the school’s budget or financial issues, only 60 percent of the parents reported that they felt well informed.

**Question 44: Do you feel knowledgeable about the things going on at your school?**

All of the 47 staff respondents reported that they felt knowledgeable about the things going on at their school. This finding was not a revelation for the researcher; however, it did reinforce how critical the sharing of information is in promoting an
environment that is conducive to the school improvement process. It also assisted the researcher in coming to the realization that a school that has established an open line of communication between staff, parents and administration is better positioned when it comes to exiting and moving beyond its program improvement status.

*Question 42: The school keeps me well informed?*

Nearly all staff respondents, 97 percent, felt well informed about things going on during school. However, only 87 percent reported feeling well informed about things going on after school, and only 80 percent reported feeling well informed about important parent meetings. In regards to the school’s budget, only 40 percent of the staff felt well informed. Some staff, 72 percent, also reported that they felt informed about the things going on at the district level.

This researcher was intrigued to discover that staff felt less informed about the school’s budget when compared to parents. Yet, both groups of respondents felt equally informed about things going on at the district level. Perhaps, this perceived difference in the levels of information shared regarding the school’s budget can be attributed to the type and quality of information that each stakeholder group expects to receive. Parents are generally satisfied with a broader overview of a school’s budget that details if teachers will be lost or if programs will be cut. However, staff general requires a more detailed or in-depth review of budget matters. Budget information at a school site level often has a direct impact on staff. Will they be laid off, will their class size increase, will they have supplies for their classroom, and will they have the opportunity to partake in professional development.
Question 43: How is information shared with you?

The staff data showed that information is generally always shared in staff meetings, 98 percent; however, 94 percent also reported that information is often shared by word of mouth. Staff also reported that sometimes information is shared via district mail, emails and postings in the staff lounge.

Research Question 2

What perceptions about a school’s environment and interpersonal relationships exist within an urban elementary school culture that promotes systemic school change?

Survey Categories and Related Survey Questions

Category 4. Perceptions about a School’s Culture that Promotes Positive Systemic School Change.

Question 23: The environment at Montebello Park Elementary can best be described as?

Approximately, 97 percent of the parents agreed that they perceived the environment at Montebello Park Elementary to be safe, clean, welcoming to parents, and supportive of students. They also perceived the school environment as one that encouraged learning, valued parents and held high expectations for students. One parent respondent noted, “We have a successful school because each adult and child is respected and valued.”

Question 17: The environment at Montebello Park Elementary can best be described as?

Approximately, 96 percent of the staff respondents agreed that they perceived the environment at Montebello Park Elementary to be safe, clean, welcoming to parents, and
supportive of students. They also perceived the school environment as one that encouraged learning, valued parents and teachers, and held high expectations for students. Ninety percent of the staff agreed that the Montebello Park Elementary was a place of trust, confidence, and honest and open communication. One staff member reported, “We are a school where staff gets along and enjoys working together as a team. The administration really listens to our concerns and asks for our input.” It was quite evident that the environment at Montebello Park Elementary is positively perceived by both parents and staff. An example of this positive perception is best described by this statement that was provided by a respondent. “Our school encourages student and teacher learning. It is a clean, safe, and healthy environment. Teachers, students, staff and administration are respected and valued.” This is further supported by the significance that was found in the variable relationships between the School Environment and Self-Perceived value of School Personnel variables. This suggests that a medium to large linear relationship exists between the two variables. Thus, as the self-perceived value of school personnel increases; the perceived school environment improves. In other words, the more respected and valued staff feel the better perception they will have of their school environment.

*Question 22: How would you describe your relationship with your child’s teacher, principal and other staff at your child’s school?*

In this study, the data showed that parent respondents perceived their relationship with teachers to be good 45.1 percent; outstanding 40.1 percent, and average 14.1 percent. The data also showed that their perceived relationship with the principal was
43.5 percent good, 32 percent average, and 14.6 percent outstanding. Parents perceived their relationships with other school staff was 52.1 percent good, 29.7 percent outstanding and 13.1 percent average.

*Question 46: How would you describe your relationship with your principal, parents and other staff at your school?*

The data showed that staff respondents perceived their relationship with the principal to be 61.9 percent good, 21.4 percent outstanding, and 16.7 percent average. The data also showed that their perceived relationship with other staff was 65.1 percent good, 27.9 percent outstanding and 4.7 percent good. The staff respondents perceived their relationship with parents to be 69.8 percent good, 25.6 percent outstanding and 4.7 percent average.

Based on the findings of this study, it is very evident that positive supportive relationships between staff, parents, and administration are present, encouraged and nurtured.

*Research Question 3*

What role do leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel have in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

*Survey Categories and Related Survey Questions*

*Category 5. The Role of Leadership in the School Improvement Process.*

*Question 21: How would you describe the quality of the principal, teachers, and other school staff?*
In this study, the data showed that overall; the leadership of the principal was perceived to be good or excellent by parents.

*Question 45: How would you describe the quality of the principal, teachers, and other school staff?*

The data showed that staff respondents perceived the overall quality of the principal to be excellent or good. These comments from staff and parents reinforce the findings of this study:

“A supportive administrator is a true leader when they are able to encourage others to be the best that they can be.” “Leadership is about more than just leading, an excellent leader is defined by how well they can empower others”. “When you find a school environment that promotes and supports success; you will often find not one, but several great leaders.”

*Question 22: How would you describe your relationship with your child’s teacher, principal and other staff at your child’s school?*

Parent respondents reported that they perceived their relationship with the principal to be 43.5 percent good, 32 percent average, and 14.6 percent outstanding.

*Question 46: How would you describe your relationship with your principal, parents and other staff at your school?*

Staff respondents reported that they perceived their relationship with the principal to be 61.9 percent good, 21.4 percent outstanding, and 16.7 percent average.

This is further supported by the significance that was found in the variable relationships between Interpersonal Relationships “Principal” and Interpersonal Relationships “Staff” variables. The large positive linear relationship between the two variables suggests that as
the principal’s interpersonal relationships increase; the interpersonal relationships between staff improve. In other words, the principal’s ability to establish, develop, nurture and maintain relationships has a direct influence on the staff’s ability to establish, develop, nurture and maintain relationships. In essence, the effectiveness of the principal’s leadership ability is reflected in how well equipped and skilled they are in relational organizing.

*Question 18: If you have a question or a problem who would you talk to?*

Parent respondents reported, if a problem existed with their child’s teacher or other staff member, they felt 67.6 percent comfortable in discussing the issue with the principal. However, 34.1 percent of parents reported that they would discuss the issue personally with the teacher or other staff member.


*Question 14: How do you feel about the following statements regarding self-perceived value and respect?*

Staff respondents were in consensus about feeling valued and respected by parents, and 100 percent of the staff reported that they felt valued and respected by parents. There was also a consensus amongst staff in regard to the value of their opinion; all staff was in agreement, they felt that their opinions were valued by their colleagues. When it came to being valued and respected as an employee, 95 percent reported that they agreed or strongly agreed. When they were asked if they felt valued and respected by their colleagues, 97 percent reported that they agreed or strongly agreed. The data also
showed that respondents were in agreement in feeling valued by their students, 98.1 percent, and respected by their students, 92.3 percent. Ninety-Seven point four percent of staff respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that their school administrator valued their opinion. The staff respondents were also 90.1 percent in agreement in regard to their opinions of being valued by district administration.

Survey Category and Questions That Were Related to Parents

*Category 7. The general perceptions of parents in relation to school, testing, and school personnel.*

**Question 11: Montebello Park Elementary is a successful school?**

Overall, the majority of parents surveyed agreed that Montebello Park Elementary was a successful school. Strongly Agreed = 23.5 percent, Agreed = 69.3 percent, Disagreed= 4.6 percent and Strongly Disagreed= 2.9 percent.

**Question 12: Would you recommend Montebello Park Elementary to others?**

The majority of the parents surveyed, 92.3 percent would recommend Montebello Park Elementary to others. However, 7.7 percent of parents reported that they would not recommend the school.

**Question 16: How would you define your role in your child’s education?**

The parents defined their role as very important in their child’s education. They considered their role to be the most important role. Teachers were identified as the second most important person in their child’s education.

**Question 27: In regards to your child’s education, what are the three most important things to you as a parent?**
The parents identified learning, teachers and a safe school environment as the three most important things. Learning was ranked number 1, followed by teachers’ number 2 and a safe school environment number 3.

*Question 30: How would you describe your child’s personal likes, behaviors and home environment?*

Parent respondents reported that 75.2 percent of their children liked their teachers and 70.4 percent reported that they believed that their child’s teacher cared about their child. Parent respondents also reported that 61.9 percent of their children liked going to school, and 60.9 percent reported that their child attended school every day.

*Question 28: Do you think that state testing is important?*

The majority of parent respondents reported that state testing was important 89.9 percent, while 10.1 percent reported that state testing was not important.

*Question 21: How would you describe the quality of the principal, teachers, and other school staff?*

Over half of the parent respondents perceived the teachers as excellent, 53.2 percent, and 44.2 percent perceived the principal as excellent. School staff did not fare as well, only 29.9 percent of the parent respondents perceived school staff as excellent. However, 47.6 percent of the parent respondents did agree that the school staff was good. Overall, teachers, staff and the leadership of the principal were perceived to be good or excellent by parents.
Summary

In this study, data interpretation involved explaining the patterns and trends uncovered during the data analysis process. It involved constructing a logical scientific argument to explain the data collected. In this regard, scientific interpretations were descriptions, comments, and suggestions related to what the data of this study meant, which were based on a foundation of scientific knowledge and the individual researcher’s expertise. When researchers interpret the data these researchers draw on their own personal and collective knowledge to construct one or more plausible explanations for the data. As with any human endeavor, the researcher can make mistakes, yet the majority of researchers usually present interpretations of the findings that they feel are most reasonable and supported by the data (Maruyama & Deno, 1992).

Student performance data from the CST’s were utilized to drive decisions in regard to instructional practices and to set achievement goals for students. By utilizing data, along with clearly defined grade level goals and making a commitment to focus on the development and implementation of standards based direct instructional lessons, the teachers were able to establish a foundation for the school improvement process. Structures in place that assist in fostering school-wide effective instruction included the use of mandated assessments, standard-based curriculum, and direct instruction. Benchmark assessments served as a means of accountability and provided data for school leaders and teachers to reflect on and guide their decisions about instruction. In this regard, the data was utilized to assist school leaders and teachers’ decision-making about how to implement and modify instructional practices. Before school leaders and teachers
can begin to truly utilize data to drive the school improvement process they must be instructed on how to collect data, disaggregate data, and interpret data in order to provide a clear picture of what the students have learned, along with areas where students need additional support (Johnson, 2002).

By using data to identify students who were performing at the basic performance level on the CST’s, and directing instructional practices and programs to target the needs of those particular students, the school in this study was able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.

Another important factor to the school improvement process that was identified by staff was the consistent and strong leadership of their principal. All signs indicate that global interdependence is accelerating at a furious pace. Politically, economically, and environmentally, we are living in a world where leadership decisions anywhere now affect everything and everyone. Autonomous decisions have become a thing of the past (Lipman-Blume, 1996). Stogdill (1974) concluded that “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (p. 12). Leadership has been defined in terms of traits, behaviors, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupations of an administrative position (Yukl, 2006). Rost (1991) defines leadership as a multidirectional influence relationship between a leader and followers with the mutual purpose of accomplishing real change. Yukl defines leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish a shared goal. In the role of an educational leader the principal set
high expectations for both staff and students. These expectations, accompanied with professional development, numerous opportunities for staff collaboration, focused teaching, focused learning, long term planning, and the identification of goals and objectives that were clearly defined and realistic were found to have been the driving force behind the school improvement process. The findings of this study indicate that the consistent and strong leadership of the school’s principal contributed to the school’s ability to implement change and to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.

This study found that 100 percent of the certificated staff received professional development in direct instructional lesson planning and implementation. Teacher respondents reported that the consistent use of direct instructional lessons, the consistent reviewing of student performance data, and the consistent reassessing and sharing of what practices were working with their colleagues was instrumental in the change process. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of other studies conducted by other researchers. Many studies have been conducted (Hunter, 1982; Portner, 2005) investigating the positive impacts that highly trained teachers have on the achievement of students. While it is essential that teachers have a sound understanding of the curriculum, it is also important that they be able to relate to their colleagues. Many times whether a teacher is successful in the classroom or not depends more on the amount of support that they receive from colleagues than on the amount of training that they have undergone (Portner, 2005).
A study by Cohen and Hill (2001) found that teachers whose learning focused directly on the curriculum were the ones who adopted the practices taught in their professional development. These teachers embraced new curriculum materials when they were supported by leadership and relevant training. Their study also showed that students of teachers who participated in this curriculum-focused professional development did well on standardized assessments (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

The staff and parents perceived the school environment to be safe, clean, supportive of students and welcoming to parents. Both staff and parents agreed that high expectations were held for all students. Interpersonal relationships among parents, staff and the principal were found to be well established, highly regarded and interconnected. Michael Fullan dedicates a full chapter of his book *Leading in a Culture of Change* (2001) to the importance of building and developing relationships both in the world of business as well as within the school structure. According to Fullan (2001), the administrator’s primary task is that of fostering the culture and relationships of the school in order to increase learning. The findings in this study echo Fullan’s research findings.

The finding of this study found a large positive linear relationship, affiliated with the effect size of the two variables; Interpersonal Relationships “Principal” and Interpersonal Relationships “Staff”, provides evidence that there is a correlation between the principal’s ability to develop school relationships and the staff’s ability to develop school relationships. In essence, a principal with good relational building skills will have a positive influence on the relational building skills of the school’s staff. Hence, a positive school culture can be attributed in part to the ability of its school’s principal and
staff to establish, nurture and grow trusting and respectful personal relationships. Staff respondents reported that they perceived their relationship with the principal to be 61.9 percent good, 21.4 percent outstanding and 16.7 percent average. Parent respondents reported that they perceived their relationship with the principal to be 43.5 percent good, 32 percent average, and 14.6 percent outstanding. Furthermore, parent respondents reported talking to their child’s principal often at 39.9 percent and meeting with their child’s principal sometimes at 42.7 percent. Parents’ respondents reported at 70.4 percent that they believed that their child’s teacher cared about their child. These findings suggest that an important relationship exists between home and school; and a line of communication has been established between home and school. This relationship can be attributed to the positive school environment and established interpersonal relationships with staff and administration. Other studies over the last 30 years have reflected similar findings regarding the importance and impact of bridging school-home relationships (Felice, 1981; Levin, Belfield, Muenning & Rouse, 2006, Lipka, 1991).

This study also found a medium to large effect size affiliated with the relationship between the school environment and the self-perceived value of the school personnel variables. This suggests a medium to large positive linear relationship between the two variables. Thus, as the self-perceived value of school personnel increases; the perceived school environment improves. School personnel share a significant relationship with creating a school’s environment; and the inter-workings of the school site can directly or indirectly affect the progress towards achieving the goals set by the organization. In developing a self-perceived value among staff, whether positive or negative, that
relationship is transmitted to others who associate within that school’s community, thus, magnifying the possible influence of that relationship.

A study conducted by McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), goes on to show how, within a single high school, departments which meet frequently and share both ideas as well as lessons typically perceived the school’s environment and the students in a more positive light. Furthermore, a study by Fullan, (2001), found whereas members of departments who met infrequently or who did not develop relationships among themselves maintained negative perceptions of the school’s environment.

As anticipated by this researcher, due to the familiarity with the subjects and subgroup in general, parent respondents identified learning, teachers and a safe school environment as the three most important things to them as parents. Learning was identified as number 1, followed by teachers, and a safe school environment.

On the other hand, the findings in regards to parents’ perceptions on the importance of state testing were not expected by the researcher. A large majority, 89.9 percent of the parent respondents reported that state testing was important; while only 10.1 percent of the parent respondents reported that state testing was not important. This researcher was expecting to find parents equally divided on their perceived importance of state testing. The identified importance on state testing could be attributed to the push by staff and administration to meet the accountability requirements under NCLB, and parents are echoing the thoughts of staff and administration; or possibly an instilled fear has been placed in parents by staff and administration regarding the horrendous interventions, sanctions and consequences that could be imposed on their school and
impact their children, if they do not do well on state tests. Or, perhaps, parents truly do believe that test scores alone, do in fact measure learning, achievement and student success.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents a summary of this study, which includes a brief description of its purpose and significance, a review of the research questions that guided the study, and a description of the methodology utilized in the study. A synopsis of the literature that informed the study, and a discussion of the findings are presented through a structured review of the three research questions. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the recommendations for practice and further studies.

The intent of this researcher was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will contribute by assisting educators, and educational leaders in understanding the conditions, factors, processes and elements that drive the school improvement process, influence student learning, and promotes systemic school change. By utilizing a strength-based theoretical lens to examine the organizational structures that existed in a school that was able to exit and move beyond its program improvement status; and by capturing the perceptions of parents and staff about their school’s environment and interpersonal relationships, this researcher hopes to contribute towards scholarship that will assist schools and educational leaders in understanding the organizational systems that foster the growth of interpersonal relationships, and promote school environments that are conducive to positive systemic school change. If organizational structures resist too long, these structures may become
obsolete or extinct. If organizational structures learn how to learn, educational leaders can adapt to the forces of change and go with the flow (Lewin, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to pursue further investigation into program improvement; it is hoped that this study will assist in identifying any conditions, factors, processes or elements that may have contributed to a Title I federally funded California public urban elementary school’s ability to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status. More specifically, this researcher sought to develop a series of suggestions that could prove to be beneficial to the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001.¹⁴

The findings of this study become more significant as the timeline approaches to meet the AYP growth targets established under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. To date, no research is available that utilizes a strength based theoretical lens to formally study the factors, conditions, processes, or elements, present in Title 1 funded schools in California that have successfully overcome their program improvement status. Answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What instructional and non-instructional practices or programs were used to drive the school improvement process in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

¹⁴ The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp.
2. What perceptions about a school’s environment and interpersonal relationships exist within an urban elementary school schools culture that promotes positive systemic school change?

3. What role does leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel have in an urban elementary school’s that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

In establishing a theoretical framework around which to build the critical components of this study, this researcher reviewed previous research on program improvement and discovered that the majority of the studies conducted were somewhat similar in their purpose of examining the program improvement dilemma. While similar in intent, all of the studies differed in various ways: including how they were conducted, the subgroups selected, and, in some respects, the findings or conclusions reached by the researchers. Only three major theoretical themes seemed to be followed by the majority of researchers’ deficits, the problems or flaws with the state and federal accountability systems, deficits in available funding and resources, and the deficits of students attending schools in program improvement status.

This researcher was intrigued to find that no research could be identified that examined the program improvement dilemma on a local school site level that utilized a strength-based theoretical theme to pursue investigations into the area of program improvement in California public schools receiving Title I federal funding. For this reason, this researcher decided to base the theoretical framework in this study on a strength-based theoretical model using a strength-based theoretical lens. This study
utilized two strength-based theoretical models “Appreciative Inquiry” (inquiry framework) and “Positive Deviance” (behavioral framework) to investigate the area of program improvement at a California public urban elementary school receiving Title I federal funding.

Before plunging into the summary of findings of this study, it is necessary for this researcher to establish the significance behind the utilization of the strength-based theoretical framework and lens that provided the foundation of this study. By establishing a clear distinction between the traditional approaches utilized to examine school improvement, and the approach utilized in this study to examine school improvement, this researcher hopes to afford the reader with a clearer understanding of the significance of the findings of this study.

In educational research, the traditional approach to program improvement is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. Many problem solving models are traced back to Dewey (1910), who claimed five stages to problem solving: perceiving a difficulty, defining the problem, suggesting possible solutions, analyzing implications of solutions and testing validity of solutions. Problem-solving research was revolutionized in the 1960’s when researchers turned from studying the conditions under which solutions are reached to the process of problem solving (Chi, Glaser & Rees, 1982). This approach focuses primarily on the identification of the needs and the external inputs necessary to meet those needs or to solve a problem. The problem solving model is often driven by what is wrong or broken; thus, the process begins with the perception that there is a problem and something needs to be fixed; and when one searches for problems
one often finds them. According to Hammond (1998), by paying attention to problems they are emphasized and amplified. This approach is consistent with a historical attitude in American Business that sees human systems as machines and people as interchangeable parts. Hence, we believe we can fix anything and there is a right answer or solution to any organizational problem or challenge.

On the other hand, Strength-based school improvement represents a major shift from traditional school reform approaches where the responsibility for change lies in the hands of a few individuals. Fundamental to this approach is the assertion that meaningful and sustainable school improvement is more likely when school-community stakeholders think together, work together, are excited about the changes they want to make, and have a clear plan for action.

The Strength-Based Appreciative Inquiry model provides a critical new way of thinking about organizational change and improvement, yet it is deeply rooted in the historical values of Organization Development (Cooperrider, Sorensn, Yaeger & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos, 2008).

The Strength-Based Positive Deviance model builds on positive behavior, bottom up interventions and learning through actions, it is a model used for social and behavioral change (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010). The PD process is a tool for adaptive work and it emphasizes the “How” instead of merely the “What”. Hence, by constructing survey instruments that were founded in the art of affirmative questioning and by
utilizing an approach that was based on the premise that the stakeholders of a school’s community are experts and often an untapped rich resource; this researcher was able to identify not only what practices the school in the study utilized to exit and move beyond its program improvement status, but this researcher was also afforded the opportunity to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the staff and administration implemented the particular practices that promoted positive systemic school change.

In this study the positive deviance process was utilized to identify the outliers, also referred to as the “Positive Deviants”. There were a total of 79 schools that were identified as positive deviants. All of the 79 schools had somewhat similar populations and were recipients of federal Title 1 funds. These schools all worked under the same constraints and conditions of the NCLB Accountability Act of 2001; yet they were able to find a way to succeed against all odds and to exit and move beyond their program improvement status during the 2008-2009 school year. In other words, these 79 schools exhibited the desired outcomes for program improvement schools (they were able to reach their yearly AYP growth targets); and they were able to deify the established norms of program improvement schools (most schools that enter program improvement, rarely are able to escape program improvement). This researcher considered including all of the 79 school sites that were identified as positive deviants; however, given the time constraints, the limited resources and the limited manpower available to this researcher, only one positive deviant site was invited to participate in this study. Montebello Park Elementary was identified as the research site; given its close proximity and accessibility to this researcher.
While this researcher found the utilization of Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Deviance to be valuable approaches that provided an opportunity for the researcher to learn about common practices, determine normative behaviors, and to capture the perceptions of parents and staff about their school’s environment and interpersonal relationships, other researchers may find these approaches to be quite challenging. Especially, since it represents a major shift from the traditional school reform approaches that are more commonly utilized in educational research today. Furthermore, by requiring one to focus on what is working, one must be committed to embracing a critical new way of thinking. This researcher found that even Montebello Park Elementary, with its monumental accomplishment, and its ability to succeed against all odds, had difficulty in understanding and embracing this critical new way of thinking.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study produced several revelations to the researcher concerning the topic of this study. These revelations will be reflected throughout the discussion of this summary and presented through a structured review of the three research questions that were addressed in this study.

Research Question 1

What instructional and non-instructional practices or programs were used to drive the school improvement process in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

This study found that the teachers and the administrator at Montebello Park Elementary school utilized data to identify students who were performing at the basic
performance level on the CST’s, and then they directed their instructional practices and programs to target the needs of those particular students. Student performance data from the CST’s were used to drive decisions in regard to instructional practices and to set achievement goals for students. By utilizing data, along with clearly defined grade level goals and making a commitment to focus on the development and implementation of standards based direct instructional lessons, the teachers were able to establish a foundation for the school improvement process. Structures in place that assisted in fostering school-wide effective instruction included the use of mandated assessments, standard-based curriculum, and direct instruction. Benchmark assessments also served as a means of accountability and provided data for school leaders and teachers to reflect on and guide their decisions.

The revelation that data can be used to assist school leaders and teachers in the decision-making process about how to utilize and modify instructional practices to meet the needs of students is congruent with findings from previous research. However, if the study results had run counter to the results of prior research, there would have been a cause for alarm for this researcher. It is worth noting that it was not the quantity of data, but rather the quality of data, and how the data is collected and utilized that influences the school improvement process. Furthermore, school leaders and teachers must be instructed on how to collect data, disaggregate data, and interpret data in order to provide a clear picture of what the students have learned, along with areas where students need additional support (Johnson, 2002).
This study found that 100 percent of the certificated staff received professional development in direct instructional lesson planning and implementation. Teacher respondents reported that the consistent use of direct instructional lessons, the consistent reviewing of student performance data, and the consistent reassessing and sharing of what practices were working with their colleagues was instrumental in the change process. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of other studies conducted by other researchers. Many studies have been conducted (Hunter, 1982; Portner, 2005) investigating the positive impacts that highly trained teachers have on the achievement of students. While it is essential that teachers have a sound understanding of the curriculum, it is also important that they be able to relate to their colleagues. Many times whether a teacher is successful in the classroom or not depends more on the amount of support that they receive from colleagues than on the amount of training that they have undergone (Portner, 2005).

The findings of this study are further substantiated by a study conducted by Cohen and Hill (2001) that found that teachers whose learning focused directly on the curriculum were the ones who adopted the practices taught in their professional development. These teachers embraced new curriculum materials when they were supported by leadership and relevant training. Their study also showed that students of teachers who participated in this curriculum-focused professional development did well on standardized assessments (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Both staff and parent respondents reported ICES (a teacher supported afterschool program) was very successful as the number one program offered to students. The ICES
program provides a safe and structured environment for students after school. Tutoring, assistance with homework and organized physical sports activities are part of the program. This program also provides for a small teacher student ratio which supports more one-on-one assistance for students. Parents also mentioned that it provided them with an excellent alternative to unstructured afterschool childcare.

The Saturday Achievement Academy was ranked as the second best program by both staff and parents. The Saturday Achievement Academy is offered twice a month for 4 hours, and provides academic support to students in the form of studying tips, CST test preparation, and test taking strategies. Parents are provided parenting classes and English as a Second Language classes. Parents are also provided with an opportunity to practice and use their English speaking skills.

The school plan which identified clear goals and objectives ensured that everyone was clear on their role in the change process. All staff reported that keeping students and parents accountable for student learning and working together as a cohesive team towards the same goal of educating, supporting, and encouraging students was critical to the school improvement process. Teachers reported that grade level collaboration, uniform curriculum, the focus on standard based instruction, the implementation of direct instruction lessons, and data driven instruction played a key role in the school improvement process. The willingness of teachers to change, and to learn to use data to develop and to direct instruction assisted in improving test scores and provided evidence of student learning. The teacher learning cooperative (TLC) which was used in the
CPEC – ELD embedded Science Program allowed teachers to provide students with more interactive hands on activities, and this improved student focus and engagement.

Frequent communication and sharing with parents about their students’ progress helped to establish a strong sense of community and support from parents. Keeping parents and students informed about year-end achievement goals, assisted in creating an environment of success and making all stakeholders (teachers, parents and students) accountable for learning.

This study found that the key stakeholders perceived themselves as a community that was well informed and often involved in the decisions made at their school. The parents and staff reported a sense of interconnectedness to the other key stakeholders. The staff and parents perceived the well established relationships and open line of communications to be contributing factors to the school’s ability to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.

The findings of this study echo the findings of other researchers. Too often decisions made within the educational systems are made within a vacuum and without input from others. However well-intentioned these efforts may be, “No major educational problem is only a ‘within system’ problem” (Sarason, 1990, p. 39). Therefore, the need to develop networks, relationships, and an open line of communication between those within the system and those who directly affect or are influencing the system need to be established in order to effectively bring about change and improvement. The principle obstacle to this task is the fact that many site level and district level educators are not trained to directly manage or interact with those who are outside of their direct sphere of
influence (Christie, 2005; Heckman & Petersman, 1996; Lewis, 2002). The finding in this study found that relationships and an open line of communication were well established at the school site between the principal, staff and parents.

Research Question 2

What perceptions about a school’s environment and interpersonal relationships exist within in an urban elementary school culture that promotes systemic school change?

The staff and parents perceived the school environment to be safe, clean, supportive of students and welcoming to parents. Both staff and parents agreed that high expectations were held for all students. Interpersonal relationships among parents, staff and the principal were found to be well established, highly regarded and interconnected. The respondents reported that their environment was conducive to establishing, nurturing, and growing interpersonal relationships and this was instrumental in promoting positive systemic change at their school.

The finding of this study found a large positive linear relationship, identified with the effect size of the two variables; Interpersonal Relationships “Principal” and Interpersonal Relationships “Staff” provides evidence that there is a correlation between the principal’s ability to develop school relationships and the staff’s ability to develop school relationships. In essence, a principal with good relational building skills will have a positive influence on the relational building skills of the school’s staff. Hence, a positive school culture can be attributed in part to the ability of its school’s principal and staff to establish, nurture and grow trusting and respectful personal relationships. Staff respondents reported that they perceived their relationship with the principal to be 61.9
percent good, 21.4 percent outstanding and 16.7 percent average. Parent respondents reported that they perceived their relationship with the principal to be 43.5 percent good, 32 percent average, and 14.6 percent outstanding. Furthermore, parent respondents reported talking to their child’s principal often at 39.9 percent and meeting with their child’s principal sometimes at 42.7 percent.

Michael Fullan dedicates a full chapter of his book *Leading in a Culture of Change* (2001) to the importance of building and developing relationships both in the world of business as well as within the school structure. According to Fullan (2001), the administrator’s primary task is that of fostering the culture and relationships of the school in order to increase learning. The findings in this study echo Fullan’s research findings.

Parent respondents reported at 70.4 percent that they believed that their child’s teacher cared about their child. These findings suggest that an important relationship exists between home and school; and a line of communication has been established between home and school. This relationship can be attributed to the positive school environment and established interpersonal relationships with staff and administration. Other studies over the last 30 years have reflected similar findings regarding the importance and impact of bridging school-home relationships (Felice, 1981; Levin, Belfield, Muenning & Rouse, 2006, Lipka, 1991).

As anticipated by the researcher, due to her familiarity with the subjects and subgroup in general, parent respondents identified learning, teachers and a safe school environment as the three most important things to them as parents. Learning was identified as number 1, followed by teachers, and a safe school environment.
On the other hand, the findings in regard to parents’ perception on the importance of state testing were not expected by the researcher. A large majority, 89.9 percent of the parent respondents reported that state testing was important; while only 10.1 percent of the parent respondent reported that state testing was not important. The researcher was expecting to find parents equal divided on their perceived importance of state testing. The identified importance on state testing could be attributed to the push by staff and administration to meet the accountability requirements under NCLB, and parents are echoing the thoughts of staff and administration; or possibly an instilled fear has been placed in parents by staff and administrations regarding the horrendous interventions, sanctions and consequences that could be imposed on their school and impact their children, if they do well on state tests. Or, perhaps, parents truly do believe that test scores alone, do in fact measure learning, achievement and student success.

Research Question 3

What role does leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel have in an urban elementary school that has been able to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status?

Another important factor to the school improvement process that was identified by staff was the consistent and strong leadership of their principal. The findings of this study indicate that the consistent and strong leadership of the school’s principal contributed to the school’s ability to implement change and to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.
All signs indicate that global interdependence is accelerating at a furious pace. In today’s world, leadership decisions now affect everything and everyone politically, economically, and environmentally. Autonomous decisions have become a thing of the past (Lipman-Blume, 1996). Stogdill (1974) concluded that “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (p. 12). Leadership has been defined in terms of traits, behaviors, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupations of an administrative position (Yukl, 2006). Rost (1991) defines leadership as a multidirectional, influential relationship between a leader and followers with the mutual purpose of accomplishing real change. Yukl defines leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish a shared goal. In the role of an educational leader, the principal sets high expectations for both staff and students. These expectations, accompanied with relevant professional development, numerous opportunities for staff collaboration, focused teaching, focused learning, long term planning, and the identification of goals and objectives that were clearly defined and realistic, were found to have been the driving force behind the school improvement process.

This study also found a medium to large effect size affiliated with the relationship between the school environment and the self-perceived value of school personnel variables. This suggests a medium to large positive linear relationship between the two variables. Thus, as the self-perceived value of school personnel increases, the perceived school environment improves. School personnel share a significant relationship with
creating a school’s environment; and the inter-workings of the school site can directly or indirectly affect the progress towards achieving the goals set by the organization. In developing a self-perceived value among staff, whether positive or negative, that relationship is transmitted to others who associate within that school’s community, thus magnifying the possible influence of that relationship.

A study conducted by McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), goes on to show how, within a single high school, departments which meet frequently and share both ideas as well as lessons typically perceived the school’s environment and the students in a more positive light, whereas members of departments who met infrequently or who did not develop relationships among themselves maintained negative perceptions of the school’s environment (Fullan, 2001).

Conclusions

The authorization of the NCLB Act of 2001, which reauthorized the ESEA of 1965, has shaped a new direction for states by creating rigid expectations for students, staff and schooling organizations. These requirements establish prerequisite criteria for staff to be considered “highly qualified,” raising benchmarks for students to be considered “proficient” and the implementation of sanctions for schools lacking progress in reaching those goals. The NCLB Act combines the historical tradition of students being responsible for their own actions, with the more recent trend of holding educators and educational institutions accountable for the failure of students who do not test proficient in English and Math and meet AYP targets. The NCLB Act mandates that all
teachers be “highly qualified” and demonstrate specific competencies related to their subject matter areas.

This study found that relevant professional development supported by leadership, the utilization of data to identify students who were performing at the basic performance level on the CST’s, the directing of instructional practices and programs to target the needs of those particular students, focused achievement goals for each grade level and the on going opportunities for weekly collaboration with grade level colleagues were found to drive the school improvement process. These instructional practices were instrumental in assisting the school in this study to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.

Teacher respondents reported that developing focused standard based direct instructional lessons were key in their ability to move their students up a bandwidth from basic to proficient on the performance scale of the CST’s. They also reported that focused goals for each grade level, and weekly collaboration with grade level colleagues, regarding lesson planning strategies was instrumental in their success. Frequent monitoring of student’s academic progress, focused teaching, and focused learning were also reported as important changes in their instructional practices. Focused small group instruction, thinking maps and the incorporation of more interactive hands on activities in their lesson were used to keep students focused and be more engaged. The findings of this study were consistent with the findings of other studies conducted by other researchers. Previous research supports the importance of highly qualified teachers,
professional development, focused instructional practices and the power of data driven
decision making.

Under No Child Left Behind families are empowered with new options; including
the choice to attend a better performing public school and free access to supplemental
educational services, such as tutoring and after school programs. To improve and increase
parental involvement levels, it is critical that the school or school district identify exactly
how it wants to involve families and ensure that the specified plan supports the expressed
goals of the institution. Additionally, it is important to understand the limitations that
parents may have in participating in certain types of activities. Single parent households,
dual income households and lack of transportation all significantly impact the ability for
families to play an active part in becoming more involved in the academics of their
children (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Furthermore, whether due to their own
schooling experiences or lack of understanding of the American schooling system, some
parents simply do not feel comfortable in the schooling environment (Colombo, 2006;
Epstein & Becker, 1981; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Schools need to be able to
address and understand the “affective filters” that parents may have when it comes to the
schooling system.

To fully grasp those tasks and ideas which most effectively bring about improved
relations between communities and the schooling environment, school administrators
need to first understand that positive relationships are necessary to bring about desired
changes in student and community attitudes regarding schooling, and secondly, the skills
necessary to foster those relationships must be developed.
In order for a school’s environment to support a culture for success and promote systemic school change it is essential that schools create a welcoming and supportive environment for parents, students and staff which offer various opportunities for engagement and interaction. Strong interpersonal relationships and an open line of communication between those within the system need to be established in order to effectively bring about change and school improvement.

The finding in this study echoed the finding of other researchers. To more efficiently address the needs of the communities associated with school systems, a reexamination is needed of how schools are prepared to take on the roles and responsibilities necessary to successfully build relationships that foster a culture for success. Michael Fullan dedicates a full chapter of his book *Leading in a Culture of Change* (2001) to the importance of building and developing relationships both in the world of business as well as within the school structure. Through the strategic building of relationships within a school’s community, a more clearly defined definition of positions and goals is created thus allowing for more people to have a stake in the results of the organization.

Leadership has been defined in terms of traits, behaviors, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupations of an administrative position (Yukl, 2006). Rost (1991) defines leadership as a multidirectional influence relationship between a leader and followers with the mutual purpose of accomplishing real change. Yukl defines leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs
to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish a shared goal.

Another important contributing factor in the school improvement process that was identified by staff was the consistent and strong leadership of their principal. Interpersonal relationships among parents, staff and the principal were found to be well established, highly regarded and interconnected. According to Fullan (2001), the administrator’s primary task is that of fostering the culture and relationships of the school in order to increase learning.

The findings of this study indicate that the role of leadership and the self-perceived value of school personnel contributed to the school’s ability to implement change and to successfully exit and move beyond its program improvement status.

Recommendations

Schools are complex, living adaptive systems that are interconnected and interdependent; and they are composed of many parts, which are joined together and constantly trying to adapt to their changing environments in order to survive and thrive (Codynamics, 2003-2004).

It is hoped that the results and findings of this study, which examined the monumental accomplishment of one California urban elementary school’s ability to exit and move beyond its program improvement status, will offer researchers, educators, and educational leaders new insight and possible options which lend themselves towards promoting those conditions and experience which are perceived by parents and school personnel to promote systemic school change.
This researcher also anticipates that this study will contribute by assisting educators and educational leaders in understanding the conditions, factors, processes and elements that drive the school improvement process, influence student learning, and promotes systemic school change. This researcher hopes to contribute towards scholarship that will assist schools and educational leaders in understanding the organizational systems that foster the growth of interpersonal relationships and promote school environments that are conducive to positive systemic school change.

Recommendation 1

It is the recommendation of this researcher that the results of this study be shared with the 3,169 public schools in California that are currently designated as program improvement schools under the NCLB Act of 2001\textsuperscript{15}, as well as the estimated 3,649 schools that will be receiving Title I funding in 2011-2012 that are at risk of being identified for program improvement based on AYP growth targets (CDE, Schools at Risk Data Files, 2011).

Recommendation 2

It is also the recommendation of this researcher that the results of this study be shared with district leadership, district administration, district board members, as well as the school site administrators, school site personnel and parents of the Montebello Unified School District which has 12 elementary schools and 6 middle schools that have been identified for program improvement. The status of the 18 schools in program

\textsuperscript{15} The number of California public schools designated as program improvement schools for 2010-2011. This data was retrieved on January 10, 2011 from California Department of Education at \url{http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/tistatesum10.asp}. 
improvement was identified as: Year 1 (six schools); Year 2 (one school); Year 3 (one school); Year 4 (two schools) and Year 5 (eight schools).

Recommendation 3

Given the continued growth of schools being identified for program improvement, and the fact that the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is currently being reviewed for reauthorization by policymakers and legislators additional interest in the findings from this study may be expected from a wider audience for validating the impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 on schools receiving Title I funding. Therefore, it is also the recommendation of this researcher that the results of this study be shared with policymakers and legislators.

Recommendation 4

Data can be found in abundance at our schools, and the findings of this study were congruent with the finding from previous research in regards to the use of data. It is not the quantity of data, but rather the quality of data and how it is collected and utilized that influences the school improvement process. Furthermore, school leaders and teachers must be instructed on how to collect data, disaggregate data, and interpret data in order to provide a clear picture of what the students have learned, along with areas where students need additional support (Johnson, 2002). Therefore, it is the recommendation of this researcher that all educators and educational leaders be provided with an opportunity to establish the fundamental foundation and skill set needed to clearly understand how to collect data, disaggregate data, and interpret data. This opportunity should be presented at
all institutions for higher learning and required in all teacher preparation coursework, administrator preparation coursework, and educational leadership coursework.

Recommendation 5

Many studies have been conducted (Hunter, 1982; Portner, 2005) investigating the positive impacts that highly trained teachers have on the achievement of students. The findings of the study support the findings of other researcher in regards to the value of relevant professional development in school improvement efforts. Professional development is relevant when it purposeful, meaningful, focused and driven by the needs of school staff. One size does not fit all. It is the recommendation of this researcher that schools identified for program improvement continue to meet the professional development requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Recommendation 6

Schools are constantly changing adaptive systems with internal and external community stakeholders. The findings of this study echoed the findings of other researchers in regards to how instrumental building, developing and maintaining relationships are to a school’s environment and its ability to promote systemic school change. Through the strategic building of relationships within a school’s community, a more clearly defined definition of positions and goals is created thus allowing for more people to have a stake in the results of the organization (Fullan, 2001). Finally, it is the recommendation of this researcher that all schools that are identified for program improvement be required to reexamine and modify their mandated Single Plan for Student Achievement to be inclusive of specific components that foster relationships
between the internal and external school communities. This has been addressed to some extent with the requirements under Senate Bill 374 which requires that all schools have a Single Plan for Student Achievement that is aligned with the school’s goal for improving student achievement, and is developed with input from the site administrator, schools staff and parents; however, the inclusion of a component that fosters the building, development, and maintenance of school-community relationships is not specified or addressed under Senate Bill 374.

Suggestions for Future Research

California’s public schools are measured primarily by accountability systems; personal relationships have become brittle or non-existent. State and Federal accountability systems are obsessed with testing and have lost sight of the immeasurable, such as human spirit, innovation, and creativity; these are the casualties of the accountability age. Clearly, it is time for the paradigm in education to shift. Perhaps, if future researchers commit to utilizing a strength-based lens to examine our schools, student learning and accountability mandates, then educators and educational leaders may be able to move beyond the destructive deficit and problem solving models of program improvement and develop a better understanding of what drives the school improvement process. According to Hammond (1998), by paying attention to problems, these problems are emphasized and amplified. Unfortunately, most of us have little sense of our talents and strengths; instead, guided by our parents, by our teachers, by our managers, and by psychology’s fascination with pathology, we become experts in our weaknesses and
spend our lives trying to repair these flaws, while our strengths lie dormant and neglected (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

Although limited in sample size, many of the findings in this study appear to parallel the results of previous findings from other researchers. This indicates a probability that similar outcomes would result from broader studies. Thus, an opportunity exists for future researchers to utilize the findings from this study to broaden the scope of studies to the other schools in California that have been able to successfully exit and move beyond their program improvement status.

Furthermore, utilizing a strength-based theoretical lens to conduct future research into the understanding of organizational systems that foster the growth of interpersonal relationships and promote school environments that are conducive to positive systemic change could prove to be the catalyst to a paradigm shift in the future of educational research. Millions of dollars have been spent to study what our schools are lacking, what our schools are doing wrong, and what teachers are not doing right, yet the number of schools entering program improvement continues to increase every year. The time has come to stop focusing on what our schools are not doing right and to start focusing on what they are doing right.

The findings of this study suggest that the true answers to the program improvement dilemma do exist; if future researchers can move beyond problem solving, and break free from the bondage of the traditional deficit model of school improvement. By continuing to examine the schools that have been able to succeed in beating the odds by successfully exiting and moving beyond their program improvement status, future
researchers could prove to be the catalysts in a strength-based movement; thereby, creating a paradigm shift in the future of educational research.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Introductory Letter for Participation in a Study
(For Teachers, Certificated Staff and Classified Staff)

Date April 19, 2010

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program at California State University in Sacramento, and I am currently working towards the completion of my doctoral dissertation. It is with great pleasure that I am inviting you to participate in my research. I have received permission from your school district and your Principal Ms. Rodriguez to include Montebello Park Elementary school in this study. The purpose of this letter is to ask you to participate in the study by completing a paper Survey, which has 27 Likert scales questions (multiple choice type questions) and 20 open-ended questions. As a participant in the Survey you can decide at any point to not answer any specific question or to stop the Survey. I anticipate that the Survey will take you no longer than 35 minutes to complete.

Upon completion and return of the Informed Consent Document and Survey to the researcher or her designee, you will receive a $20.00 Target gift card as compensation for your participation in the study.

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, all schools that receive Title I funds and do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) growth targets can be identified for program Improvement (PI). The NCLB Act requires that 100 percent of students nationwide to become proficient in English Language Arts and Mathematics by 2013-2014. As AYP growth targets continue to increase there will be fewer and fewer schools that will be able to escape identification for Program Improvement. Currently, there are 2,778 public schools in California that have been identified for program improvement and 79 schools that were able to overcome their Program Improvement status for 2009-2010 school year.

The purpose for this study is to use a strength based approach to identify the factors that contributed to your school’s ability to overcome program improvement status. The goal of this study is to use the factors identified from the study to predict how other urban schools in California can promote systemic school improvement and overcome their program improvement status. Your school is one of the 79 schools in the entire state of California that has been able to overcome Program Improvement status. This is a monumental accomplishment. The anticipated benefit of this study is to gain a better understanding of what model, approach or process can be used to drive the school improvement process.
This researcher seeks to develop a series of suggestions or strategies that could prove to be beneficial to Montebello Unified School District, which currently has 18 of its 29 (K-12) schools in various levels of program improvement status. This study could also prove to be beneficial to the 2,778 currently identified Title I schools in California who are currently trying to overcome their program improvement status.

All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your anonymity. Information you provide on the Informed Consent Document and Survey will be stored separately from data. The researcher’s dissertation chair may have access to all data collected during the duration of the project. Your individual performance will not be reported. Only the results of all participants as a group will be reported. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All data and documentation collected will be destroyed upon the completion of the study. Attached is the Informed Consent Document with specific information on the study for your review. If you agree to participate in this important study, please read and sign the Informed Consent Document. After you have read and signed the Informed Consent Document you may proceed with the attached Survey.

Thank you for your help and support. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Anita Benitas
Doctoral Candidate
Email address: XXX

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This researcher seeks to develop a series of suggestions or strategies that could prove to be beneficial to Montebello Unified School District, which currently has 18 of its 29 (K-12) schools in various levels of program improvement status. This study could also prove to be beneficial to the 2,778 currently identified Title I schools in California who are currently trying to overcome their program improvement status.

All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your anonymity. Information you provide on the Informed Consent Document and Survey will be stored separately from data. The researcher’s dissertation chair may have access to all data collected during the duration of the project. Your individual performance will not be reported. Only the results of all participants as a group will be reported. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All data and documentation collected will be destroyed upon the completion of the study. Attached is the Informed Consent Document with specific information on the study for your review. If you agree to participate in this important study, please read and sign the Informed Consent Document. After you have read and signed the Informed Consent Document you may proceed with the attached Survey.

Thank you for your help and support. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Anita Benitas
Doctoral Candidate
Email address: XXX
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Document to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study that will be conducted by Anita Benitas, a doctoral candidate in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program at California State University, Sacramento. The title of my dissertation is: Overcoming Program Improvement Status: A Strength Based Approach to School Improvement. Permission to conduct this study has been granted by your school district and your principal Ms. Rodriguez.

The purpose for this study is to use a strength based approach to identify the factors that contributed to your school’s ability to overcome program improvement status. The goal of this study is to use the factors identified from the study to predict how other urban schools in California can promote systemic school improvement and overcome their program improvement status.

After reviewing this Informed Consent Document and agreeing to participate in the study, the following will happen: Participants will be asked to complete a Survey with 27 Likert scale questions (multiple choice type questions) and 20 open-ended questions. The Survey will take no longer than 35 minutes of your time. The Introductory Letter, an Informed Consent Document, a paper Survey and envelope are attached. After you read and sign the Informed Consent Document and complete the paper Survey, place both documents in the attached envelope and seal it. You may hand deliver both documents to the Large Red Bag in the Staff Workroom at Montebello Park Elementary school by Friday, April 23, 2010.

Your response to the Survey will be anonymous and kept confidential. The Surveys will not ask for any kind of identification information and will not include name, address, identification number, or any other personal information such as birthdate, phone number, and email address. As a participant in the Survey you can decide at any point to not answer any specific question or to stop the Survey.

This researcher anticipates that the discomfort or harm for participants will be no greater than what they may encounter in daily life or during the performance of a routine physical or psychological examination or test. Thus, there is a minimal risk of discomfort or harm for the participants of this study.

If you experience any psychological discomfort in answering the survey questions and want any help any time after completing the research, you may call the Mental Health America at 800-273-8255 for counseling services provided by licensed counselors.
The anticipated benefit of this study is to gain a better understanding of what model, approach or process can be used to drive the school improvement process. This researcher seeks to develop a series of suggestions or strategies that could prove to be beneficial to Montebello Unified School District, which currently has 18 of its 29 (K-12) schools in various levels of program improvement status. This study could also prove to be beneficial to the 2,778 currently identified Title I schools in California who are currently trying to overcome their program improvement status.

All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your anonymity. Information you provide on the Informed Consent Document and Survey will be stored separately. The researcher’s dissertation chair may have access to all data collected during the project. Your individual performance will not be reported. Only the results of all participants as a group will be reported. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All data and documentation collected will be destroyed upon completion of the study. In order to ensure confidentiality, please adhere to the follow procedures for paper Surveys:

1. After you sign the Informed Consent Document and complete the Survey, place both documents in the attached envelope and seal it. You may hand deliver both documents to the Large Red Bag in the Staff Workroom at Montebello Park Elementary school by Friday, April 23, 2010.

2. Do not put your name on the envelope.

3. Once you place your sealed envelope containing your Survey and signed Informed Consent Document in the Large Red Bag for the researcher; please check your name off the list.

Upon delivery of your signed Informed Consent Document and paper Survey into the Large Red Bag in the Staff Workroom; please mark your name off the list. The Target gift cards will be distributed to participants after the researcher confirms receipt of the signed Informed Consent Document and completed paper Survey. It is anticipated that the Target gift cards will be distributed during the week of April 19-23, 2010, at the time of distribution you will be asked to sign a document to confirm receipt of your Target gift card.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Anita Benitas at (916) XXX or by e-mail at XXX. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carlos Nevarez, at California State University, Sacramento, at (916) XXX or by email at XXX.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in this study or to withdraw from it at any time.
Thank you so much for your time and attention, it means a lot not only to me personally, but to our students and public education as well. Thank you in advance for your participation.

I have read the descriptive information presented in this document. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in the study.

Please, sign and return this Informed Consent Document and your completed Survey in the attached envelope to the Large Red Bag in the Staff Workroom at Montebello Park Elementary school by Friday, April 23, 2010.

Participant Signature: ______________________________ Date: ________________

Researcher’s Signature: ______________________________ Date: ________________
APPENDIX C

Introductory Letter for Participation in the Study (Parents)

April 19, 2010

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program at California State University in Sacramento, and I am currently working towards the completion of my doctoral dissertation. It is with great pleasure that I am inviting you to participate in my research. I have received permission from your school district and your Principal, Ms. Rodriguez, to include Montebello Park Elementary school in this study.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to participate in the study by completing a paper Survey, which has 22 Likert scales questions (multiple choice type questions) and 10 open-ended questions. As a participant in the Survey you can decide at any point to not answer any specific question or to stop the Survey. I anticipate that the Survey will take you no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Upon completion and return of the completed Informed Consent Document and Survey to your child’s classroom teacher, your child will be awarded a special gift for participating.

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, all schools that receive Title I funds and do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) growth targets can be identified for program Improvement (PI). The NCLB Act requires that 100 percent of students nationwide to become proficient in English Language Arts and Mathematics by 2013-2014. As AYP growth targets continue to increase there will be fewer and fewer schools that will be able to escape identification for Program Improvement. Currently, there are 2,778 public schools in California that have been identified for program improvement and 79 schools that were able to overcome their Program Improvement status for 2009-2010 school year.

The purpose for this study is to use a strength based approach to identify the factors that contributed to your school’s ability to overcome program improvement status. The goal of this study is to use the factors identified from the study to predict how other urban schools in California can promote systemic school improvement and overcome their program improvement status. Your school is one of the 79 schools in the entire state of California that has been able to overcome Program Improvement status. This is a monumental accomplishment.
The anticipated benefit of this study is to gain a better understanding of what model, approach or process can be used to drive the school improvement process. This researcher seeks to develop a series of suggestions or strategies that could prove to be beneficial to Montebello Unified School District, which currently has 18 of its 29 (K-12) schools in various levels of program improvement status. This study could also prove to be beneficial to the 2,778 currently identified Title I schools in California who are currently trying to overcome their program improvement status.

All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your anonymity. Information you provide on the Informed Consent Document and Survey will be stored separately from data. The researcher’s dissertation chair may have access to all data collected during the duration of the project. Your individual performance will not be reported. Only the results of all participants as a group will be reported. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All data and documentation collected will be destroyed upon the completion of the study.

Attached is the Informed Consent Document with specific information on the study for your review. If you agree to participate in this important study, please read and sign the Informed Consent Document. After you have read and signed the Informed Consent Document you may proceed with the attached Survey.

Thank you for your help and support. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Anita Benitas
Doctoral Candidate Email address: XXX
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Document to Participate in Research (Parents)

You are being asked to participate in a research study that will be conducted by Anita Benitas, a doctoral candidate in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program at California State University, Sacramento. The title of my dissertation is: *Overcoming Program Improvement Status: A Strength Based Approach to School Improvement*. Permission to conduct this study has been granted by your school district and your principal Ms. Rodriguez.

The purpose for this study is to use a strengths based approach to identify the factors that contributed to your school’s ability to overcome program improvement status. The goal of this study is to use the factors identified from the study to predict how other urban schools in California can promote systemic school improvement and overcome their program improvement status.

After reviewing this Informed Consent Document and agreeing to participate in the study, the following will happen: Participants will be asked to complete Survey with 22 Likert scale questions (multiple choice type questions) and 10 open-ended questions. The Survey will take no longer than 30 minutes of your time. The Introductory Letter, Informed Consent Document, and paper Survey are attached. After you sign the Informed Consent Document and complete the paper Survey, you may hand deliver both documents to your child’s classroom teacher, or send them with your child to hand deliver to their classroom teacher. The completed Informed Consent Document and Survey must be delivered to your child’s classroom teacher by Friday, April 23, 2010.

Your response to the survey will be anonymous and kept confidential. The surveys will not ask for any kind of identification information and will not include name, address, or email address. As a participant in the survey you can decide at any point to not answer any specific question or to stop the survey. This researcher anticipates that the discomfort or harm for participants will be no greater than what they may encounter in daily life or during the performance of a routine physical or psychological examination or test. Thus, there is a minimal risk of discomfort or harm for the participants of this study.

If you experience any psychological discomfort in answering the survey questions and want any help any time after completing the research, you may call the Mental Health America at 800-273-8255 for counseling services provided by licensed counselors. The anticipated benefit of this study is to gain a better understanding of what model, approach or process can be used to drive the school improvement process. This researcher seeks to develop a series of suggestions and strategies that could prove to be beneficial to Montebello Unified School District, which currently has 18 of its 29 (K-12) schools in various levels of program improvement status. This study could also prove to
be beneficial to the 2,778 currently identified Title I schools in California who are currently trying to overcome their program improvement status.

All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your anonymity. Information you provide on the Informed Consent Document, and Survey will be stored separately. The researcher’s dissertation chair may have access to all data collected during the project. Your individual performance will not be reported. Only the results of all participants as a group will be reported. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All data and documentation collected will be destroyed upon completion of the study. In order to ensure confidentiality, please follow the following procedures:

1. After you sign the Informed Consent Document and complete the Survey, place both documents in the attached white envelope and seal it. You may hand deliver both documents to your students classroom teacher or send them with your child to hand deliver to his/her classroom teacher. All completed Informed Consent Documents and Survey must be delivered to your child’s classroom teacher by Friday, April 23, 2010.

2. Your child’s classroom teacher will place your child’s completed Informed Consent Documents and Survey in a large blue bag for the researcher.

Upon completion and return of the Informed Consent Document and Survey to your child’s classroom teacher, your child’s classroom teacher will award your child with a special gift for participating. Please Note: If you have more than one child attending Montebello Park Elementary, each child must have a completed Informed Consent Document and Survey submitted to their classroom teacher in order to receive their special gift. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Anita Benitas at (916) XXX or by e-mail at XXX. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carlos Nevarez, at California State University, Sacramento, at (916) XXX or by email at XXX. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in this study or to withdraw from it at any time.

Thank you so much for your time and attention, it means a lot not only to me personally, but to our students and public education as well. Thank you in advance for your participation. I have read the descriptive information presented in this document. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in the study. Please, sign and return this Informed Consent Document and your completed Survey in the attached white envelope to your child’s classroom teacher at Montebello Park Elementary school by Friday, April 23, 2010.

Participant Signature: __________________________ Date: ____________________

Student Name: ________________________________ Classroom: __________________

Researcher’s Signature: __________________________ Date: ____________________
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APPENDIX E

English Parent Survey
Montebello Park Elementary School

1. Gender
☐ Male
☐ Female

2. What is your age?
☐ Under 20
☐ 20-29
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59
☐ Over 60

3. What is your Ethnicity?
☐ Latino/Hispanic
☐ Pacific Islander
☐ African American/Black
☐ Caucasian/White
☐ Asian
☐ Other (please specify)_____________________

4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
☐ High School
☐ College Graduate
☐ Some College
☐ Other
☐ Trade or Professional School Graduate

5. Do you work outside of your home, if so how many hours per week do you work?
☐ I do not work outside of my home.
☐ 5-10 Hours
☐ 10-20 Hours
☐ 30-40 Hours

6. Did you attend a school in the Montebello Unified School District as a student?
☐ Yes
☐ No

7. What grade is your child enrolled in?
☐ Kindergarten
☐ 1st
☐ 2nd
☐ 3rd
☐ 4th
8. When communicating, I prefer to use the following language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With my child at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With my child’s Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With my child’s Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Staff at my child’s school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With other Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When receiving school correspondence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. What Language does your child use most often at home?
   - English
   - Spanish
   - Other (please specify)________________________

10. How would you define a successful school?

11. Montebello Elementary is a successful school?
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

12. Would you recommend Montebello Park Elementary to others?
    - Yes
    - No

13. What are three greatest things about Montebello Park Elementary School?
    1. 
    2. 
    3. 

14. What are the three biggest challenges facing Montebello Park Elementary?
    1. 
    2. 
    3. 

15. If you could change anything at Montebello Park Elementary, what would it be?

16. How would you describe your role in your child’s education?
17. How often do you meet or correspond with the following?
- I meet with my child’s teacher
- I correspond in writing with my child’s teacher
- I talk with my child’s teacher
- I meet with my child’s principal
- I talk with my child’s principal

18. If you have a question or problem who would you talk to?
- About your child’s grades
- About your child’s homework
- About your child’s behavior
- About your child’s health
- About a problem with a staff member at the school
- About a problem with the principal

19. The school keeps me well informed about:
- My child's academic progress
- The things going on during school
- The things going on after school
- The school's budget
- The school's goals
- The things going on at the district level
- Important meetings for parents
- How I can help my child succeed in school
- How I can keep my student safe
- How I can help keep the school safe

20. How is school information shared with you?
- It comes in the mail
- It is sent home with my child
- I get a phone call
- I get an Email
- It is posted at my child's school

21. How would you describe the following at your school:
- Teachers
- Principal
- School Staff
- Student Test Scores
- Student Learning
- Student Expectations
- Homework Assignments
22. How would you describe your relationship with:
   - Your child's teacher
   - Your child's principal
   - Other staff at your child's school
   - The district office

23. The environment at Montebello Park Elementary can best be described as:
   - A safe place
   - A clean and healthy place
   - A place that encourages learning
   - A place that appreciates its staff
   - A place that recognizes the work of its staff
   - A place of trust and confidence
   - A place with honest and open communication
   - A welcoming place to parents
   - A place that values parents
   - A supportive place for students
   - A place with high expectations for students
   - A place that celebrates student success

24. Who has input in the decisions at Montebello Park Elementary that involve the following: (check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>The Principal</th>
<th>All School Staff</th>
<th>The District Office</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs and Activities for Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Disciple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner Advisory Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25. What are the three most important programs or activities that are offered or provided to you as a parent at Montebello Park Elementary?
1.
2.
3.

26. What are the three most successful program or activities that are offered or provided to your child at Montebello Park Elementary?
1.
2.
3.

27. In regards to your child’s education, what are the three most important things to you as a parent?
1.
2.
3.

28. Do you think that State Testing is important for your child’s education?
☐ Yes
☐ No

29. How much time do you spend on the following activities (hrs. per week)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1-2hr.</th>
<th>3-4hr.</th>
<th>4-5hr.</th>
<th>More than 5 hr. per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing Homework with your child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading to your child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with your child about school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering at your child's school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. How would you describe the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child likes to go to school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child gets to school on time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child goes to school every day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child has a scheduled time at home to do homework.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child likes their teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child’s teacher cares about my child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child gets extra help from their teacher after school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child participates in sports activities at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child participates in music activities at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child goes to bed before 9:00 pm on a school night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child eats breakfast before going to school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child’s school offers me the opportunity to volunteer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child has books to read at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child has access to a computer at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Child talks to me about school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student field trips are offered to my child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. What additional support can Montebello Park Elementary provide you as a parent?

32. What addition support can Montebello Park Elementary provide you child?
APPENDIX F

Spanish Parent Survey

1. Genero
   - [ ] Masculino
   - [ ] Femenino

2. Edad
   - [ ] Menos de 20
   - [ ] 20-29
   - [ ] 30-39

3. Origen étnico
   - [ ] Latino/Hispano
   - [ ] Afroamericano/Negro
   - [ ] Asiático
   - [ ] Especifique otra etnia

4. ¿Cuál es el mayor nivel de educación que ha cursado?
   - [ ] Preparatoria
   - [ ] Recibido de la universidad
   - [ ] Universidad parcial
   - [ ] Otro
   - [ ] Licenciado de escuela de comercio o alguna otra escuela superior

5. ¿Trabaja usted fuera de casa, y si así lo es, cuántas horas trabaja a la semana?
   - No trabajo fuera de casa
   - [ ] 5-10 Horas
   - [ ] 10-20 Horas
   - [ ] 30-40 Horas

6. ¿Fue usted alumno de alguna escuela perteneciente al Distrito Escolar de Montebello?
   - [ ] Si
   - [ ] No

7. ¿En qué nivel académico del año escolar está su hijo/a matriculado?
   - [ ] Kindergarten
   - [ ] Tercero
   - [ ] Primero
   - [ ] Cuarto
   - [ ] Segunda
8. Cuando me comunico, doy preferencia a la siguiente lengua: Español
   □ Con mi hijo/a en casa
   □ Con los maestros de mi hijo/a
   □ Con el director de mi hijo/a
   □ Con el personal de la escuela de mi hijo/a
   □ Con otros padres
   □ Cuando recibo correspondencia de la escuela

9. ¿Cuál es la lengua que más usa su hijo/a en casa?
   □ Inglés
   □ Español
   Otra (especifique) _____________

10. ¿Cómo definiría usted una escuela exitosa? Explique.

11. ¿Cree usted que la escuela primaria Montebello es una escuela exitosa?
    □ Totalmente en desacuerdo
    □ En desacuerdo
    □ De acuerdo
    □ Totalmente de acuerdo

12. ¿Usted recomendaría la escuela primaria Montebello a otros?
    □ Sí
    □ No

13. ¿Cuáles son tres cosas buenas que usted crea que la escuela primaria Montebello tenga?
    1. 
    2. 
    3. 

14. ¿Cuáles son tres retos que usted cree que la escuela primaria Montebello está enfrentando en este momento?
    1. 
    2. 
    3. 

15. Si usted pudiera cambiar algo de la escuela primaria Montebello Park, ¿Qué cambiaría?

16. ¿Cómo describiría usted su papel como padre de familia en la educación de su hijo/a?
17. ¿Cada cuando cumple usted corresponde con los siguientes aspectos?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nunca</th>
<th>A veces</th>
<th>A Menudo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me reúno con el maestro de mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me mantengo en contacto con el maestro de mi hijo/a por correspondencia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le llamo al maestro de mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me reúno con el director de mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le llamo al director de mi hijo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Si tuviera alguna pregunta o problema, ¿Con quién se pondría en contacto?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maestro</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Miembro Familiar</th>
<th>Personnal</th>
<th>de la escuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progreso académico de mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acerca de las áreas de mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acerca de la conducta de mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acerca de algún problema relacionado con algún miembro del personal escolar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acerca de algún problema con el director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. La escuela me mantiene bien informado sobre:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totalmente en desacuerdo</th>
<th>En desacuerdo</th>
<th>De acuerdo</th>
<th>Totalmente de acuerdo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El progreso académico de mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las cosas que pasan en la escuela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las cosas que pasan al final del día</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El presupuesto escolar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las metas de la escuela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las cosas que suceden a nivel distrito escolar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juntas importantes para padres de familia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Como poder ayudar a mi hijo/a a ser exitoso/a académicamente</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Como poder mantener a mi hijo/seguro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Como poder aportar a la seguridad de la escuela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. ¿Cómo o cada cuando comparte la escuela información con usted?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nunca</th>
<th>Aveses</th>
<th>A Menudo</th>
<th>Siempre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La recibo por correo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Mandan con mi hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me llaman por teléfono</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me Mandan un correo electrónico</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La hacen accessible en el boletin escolar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. ¿Cómo describiría lo signuiente sobre su escuela?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Promedio</th>
<th>Bien</th>
<th>Excelente</th>
<th>Otro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los maestros</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El personal de la escuela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resultados de examenes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El aprendizaje de su hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El aprendizaje hacia los estudiantes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las tareas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. ¿Cómo describiría su relación con:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Promedio</th>
<th>Bien</th>
<th>Excelente</th>
<th>Otro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El maestro de su hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El director de su hijo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algún otro miembro del personal escolar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otros padres de familia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La oficina del distrito escolar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. El medio ambiente en la escuela primaria Montebello Park, podría ser major descrito como:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totalmente en desacuerdo</th>
<th>En desacuerdo</th>
<th>De acuerdo</th>
<th>Totalmente de acuerdo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar seguro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar limpio y sano</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar que promueva el aprendizaje</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar que reconoce el esfuerzo del personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar de confianza y confidencialidad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar afable u hospitalario hacia los padres de familia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar valora a los padres de familia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar que apoya a los estudiantes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un lugar celebra el logro académico de los estudiantes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
24. ¿Quién tiene aporte a las decisiones que se hacen en la escuela primaria Montebello Park, que tiene que ver con lo siguiente?: (marquee todo que aplica)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Los padres</th>
<th>Los maestros</th>
<th>El director</th>
<th>Todo el personal</th>
<th>La oficina distrito</th>
<th>No sé</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El presupuesto de la escuela</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El currículo educativo y la enseñanza</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La seguridad de la escuela</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programas escolares</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actividades extracurriculares estudiantiles</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El consejo educativo escolar</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temas sobre el alumnado</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calificaciones/notas</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comité de Asesoría para los estudiantes cuyo inglés es su segundo idioma</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. ¿Cuáles son tres programas o actividades de mayor importancia para usted, que se ofrezcan o se suministren directamente para usted como padre de familia, en la escuela primaria Montebello Park?
1. 
2. 
3. 

26. ¿Cuáles son tres programas o actividades de mayor importancia para usted, que se ofrezcan o se suministren para us hijo/a en la escuela primaria Montebello Park?
1. 
2. 
3. 
27. En cuanto a la educación de su hijo/a, ¿Cuáles son tres cosas que tengan mayor importancia para usted como padre de familia?
1. 
2. 
3. 

28. ¿Cree usted que las Pruebas Estatales son importantes para la educación de su hijo/a?
☐ Sí
☐ No

29. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasa haciendo las siguientes actividades?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actividad</th>
<th>1-2 horas por semana</th>
<th>3-4 horas por semana</th>
<th>4-5 horas por semana</th>
<th>Más de 5 horas por semana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ayudándole a mi hijo/a a hacer sus tareas</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyéndole a mi hijo/a</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversando con mi hijo/a sobre la escuela</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participando como voluntario en la escuela de mi hijo/a</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. ¿Cómo describiría lo siguiente?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nunca</th>
<th>Aveces</th>
<th>A Menudo</th>
<th>Siempre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a le gusta ir a la escuela</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a llega a la escuela a tiempo</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a va a la escuela todos los días</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a tiene una hora programada en la casa para hacer la tarea</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a le gusta su maestro</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La maestra de mi hijo/a se preocupa por mi hijo</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a recibe ayuda adicional de su maestro después de clases</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a participa en actividades deportivas en la escuela.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a participa en actividades musicales en la escuela.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a se acuesta antes de 9:00 p.m. en una noche de escuela.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo/a se desayuna antes de ir a la escuela.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La escuela de mi hijo/a me ofrece la oportunidad de ser voluntario.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo tiene libros para leer en casa</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo tiene acceso a una computadora en casa</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi hijo habla conmigo acerca de la escuela</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los viajes de estudio del estudiante son ofrecidos a mi hijo/a</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. Como padre de familia, ¿Cómo podría la escuela primaria Montebello Park proveerle con apoyo adicional?

32. Cómo podría la escuela primaria Montebello Park proveerle apoyo adicional a su hijo/a?
APPENDIX G

Teacher-Staff Survey
Montebello Park Elementary

1. Gender
   □ Male
   □ Female

2. What is your age?
   □ 20-29
   □ 30-39
   □ 40-49
   □ 50-59
   □ Over 60

3. What is your Ethnicity?
   □ Latino/Hispanic
   □ Pacific Islander
   □ African American/Black
   □ Caucasian/White
   □ Asia
   Other (please Specify) ____________________________

4. Did you attend a school in the Montebello Unified School District as a student?
   □ Yes
   □ No

5. How far is your home from your place of employment?
   □ Less than 5 miles
   □ 5-10 miles
   □ 10-20 miles
   □ 20-30 miles
   □ More than 30 miles

6. What is your occupation?
   □ Kindergarten Teacher
   □ 1st Grade Teacher
   □ 2nd Grade Teacher
   □ 3rd grade Teacher
   □ 4th grade Teacher
   □ Other (please specify) ____________________________
7. How many years have you been with the district?

- □ Less than a year
- □ 1-2 years
- □ 3-4 years
- □ More than 5 years

8. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- □ High School
- □ Master’s
- □ Some College
- □ Doctorate
- □ Trade or Professional School Graduate
- □ Other
- □ College Graduate

9. If you are currently employed as a teacher, where did you complete your coursework?

- □ State University
- □ University of California
- □ Private University
- □ District Inter-Program
- □ Other (Please specify)

10. If you are currently employed as a teacher, did you ever work as an instructional assistant in the Montebello Unified School District?

- □ Yes
- □ No
- □ I am not a Teacher

11. What are the three greatest things about Montebello Park Elementary?

1. 
2. 
3. 

12. What are the three biggest challenges facing Montebello Park Elementary?

1. 
2. 
3. 

13. If you could change anything at Montebello Park Elementary, what would it be? Why would you change it?
14. How do you feel about the following statements?
   - I feel valued as an employee
   - I feel respected as an employee
   - I feel valued by my colleagues
   - I feel respected by my colleagues
   - I feel valued by parents
   - I feel respected by parents
   - I feel valued by students
   - I feel respected by students
   - My colleagues value my opinion
   - School Administration values my opinion
   - District Administration values my opinion

16. How do you feel about the following statements?
   - As a school staff we work as a Team
   - Teachers respect each other and work together
   - School Rules and Policies are always followed
   - All staff is treated equally
   - High Expectations are held for all staff
   - As staff we share the same values
   - The site administrator is always accessible

17. The environment at Montebello Park Elementary can best be described as:
   - A safe place
   - A clean and health place
   - A place that encourages learning
   - A place that appreciates its staff
   - A place that recognizes the work of it staff
   - A place that values teachers
   - A place of trust and confidence
   - A place with honest and open communication
   - A place that is welcoming to parents
   - A place that values parents
   - A supportive place for students
   - A place with high expectations for students
   - A place that celebrates student success

18. Please answer the following questions:

   Did you know that your school was a program Improvement school?  
   - Yes  
   - No

   Do you understand what it means to be a program Improvement school?  
   - Yes  
   - No
19. Who has input in to decisions at Montebello Park Elementary that involve the following: (check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All School</th>
<th>The District</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>The Principal</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Programs and Activities for Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Programs and Activities for Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School Site Council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Discipline Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s Grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. What are the three most successful programs or activities that are offered or provided to students at Montebello Park Elementary? Why are they successful?
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

21. What are the three most important factors that contributed to your school’s ability to implement the change process?
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

22. How has the change process been implemented at your school site?
23. What are the three most important changes that have taken place at your school that have contributed to your school’s ability to overcome program improvement status?

1. 
2. 
3. 

24. How have the changes made at your school contributed to your school’s ability to overcome program improvement status?

25. If you had not been identified for program improvement would you have made the changes?

☐ Yes
☐ No

26. Has your school worked with the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A School Assistance and Intervention Team (SAIT)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A District Assistance and Intervention Team (DAIT)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who was your provider?

27. Have you participated in any Professional Development at your school site or district?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, what type of Professional Development have you participated in at your school site or district?

28. List three areas in which you would like to have more professional development or training?

1. 
2. 
3. 

29. What are the three most important changes that have occurred in the instructional program(s) at your site to improve student learning and achievement?

1. 
2. 
3. 

30. How have the changes in your instructional program(s) improved student learning and achievement?

1. 
2. 
3.
31. What are the three most important changes in your instructional strategies and practices that have occurred to improve student learning and achievement?
   1.
   2.
   3.

32. How have the changes in your instructional strategies and practices improved student learning and achievement?

33. How do you teach differently?

34. Was data or research used to change instruction?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ I am not a Teacher

If data or research was used to change instruction, how was it used?

35. What was the best and most memorable professional development or training that you have had within the last five years? Why was it the best and most memorable?

36. What are the three most important programs or activities that are offered or provided to you as a staff member at Montebello Park Elementary?
   1.
   2.
   3.

37. How would you describe your role in the change process at your school?
   □ Deeply involved
   □ Somewhat involved
   □ Not involved at all
   □ Explain how were you involved.

38. In your role as a teacher or staff member, what would you consider to be the three most important responsibilities you have to the students of Montebello Park Elementary?
   1.
   2.
   3.
39. As a Teacher, how much time do you spend on the following activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1-2 hours per Week</th>
<th>3-4 hours per week</th>
<th>4-5 hours per week</th>
<th>More than 5 hours per week</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning Lessons</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading Papers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplining Students</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with Parents</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with other Teachers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Meetings</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in Professional Development Activities</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40. How often do you meet to discuss the following issues?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Quarterly</th>
<th>Once a year</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Goals</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Evaluations</td>
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<td>Staffing</td>
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<td>The School Change Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Program Improvement Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Policies and Procedures</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Student Disciplinary Matters</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Student Academic Achievement</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Goals</td>
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<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Reforms</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41. Are teachers provided a means to share successful practices?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I am not a teacher

42. The school keeps me well informed about:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The things going on during school</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things going on after school</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school's budget</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school's goals</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things going on at the district level</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important parent meetings</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I can help students succeed in school</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I can keep students safe at school</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
43. How is school information shared with you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By District Mail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Staff Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is posted in our staff lounge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By word of mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. Do you feel knowledgeable about the things going on at your school site?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

45. How would you describe the following at your school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Test Scores</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Learning</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework Assignments</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46. How would you describe your relationship with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff at your school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents at your school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47. What additional support can Montebello Park Elementary provide you as a staff member?
APPENDIX H

AYP Targets, 2002-2014 Elementary Schools, Middle Schools, and Elementary School Districts

- Participation Rate – 95 percent (schoolwide/LEA-wide and subgroups)
- Percent Proficient – AYPs (schoolwide/LEA-wide and subgroups)

- Additional Indicator – Growth in the API of at least one point OR a minimum API score (schoolwide/LEA-wide)

Note: AYP targets are level at two time intervals between 2002 and 2007 and then increase yearly to 2014. This pattern was established to reflect the expectation that the strongest academic gains in schools and LEAs are likely to occur in later years (after alignment of instruction with state content standards, after schools and LEAs have the opportunity for increased capacity, and after a highly-qualified teacher is in every classroom).
APPENDIX I

Permission Letter

Memorandum

Date: April 18, 2010

To: MPE Staff and Parents
From: Margie Rodriguez, Principal
       Montebello Unified School District
       Montebello Park Elementary School

Re: MPE School Survey –

Attached please find a research study survey that will be conducted by Anita Benitas, a doctoral candidate for the Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program at Cal State University Sacramento. The title of the dissertation is "Overcoming Program Improvement Status: A Strength Based Approach to School Improvement". Ms. Benitas has received permission from our district and myself to survey our staff and parents.

The purpose of the study is to use a strength based lens to identify the factors that contributed to our school's ability to overcome program improvement status. Please read Ms. Benitas’ cover letter and sign the consent form and complete the survey. We will be asking that each teacher collect all their classroom's parent surveys and turn them into the office at the end of the week.

Every teacher assisting in this endeavor will receive a gift card and each student returning their parent's survey will receive a pencil. Our hope is that this research study survey will help other Title 1 schools overcome their program improvement status.

Many thanks for your assistance.
REFERENCES


EdSource (2009). *California’s approach under no child left behind.*


