

Spring 2009

A School for Our Children: A Case Study of a School Closing the Student Achievement Gap

Monica Diane Lamar

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Lamar, M. (2009). A School for Our Children: A Case Study of a School Closing the Student Achievement Gap (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/795>

This Immediate Access is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact phillips@duq.edu.

A SCHOOL FOR OUR CHILDREN:
A CASE STUDY OF A SCHOOL CLOSING THE
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Education Leaders (IDPEL)

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By

Monica D. Lamar

May 2009

Copyright by
Monica D. Lamar

2009

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL
LEADERS

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

Presented by:

Monica D. Lamar
B.S., Elementary Education, Slippery Rock University, 1995
M.A., Educational Leadership, University of Pittsburgh, 2001

March 13, 2009

A SCHOOL FOR OUR CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF A SCHOOL CLOSING THE
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Approved by:

_____, Chair
Rodney K. Hopson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Foundations & Leadership
Duquesne University

_____, Member
Peter Miller, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Foundations and Leadership
Duquesne University

_____, Member
George Yancy, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Philosophy Department
Duquesne University

_____, Member
Jerome Taylor, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Africana Studies Department
University of Pittsburgh

Program Director
James E. Henderson, Ed.D.
Professor of Educational Leadership and
Director, Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders

ABSTRACT

A SCHOOL FOR OUR CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF A SCHOOL CLOSING THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP

By

Monica D. Lamar

May 2009

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Rodney K. Hopson

This study examined the student achievement gap from the perspective of a school closing the student achievement gap. The intent of the dissertation was to discover or identify factors as to how an elementary school eliminates the student achievement gap as delineated by *accelerative factors theory* (AFT). In addition, the student achievement gap is an educational problem that emphasizes race. *Critical race theory* (CRT) was utilized to view how race and racism was situated in the school. These methodologies were chosen specifically to garner critical information on the efforts utilized by the parents, teachers and administrators to close the student achievement gap. Data was collected by interviews, observations and public document review. The results from the data were synthesized and reported based on the research questions of the study.

Since the elementary school has made significant progress in closing and minimizing the student achievement gap, it was expected that the student achievement

gap closing factors would exist in some or all of the data collected. The results of the study indicated that the research site obtained all of the factors in AFT. In addition, the acceptance of African American children was observed in the setting. This research is timely in response to the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act and assistance to a district having difficulty with minimizing the student achievement gap. Several recommendations are posited for how school leadership can close the student achievement gap.

DEDICATION

A Modern Day Story of Esther...

Thinking of my dissertation journey, I am reminded of the story of Esther from the Bible. Esther was a woman who was reared by her cousin Mordecai because her parents died. During this time, King Xerxes was in search of a new queen, and when Mordecai heard the news, he took Esther to Hegai, a preparer of queens. In order for Esther to become queen, she had to prepare for 12 months. After Esther became queen, Mordecai learned of a plot to kill all of Esther's people. Esther went to the King, risking her life by revealing her ethnicity. She convinced him and saved her people. I am reminded of this story because of my sincere belief that God has placed me on this earth to help save my young people. I went through many trials and tribulations to obtain my degree but God helped me through this experience. During this journey, I lost my grandparents, Earl and Virginia Palmer, in 2008. They were more like my parents because they raised and nurtured me. I take from them the lessons of perseverance and devotion. These character traits have been refined in me since I was very young, and I am fortunate to have had wonderful role models who were for me the true embodiment of perseverance and devotion. This work is dedicated to Earl and Virginia, who helped me make it to the Promised Land, but did not get to see me walk in it.

Unlike Esther, I had more than one Mordecai and Hegai who helped me make it through this journey. I thank my family and friends. I could not have made it without your love and support. I also would like to thank my cohort, research advisory group and T.B.D.G. mate. It was our laughter that helped me to overcome the walls and challenges.

Additionally, I thank Dr. Rodney K. Hopson, chair of this research, Dr. Jerome Taylor, Dr. Pete Miller and Dr. George Yancy, committee members. Your guidance and support helped to prepare a queen and a leader to help save the children!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Historical Overview of Student Achievement Gap.....	3
Reform Initiatives and Student Achievement Gap.....	5
Assessment Data and Student Achievement Gap.....	11
Purpose of this Work.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Significance of the Study.....	16
Theoretical Framework.....	18
Accelerative Factors Theory.....	18
Critical Race Theory.....	20
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Student Achievement Gap Explanation.....	23
Student Achievement Gap Research.....	24
Schools and the Student Achievement Gap.....	33
Families and Student Achievement Gap.....	45

Academic Achievement and African American Students	49
Theoretical Lens	51
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	59
Introduction.....	59
Practitioner Scholars Lens	59
Case Study Research Design	62
Site Selection	64
Participants.....	66
Data Analysis.....	74
Atlas ti.....	75
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	77
Ethical Considerations	78
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	79
Research Question 1	82
Research Question 2	86
Research Question 3	90
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	98
Introduction.....	98
Research.....	98
Implications for Participants and Educational Leaders	103
Recommendations for Future Research and Practice	108
APPENDIX A.....	126
APPENDIX B.....	127

APPENDIX C	129
APPENDIX D	132
APPENDIX E	162
APPENDIX F	163
APPENDIX G	164
APPENDIX H	166

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 Student Achievement Gap Key Characteristics	56
Table 2 Researcher's Observation Log.....	73
Table 3 Researcher's Use of Atlas ti Software (Muhr, 1991).....	76
Table 4 A Capacity Building Framework.....	79
Table 5: Analysis of Data Chart.....	80

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: NAEP Examination Comparison Results.....	12
Figure 2: TIMSS Examination Comparison Results	13
Figure 3: Interview Participant Descriptions	76

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Throughout American history, an education gap has been a challenge for many school districts and schools in the United States. The education gap has had many different names. According to the work of Anderson (2007) and Margo (1990), the education gap first appeared in the 1800's, over 200 years ago. The first education gap was referred to as the "literacy gap" and existed because 90% of Caucasian children at this time were able to read, and 90% of the African enslaved people did not know how to read. The "literacy gap" was minimized when the Emancipation Proclamation and end of the Civil War freed African enslaved people. Next, the education gap became known as the "elementary school attendance gap" (Anderson, 2007; Margo, 1990). African American students did not have schools to attend, for the schools that were in existence during this time were predominately for Caucasian students or the schools were unable to support all of the students that needed to attend the school (Anderson, 2007; Margo, 1990). This gap was minimized when philanthropists and the government became involved in creating schools for African American students to attend. The education gap then became known as the "high school completion gap." African American students were not completing high school as Caucasian students, for many of the African American students had to work to help provide basic needs (i.e. food, shelter, etc.) in rural areas. In addition, African American student high schools were inadequate and unequipped to address the needs of students. The "high school completion gap" was minimized when the Supreme Court and state government through reforms became involved to provide African American students with equal access to high school. This minimized the high school completion gap (Anderson, 2007; Margo, 1990). Next, the

education gap became known as the “college graduation gap” and the “degree gap.” African American students were not graduating from college or earning advanced degrees as Caucasian students were graduating and earning advanced degrees. This gap was minimized once African American students were able to enter colleges and universities based on equal opportunities act¹ and gained access to colleges and universities. The educational gaps were minimized until 1989.

In 1989, the “education gap” became known as the “black-white achievement gap.” Based on standardized assessment data, African American students were not demonstrating achievement as Caucasian students (Anderson, 2007; Margo, 1990; Haycock, 2001). Many school reform models, such as *Nation at Risk*, were enacted to minimize the black and white student achievement gap. The reform models did not close the gap between the black and white students. Currently, the gap is no longer referred to as the black-white achievement gap. Hispanic American students, which is a growing group in the United States, was not achieving as Caucasian students. The education gap is now referred to as the student achievement gap. The student achievement gap is a current educational problem that is not being resolved in all schools.

This dissertation aims to study the student achievement gap and how an elementary school is successfully closing the student achievement gap. The data from this research will help to understand the student achievement gap and potentially emulate the solution in other similar schools. The introduction reports that the gap discourse is not new and further understanding of the issue is needed in resolving the unending saga. In

¹ Equal Opportunity Act of 1964 was based on public law 82-32. The provisions of the Civil Rights act forbade discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race, for hiring, promoting and firing. This provision included the admission procedures in colleges and universities (*as cited* on <http://www.eeoc.gov/>)

the remaining section of the chapter, I will explore the historical overview of the student achievement gap and reform initiatives.

Historical Overview of Student Achievement Gap

The student achievement gap history began in the 1800s. According to the work of Anderson (2007) and Margo (1990), enslaved African people were not permitted to learn to read. This was the method utilized to maintain enslavement of the African people. The student achievement gap existed because 90% of the Caucasian children at the time had access to education and were able to learn to read, and 90% of the African enslaved people did not have access to education and were unable to read. Although some free African Americans were able to read, such as Frederick Douglas, the majority of the enslaved people were not able to read. The African American people could not read because they were brought to the United States by force and required to be slaves of the laboring class of the new world (Woodson, 2004). Most slave owners of this time were not willing to educate their enslaved people.

After Emancipation in 1863, African Americans represented the largest percentage of uneducated people in the United States of America. Margo (1990) suggests that racial differences existed in the quantity and quality of schooling as indicated by literacy, school attendance, and educational attainment. In the years 1863-1890, an education reform occurred that established state supported public education as a right of citizenship in the South (Anderson, 2007). The African Americans of this time were free but unable to attend schools because the number of schools for African American students to attend was minimal. The United States government created the Freedman Bureau in 1865, to help the enslaved people adjust to freedom (Margo, 1990). The

Freedman's Bureau was created to help with medical care, food, land acquisition, education, and a host of other needs of the free men. Literate African American men and women came to educate those recently freed African Americans, opening the Freedman Bureau Schools. In 1869, the Bureau schools educated approximately 150,000 students. By 1890, African American illiteracy stood at 61%, which was a decrease from the 1800's (Margo, 1990, p. 8). Southern white illiteracy declined, and this helped to close the gap. In 1880, 20% of African American students attended schools, allowing the achievement gap to remain between African American and Caucasian students. When attendance rose for African American students, that gap began to close. According to Margo, the reason for illiteracy was that illiterate parents had lower incomes and they needed their children to work rather than attend school. These parents lived in rural black counties and educational access was not available (Margo, 1990, p.10).

In order to overcome the attendance gap for African American students in the South, Rosenwald schools were created. Rosenwald schools began in 1914 and were private. The idea for Rosenwald schools came from Booker T. Washington in 1912. He approached philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to help fund schools for African American children. Rosenwald was particularly sympathetic to African Americans because of his Jewish background and the prejudice that both groups endured. Rosenwald would provide the matching grant to rural communities that could raise a contribution, and the white school boards would agree to operate the facility (*Rosenwald schools initiative*, 2009). During this time, 5,300 schools in 15 states were created for African American children. In 1932, Julius Rosenwald died and the creation of Rosenwald schools ended. The Rosenwald schools were a community of enterprise cooperation between the

community and the schools. Although the Rosenwald schools were instrumental in educating African American children, these schools were only in 15 states² and did not make up for the other states and districts that could not provide a quality education to African American children.

Margo (1990) suggests that it was not until schooling became universal that black students began to close the student achievement gap. The increased attendance to school did not increase the educational attainment that impacted the student achievement gap. This issue occurred majority in the high schools. There were fewer than 65 public high schools for black children. The black population was heavily rural and private and public schools were in the towns and cities. Additionally, the facilities were inadequate, and for this and other reasons, the students attended less frequently.

Reform Initiatives and Student Achievement Gap

The beginning of the student achievement gap reform could be credited to the study conducted by Robert Samuel Coleman, who wrote the *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, which became known as *The Coleman Report* (1966). The Coleman study addressed four major questions: 1) To what extent are racial and ethnic groups separated from one another in the public schools? 2) Do schools offer equal educational opportunities in terms of a number of other criteria, which are regarded as good indicators of educational quality? 3) How much do the students learn as measured by their performance on standardized achievement tests? and 4) How can one discern

² The fifteen states that had Rosenwald schools for African American students were: Maryland, West Virginia, Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky

possible relationships between student achievement and the kind of schools attended? According to the *Coleman Report*, the majority of African American children attended segregated schools. In the South, African American children were completely segregated, and the teachers were also separated by race. African American teachers taught mostly African American students and Caucasian teachers taught Caucasian students. Caucasian teachers could teach African American children, but African American teachers rarely taught Caucasian students (Coleman, 1966). Integration at that time included African American children attending predominately Caucasian schools. This reform initiative supported by the federal government verified the educational gaps for students, and American public education was unequal in most regions of the country but particularly in areas in which African American people comprised a significant proportion of the population (Coleman, 1966). Coleman created a survey to obtain the data for the study. There were many findings that documented the education gap issue for students. In response to facility questions, Caucasian children attended schools with a smaller average of pupils than minority students. Also, minority groups had less access to physical facilities that seemed to be related to academic achievement (i.e. biology labs, gymnasium, etc.).

In response to program questions, minority students had less access to curricular and extracurricular programs; Caucasian students had more access to fully developed curricular and extracurricular programs. African American students were less likely to attend regionally accredited schools; this was especially pronounced in the South. A majority of African American students attended schools that offered remedial reading classes and less experience with college preparatory curriculums and accelerated

curriculums. The Coleman research findings reported that less intelligence testing was done in schools, which African American and Puerto Rican children attend.

There was a big difference between the races regarding achievement. Based on the standardized assessments, Caucasian students scored one standard deviation higher than African American students. According to this report, this was the first time that standardized assessments were utilized to affirm a gap in education between black and white students. The majority of minority pupil achievement depended on the schools they attended as opposed to Caucasian students (Coleman, 1966). Public schools were more rigidly segregated at the elementary level than in the higher grades. This summary explores the relationships between educational achievement and school characteristics, and the education system had many inequities (Coleman, 1966). The report exposed the inequities of the education students received. In addition, this research supported the concept of gaps, such as socioeconomic status, opportunity, and education that led to the student achievement gap. With all of the educational reforms, educational opportunities and federal assistance to close the achievement gap, the student achievement gap remained and was not closing.

Another seminal report that was based on reform and the student achievement gap was *The Nation at Risk of 1983* (National Commission for Excellence in Education [NCES], 1983). This study was released 19 years after the Coleman report, and 29 years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Very few changes had occurred in education. In 1983, T. H. Bell, Secretary of Education for the U.S. Department of Education, commissioned the *Nation at Risk* report. The purpose of the study was to reform the educational system and renew the nation's commitment to schools and

colleges. U.S. competition was producing commodities that were replacing the need for U.S. commodities, and this change was redistributing world power and dominance. The National Commission on Excellence in Education received testimony from scholars, education practitioners, government officials and education associations that further detailed the problem (NCES, 1983).

At this time, twenty-three million American adults were functionally illiterate; 13% of the 17-years-olds in the U.S. could be considered functionally illiterate; 40% of African American students were functionally illiterate. The achievement of high school students was lower than when Sputnik was launched 26 years ago. Over half of the population of gifted students did not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores declined from 1963 to 1980: verbal skills scores were 50 points lower, and math scores dropped nearly 40 points (NCES, 1983). Results of the SAT also indicated a decline in physics and English skills. Many 17-year-old students did not possess higher order thinking skills, and they could not draw inferences from written materials; one-fifth could not write a persuasive essay, and one-third could not solve multi-step math problems. There was a steady decline in science achievement as measured by National Science Assessments in 1969, 1973, and 1977. Between the years of 1975 to 1980, remedial mathematics courses in public four-year colleges increased to 72% and constituted one quarter of all mathematics courses taught in those institutions. The average tested achievement of students graduating from college was lower. Business and military leaders complained that they were required to spend millions of dollars on remedial education and training programs. These deficiencies came at a time when demand for highly skilled workers in new fields

accelerated rapidly (NCES, 1983). The plan called for excellence in education.

Excellence is defined as performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and in the workplace (NCES, 1983). Excellence characterizes a school or college that sets high expectations and goals for all learners, and then tries in every way possible to help students reach them. Excellence characterizes a society that has adopted these policies. The nation's schools and colleges must be committed to achieving excellence in all these senses. The findings concluded that the declines in educational performance were in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is conducted. The *Nation at Risk* was written to help school districts to close the student achievement gap. As an issue persisted, an additional study occurred on the student achievement gap.

The current reform initiative that addresses the student achievement gap is the *No Child Left Behind of 2001(NCLB)* that was signed into law in 2002. The U.S. government, under the leadership of President George W. Bush, signed the act into legislation to eliminate the student achievement gap. This reform initiative was the first attempts of the federal government in creating state and local education policy, and this reform initiative was considered as the most noteworthy of recent congressional attempts to improve student education and secondary educational programs in the U.S (Simpson et al, 2004, p. 68). The NCLB act is based on four pillars, which are stronger accountability of results, more freedom for states and communities and more choices for parents. The NCLB requires that within a decade, all students will perform at a proficient level on state-mandated assessments (NCLB, 2002). NCLB increased the stress of the state-mandated assessments by publicly recognizing schools and granting financial rewards to

those who do well, and imposing sanctions on those whose students perform poorly on the assessments. There are many issues of concern with implementation of the NCLB mandate, which includes allowances for the use of flexible and individualized evaluation accommodations; modifications that address students' unique learning abilities, disabilities, and other needs; and support for personnel preparation and professional development needed to successfully implement the mandate (Simpson, 2004).

Although there has been some improvement in education since the NCLB Act was signed into law, the students that have not benefited from the NCLB Act are the minority³ students. In addition to the four pillars of NCLB, schools are required to have all students proficient in reading and mathematics by the by the year 2013. With increased accountability, schools are responsible to improve the student's academic performance on state and federally mandated tests. The act has many requirements, but one requirement of implementation is the disaggregation of test scores along racial groups. The purpose of the disaggregation is to make certain that all children achieve (Tatum, 2007). Although the NCLB requires disaggregation of test scores, a recent event in education is the return of school re-segregation, confining many students to high-poverty schools where high teacher turnover also means a steady influx of novice teachers, placing vulnerable children in the hands of those perhaps least prepared to give them what they need (Tatum, 2007).

In summary, the student achievement gap is rooted in limited educational opportunities for African American children, reform initiatives and federal policies. As this issue persisted, scholars began to research the student achievement gap and develop

³ Minority in this context refers to African American, Asian, Native American and Hispanic groups

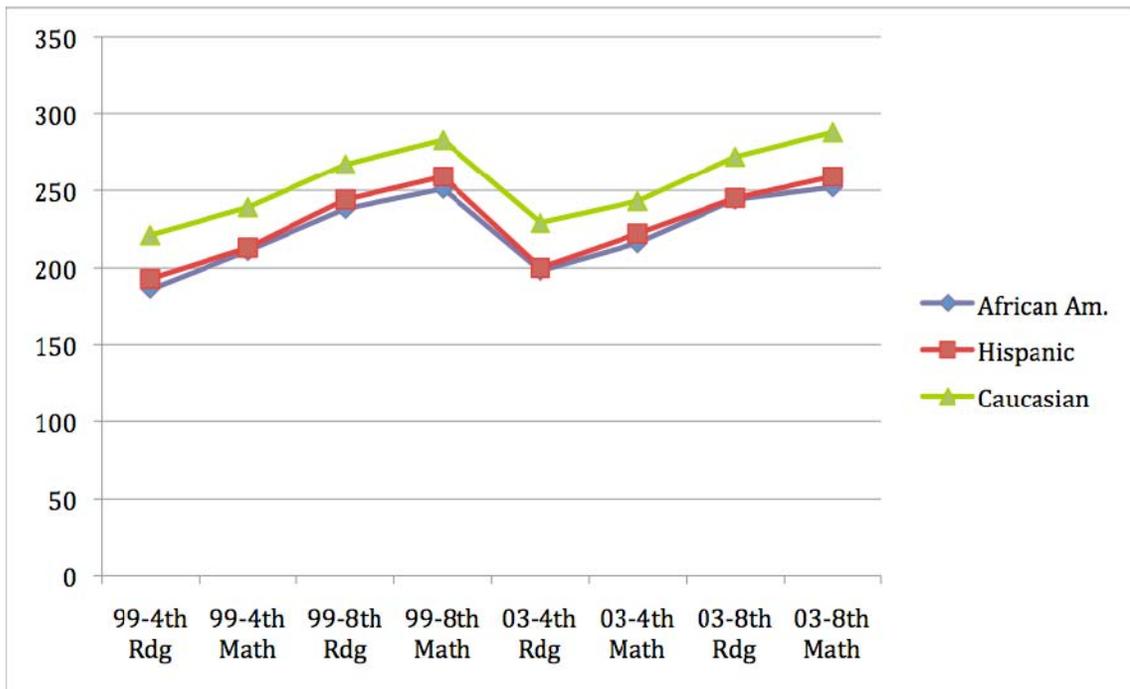
explanations for the student achievement gap, because support for the judicial system, federal, state and local policy, additional funding, instructional interventions, etc. did not close the gap. The student achievement gap remains and is rooted in the standardized assessment data taken by students.

Assessment Data and Student Achievement Gap

The review of national assessment data, such as the *National Assessment of Education Progress* (NAEP) helped to demonstrate the existence of the student achievement gap. In addition, this assessment review supports the evolution of the black/white test gap was not specifically about black and white students, but minority students (e.g., African American, and Hispanic students), and their achievement levels on math and reading assessments. With the subgroups included in the data analysis, the black/white test gap became the *Student Achievement Gap*. The student achievement gap is the disparity between African American and Latino children, and Caucasian children, on standardized assessments (Ladson-Billings, 1994, Meyers et al, 2004). Students in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades were given the National Association of Education Progress (NAEP) assessment. The NAEP assessment was required by the U. S. Department of Education, and was considered the standard of measurement for student achievement (Campbell, Hambo, & Mazzeo, 2000; NCES, 2006). The first assessment was administered in 1969, but the sample population and assessment was not consistent until the 1990 administration. The 1999 and 2003 assessments for fourth and eighth were analyzed for this research study, based on the year prior to the No Child Left Behind Act, and the year after. Based on the 1999 and 2003 NAEP assessment results, African

American students' overall proficiency scores nationally lag behind their peers in reading and mathematics. These results were derived from students in public and private schools. Figure 1 is the comparison results of the NAEP exam for the 1999 and 2003 school year for the African American, Hispanic and Caucasian students.

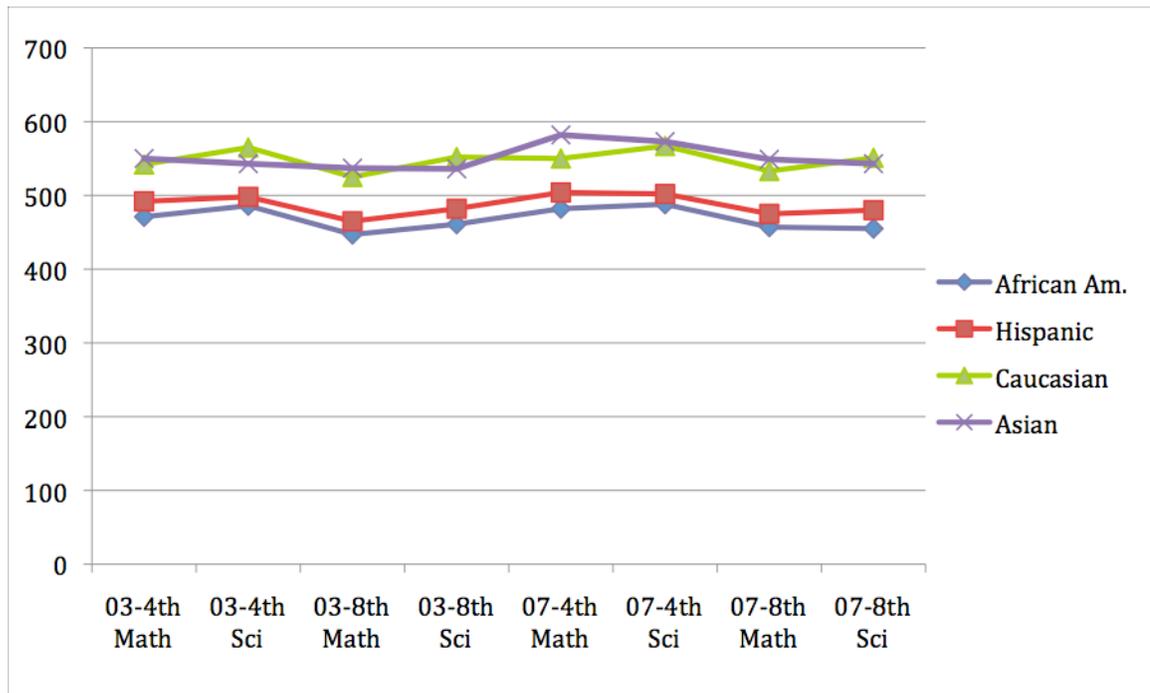
Figure 1 NAEP Examination Comparison Results



Reference: <http://www.nces.ed.gov>

In addition to the NAEP assessment results, the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) results were released, comparing United States mathematics and science knowledge, over time, internationally. This assessment was administered to students in the fourth and eighth grades. Although the assessment indicated that the United States achieved above the international average, the assessment indicated a student achievement gap existed between African American, Hispanic, Asian and Caucasian students (NCES, 2008). In 2007, the fourth TIMSS assessment was administered to a cohort of students, and the results reported in December 2008. A review of the results(See Figure 2) indicated improvement from the 2003 administration to the 2007 administration, but a student achievement gap between minority students and Caucasian students existed on the international assessment.

Figure 2: TIMSS Examination Comparison Results



Reference: <http://www.nces.ed.gov>

The NAEP and TIMSS assessments, internationally and nationally, confirm a student achievement gap between minority and Caucasian students. These results support the theory that the achievement gap still exists. In addition to the gap existing, some schools are displaying in the data improvement and minimizing the student achievement gap.

Purpose of this Work

In an era in which the student achievement gap has not been resolved, some schools have been successful in minimizing the student achievement gap. The purpose of this dissertation is to discover how an elementary school is closing the student achievement gap. As mentioned in the introduction, the multiple gaps have helped to create educational gaps that have ultimately led to the student achievement gap. Many school districts have attempted to eliminate the gaps through reforms and policies. The federal government has also attempted to encourage closure of the gaps by supporting research and by the use of legislation. The NCLB legislation was created to close the student achievement gap, but the student achievement gap still exists in most schools and districts. After reviewing the history of minority students in education, it is important to study successful schools closing the student achievement gap, particularly the actions of the administrators, teachers and parents.

The setting of this research study is Frederick Douglas Elementary School⁴ located in Higgins Public Schools, which continues to have a student achievement gap. Higgins Public School is a mid-sized urban district of approximately 25,000 students.

⁴ Additional information will be provided on Frederick Douglas Elementary School in chapter three

The student population comprises 60% African American, 35% Caucasian, and 5% other. Based on the student population, the student reporting subgroups on standardized assessments are black and white. The students are administered the state reading and math in third, fourth, fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades, in reading and mathematics (School Data Direct, 2006). In review of the 2006-2007 assessments, 40% of African American students were proficient in reading, in comparison to 73% of Caucasian students. Caucasian student performance on standardized assessments in the advanced category exceeded African American student performance three to one (Taylor, Welch, & Thomas, 2007). According to these results, the achievement gap percentages in Higgins Public Schools between African American and Caucasian students are 32% in math and 33% in reading. Although this urban district was involved in multiple years of school reform initiatives because of the NCLB legislation to improve student achievement and close the student achievement gap between African American and Caucasian children, the student achievement gap has not yet been closed or eliminated in all schools within the district.

Research Questions

In order to discover how a school's stakeholders eliminate the student achievement gap, the following research questions will be answered:

1. What are the experiences of the stakeholders (administrators, teachers and parents with the student achievement gap?
2. How do the stakeholders of these schools describe and explain the student achievement gap between Caucasian and African American children?

3. What are the specific strategies and practices being used by the stakeholders (administrators, teachers and parents) to address the achievement gap with African American students?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. This year, 2009, the No Child Left Behind Act is to be renewed with some revisions during the administration of President Barack Obama. The current act has been in the field of education for eight years, but the student achievement gap still exists. The research literature reports many lessons learned during this time, from studies conducted on the student achievement gap.

The student achievement gap cannot be addressed without the adults associated with schools addressing the issues. The stakeholders- parents, teachers, and administrators- are key to resolving the student achievement gap. Based on their understanding, the educators will implement strategies, policies, and practices to resolve the student achievement gap. Research indicates that these adults are connected to student achievement and the gap in the following ways. According to Fullan (2001) and Leithwood and Riehl (2003), *administrators* must do more than encourage math and reading. Administrators must interpret, implement, and enforce district, state, and federal policies, and mobilize teachers' energy and capacity. Thompson (2007) suggests also that administrators should have the right attitude about students, parents, teachers, and the leaders own role. In addition, Kaplan, Owings, and Nunnery (2005) assert that principal/school leadership qualities are linked statistically and practically to student

achievement, indicating that there is an association between the two, and administrators play an important role in improving the student achievement gap.

Parents are very important stakeholders in closing the student achievement gap. The parents are the student's first teachers. As suggested by Rothstein (2004a), "Families make more of an impact on children than school quality (p. 16)." Parent involvement has many positive benefits for students, the most important of which is enhanced student achievement (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Seefeldt, 1985; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1996). Barton (2003) synthesizes research to determine parent and community involvement in student achievement, including life and living conditions, parental expectations for student achievement, reading to children at an early age, attention to physical and health needs, television watching, and parent availability. Thus parents play a vital role in the student achievement and, consequently, the student achievement gap. In reviewing the actions of *teachers*, Ferguson (1998) suggests that teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors help to sustain, and perhaps even to expand, the student achievement gap. The magnitude of the effect is uncertain, but it may be quite substantial if effects accumulate from kindergarten through high school. Access to high quality teaching is the most powerful way to reduce achievement gaps and increase student achievement (Allington & Cunningham, 2002, 2003; Pressley et al., 2004). Additionally, Ladson-Billings' 1994 book, *The Dream Keepers*, reports that those teachers successful in educating African American children use culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant teaching uses the student culture in order to maintain that culture, and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. Teachers have a direct impact on student achievement and the student achievement gap.

Analyzing these studies, the SAG resolution is unclear. The significant lesson learned is that when schools and homes collaborate, student achievement for all students improves, but particularly that of minority students. This collaboration may eliminate the student achievement gap. These ideas can help improve schools, but the intent of this dissertation is to examine a successful school and to discover how a school is educating their African American students. This research will tell the story of a successful school for African American children – or, *A School for our Children*.

Theoretical Framework

In order to examine the case study of how a school within an urban district educates their African American students, *Accelerative Factors Theory* and *Critical Race Theory* will be utilized for several reasons. First, the student achievement gap is between minority and Caucasian students within a district, but the site school is successfully minimizing/eliminating the student achievement gap. Second, this theory will allow for analysis of the data and discern the work of the school. Finally, the theories intersect by looking at the problem from a racialized perspective.

Accelerative Factors Theory

Taylor, Orgass, and Kouyate (2007) created *Accelerative Factors Theory* (AFT) to understand how to accelerate the closure of the racial achievement gap in America, and what factors to use to close the achievement gap (p. 1). This theory was written to help identify factors that may be important in accelerating the racial achievement gap. The

seven components that comprise AFT are soil, seed, root, environment, gardener, gardener support, and gardener school. Each metaphor represents a familiar educational structure. The most important element of this construct is the students, or “the glorious bloom.”

1. *Soil (Antecedents)*. The students’ literacy and numeracy skills have been unattended or underestimated by caregiver, school, neighborhood, and media environments (p. 5)
2. *Seed (Curriculum and Pedagogy)*. A rigorous curriculum is structured around clearly aligned state, national, or international standards. Pedagogy (or personalizing strategies) helps the students achieve mastery (p. 7).
3. *Root (Culture)*. The cultural competency. The nurturing function is questioning, emotional, and social competencies (p. 10).
4. *Environment (Context)*. The strategy for changing the organization and culture of schools, their relationship with their stakeholders, and the systems in which they are embedded (p. 13)
5. *Gardener (Teacher)*. The personal, professional, and communal attributes of teachers are critical in accelerating the gap (p. 14).
6. *Gardener Support (Administrator)*. The knowledgeable and accessible resources that help the gardener produce the glorious bloom (p. 15).
7. *Gardener School (Teacher and Administrator Training)*. Professional development on how to work with the other six components of the construct (p. 15)

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework created by a group of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship that exists between race, racism, and power. The theory originated from critical legal studies. The theory places issues regarding race and racism in a broader context, to understand their multiple manifestations. CRT not only attempts to understand social situations and how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but it attempts to transform society for the better by eliminating racial oppression, as a part of the goal of eradicating all forms of oppressions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In education, *critical race theory* scholars view educational fairness, neutrality in educational policy, practice, and research, and are able to offer new perspectives on the persistent problems of racism in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Since an essential theme of CRT is the “recognition of experiential knowledge of people of color,” this recognition is the basis of the theme of voice that runs throughout CRT (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). According to Tate (1996), research concerning minority children should include pertinent historical and legal background, the ideology of racism, continuing re-examination of prevailing views of the role of race and social class learning, and the influence of minority communities on schools. In addition, CRT builds on the previous race/culture-based critiques of school and minority prior relations with white authorities, by analyzing links between adherence to various ideological or empirical positions that appear fair and race neutral, but often turn out to have discriminatory impact on racial minorities (Villenas, Deyhle, & Parker, 1999).

In this study, *critical race theory* will help the researcher discern in the interviews, observations, and document data, strategies on how the stakeholders manage race and racism in the school to make certain that children are learning and achieving. The theory will also assist the researcher in analyzing the experiences had by the stakeholders, to determine the fairness and race neutral positions held to support the student's achievement and eliminate the student achievement gap. The data will be presented in a narrative to allow for the voices of the stakeholders to be heard. *Accelerative factors theory* and *critical race theory* will be utilized to help analyze the data presented in this research study.

In chapter two, the literature and research will be reviewed on the student achievement gap and research related to the student achievement gap to build background and knowledge for the study. Chapter three, the methodology chapter, will detail how the research was conducted. The case study design, site utilized for the study, participants, data collected and the plans for data analysis will be explained. Chapter four, the findings of the research conducted will be shared. Finally, chapter five will review the research and discuss the findings of the research and additional research opportunities for the student achievement gap.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), the literature review is used to critique the status of knowledge of a carefully defined topic and enables the reader to gain further insights for the study. This research study has been written to examine in-depth the student achievement gap. Many scholars have researched the student achievement gap (Adelman, 1988; Barton, 2003; Bennett et al., 2004; Campbell, Hambo, & Mazzeo, 2000; Education Trust, 2005; Ferguson, 1998; Fryer & Levitt, 2002, 2006; Haycock, 2001; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; McWhorter, Noguera, & Akom, 2000; Rothstein, 2004a&b). In each of the research studies, the scholars developed explanations for the student achievement gap. Explanations for why the student achievement gap exists and what should be developed in schools and families includes: effective schools, instructional leadership, curriculum, assessments, reforms, pedagogical practices, teacher quality, perceptions, expectations, stereotype threat, student tracking, socioeconomics, genetics, and race.

This study is designed to look at one elementary school that utilizes strategies recommended by research to produce a high achieving assessment results. This review begins with a discussion of the research conducted on the student achievement gap; the reasons for its occurrence and what should be done to minimize the gap will be detailed. The review concludes with an examination of the student achievement gap from the perspective of a school closing the achievement gap.

Student Achievement Gap Explanation

Many scholars have researched the student achievement gap. In their research studies, the results have been divided into two topical areas: school and family. The results also yield explanations for the student achievement gap. These explanations for schools and the student achievement gap include: policy, educational leadership, cultural bias and difference, curriculum, assessments, reforms, standards, pedagogical practices, teacher quality, perceptions, expectations, and student-tracking. The explanation for families and the student achievement gap are socioeconomics, genetics, and race. Although researchers have recognized the family the theories are not widely supported in the research.

In order to research the student achievement gap, many scholars have defined the student achievement gap. Ladson-Billings (1994) and Meyers et al (2004) suggest that the student achievement gap is the disparity between African American and Asian, and Caucasian students, on standardized assessments. Additionally, Jencks and Phillips (1998) and Braun et al. (2006) state the student achievement gap is: “African Americans currently scoring lower than European Americans on vocabulary, reading, and mathematics tests, as well as on tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence. This gap appears before children enter kindergarten, and it persists into adulthood (p.8).” According to Haycock (2001) and Hilliard (2002), the achievement gap is likely due to the quality gap in instruction. Schools with a high concentration of low-income minority students are less likely to have well-trained or experienced teachers. These schools are less likely to offer advanced courses for children. Rothstein (2004a) and Fryer and Levitt (2004) indicated that the achievement gap is a phenomenon of

averages, a difference between the average achievement of lower class children and the average achievement of middle class children. Murrell (2001) states that many scholars have offered interpretations of the gaps and inequities in resources and opportunities. All of these interpretations have supported the ways in which scholars have researched the achievement gap.

Student Achievement Gap Research

Jencks and Phillips (1998) conducted research on the student achievement gap. They helped to provide an explanation for why the student achievement gap exists. A traditional explanation for the gap was poverty, racial segregation and inadequate funding of black schools (p. 24). Since the focus of the student achievement gap, these explanations were challenged. First, as it relates to poverty, this explanation has been refuted since many African Americans that are not impoverished are not achieving as Caucasian students. In addition, not every African American student is underachieving or achieving lower than Caucasian students. Second, according to Jencks and Phillips (1998), school desegregation may have played a role in closing the student achievement gap. Segregated schools did not provide equal opportunities and resources to African American students unlike the current desegregated schools. Finally, inadequate funding has also contributed to the student achievement gap (p. 26). This explanation has been dismissed since desegregation and districts are spending the same amount of money on all of its students. Many liberals gave these explanations during the 1960's, but the conservatives explained the reasons for the achievement gap were student genes, culture of poverty, and single motherhood.

Although these explanations were used, Jencks and Phillips (1998) indicated that the current explanations of the achievement gap were family factors and black and white student responses. Family factors mean the way in which parents interact with their children, for example, the reason why some Caucasian students have a vast vocabulary in comparison to some African American students (Jencks and Phillips, 1998). In addition, black and white students respond to the same classroom experiences differently. These current explanations will look at how students are responding in small group settings in comparison to large group settings. Jencks and Phillips (1998) suggest that closing the student achievement gap would promote racial equality in the United States.

Hedges and Nowell (1999) conducted a study using six data samples from all of the studies that had collected data on achievement tests from representative samples. Data utilized was collected from 1965 to 1996. The samples were: National Longitudinal Study of the High School class of 1972, National Longitudinal Study of Youth, National Assessment of Education Progress, Equality of Education Opportunity, High School & Beyond, and National Educational Longitudinal Study of the Eighth Grade Class of 1988. In order to analyze the data sets, sampling weights were used to construct estimates of the national means and standard deviations of test scores. The conclusions of the study are that the student achievement gap has narrowed since 1965 but the narrowing has decreased since 1972.

Symonds (2004) conducted a study of 32 Kindergarten to eighth grade schools in the San Francisco Bay area. These schools were selected based on their involvement with the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative and had to be involved in the collaborative

for a minimum of three to eight years. The schools also represented the diversity of schools- urban and suburban.

According to Symonds (2004), the goal of the study was to examine and compare the schools that demonstrated progress in closing the achievement gap and schools not closing the gap. The data was collected by a survey of all thirty-two schools. Once the data was collected, three schools were chosen that were closing the gap significantly to be researched through observations, interviews and document review. Finally, six gap-closing schools were selected to be in a focus group (2004).

Based on the findings of this study, Symonds (2004) recommends the importance of using data to close the achievement gap. It was discovered that teachers in gap-closing schools frequently administer on-going assessments and use the data to understand the skill gaps of low-achieving students. Teachers in these schools have time in their schedules and are encouraged to talk about assessment results, next steps and race. The factors that support the student achievement gap are professional development, encouragement to use inquiry, discussion of data with colleagues, classroom visitations, and teacher collaboration (p. 14).

Bifulco and Ladd (2006) studied how the experience of charter school students from disadvantaged groups will depend both on the new schooling options that the program makes available on the choices made by their parents. The experiences of the charter school students in North Carolina to examine how on popular approach, school choice has affected students of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, the examination of whether charter schools have increased or decreased racial isolation of black students and how they have affected the black-white test score gap.

According to the study, race and class are closely intertwined, the effects of charter schools on segregation and achievement gaps by socioeconomic status, measured by the parents' level of education.

In order to conduct the analysis, Bifulco and Ladd (2006) organized five cohort groups of students in third grade in 1996-2000 were utilized. The scale scores for these students on the end of the grade reading and math tests, their school type, gender, ethnicity, and highest level of completion of education by their parents was also utilized for the comparison. After reviewing the charter school data and public school data on student population, charter schools in North Carolina clearly increase the extent to which students are racially segregated. After reviewing the charter school data as it relates to the black-white test score gap, that the first year a student enters a charter school there is a negative effect on test score gains. The analysis also indicates that there is positive score gains as students remain in the charter school after two years. Black students who have parents who are not college educated display difficulty with achievement as opposed to their white classmates. The negative effect for charter schools on black students was more significant.

Bifulco and Ladd (2006) discovered that charter schools, in North Carolina, are more racially segregated than traditional public schools. More families choose charter schools to be with families that are racially similar and socioeconomically similar. When parents are given a choice, they choose to send their students more racially segregated schools. There is a need for more research on racial segregation, minority achievement, and black-white test score gaps in other states. The study did indicate that parents choose to put their children in schools that are close to their homes. These schools, like public

schools, are often reflections of their neighborhoods. In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) de jure segregation was eliminated but de facto segregation is allowed to exist. The issue of de facto segregation is affecting the school systems and currently no resolutions have been proposed that works.

Cooper and Schlesinger (2006) examined the role of cognitive developmental level plays in the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian children in kindergarten and first grade. Research has consistently supported the existence of an achievement gap in mathematics; researchers are currently attempting to identify reasons to explain how and why the gap begins in childhood and continues throughout adulthood. The most obvious reasons for this are socioeconomic status. Other variables include educational activities in the home and parental education, but these variables have not been keys to understanding the achievement gap. Piaget's theory of intellectual development was one of the first theoretical foundations used to describe changes in cognitive functioning. Based on literature, three hypotheses were developed: 1) African American children would perform significantly lower than Caucasian children on tests of mathematical achievement. 2) Proportionally more African American children would remain in the pre-operational stages of development than their same age Caucasian peers. 3) The achievement gap in mathematics would dissipate when CDL is held constant.

The study used a sample of 56 students, kindergarten (26) and first grade students (30); the students were recruited from a public elementary school located in a suburb of Chicago. In order to assess the student's mathematical abilities, the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement, 3rd edition mathematical subtests were used. These tests were the calculation, math fluency, and applied problems were the subtests specifically. The

scaled scores of the three math subtests were summed and a standard score was obtained. The cognitive development level was determined by two conservations of substance task given to the students. The children were tested over 1 hour and the tests were randomized to ensure minimization of bias in the administration. Four independent-samples t-tests were conducted to test the first hypothesis. The results indicated significant differences in overall mathematics achievement with African American children, for African American students scored significantly lower than Caucasian students. The t-test conducted on the calculation subtests was not significant. A two-way contingency table was used to test hypothesis 2. The results indicate more African American children remain in the preoperational stage than their same age Caucasian peers. Because there was no correlation between overall math achievement and CDL, student scores that were at the transitional group were removed from the data set. An ANCOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis that ethnicity and math achievement scores would no longer be significantly related after controlling for CDL.

Cooper and Schlesinger (2006) indicated that cognitive development level plays a role in kindergarten and first grade math skills. African American students scored significantly lower than Caucasian students in all of the subtests except on the calculation test. Differences really appear when problems become less routine. African American students remained in the pre-operational stage of development. If the cognitive developmental level was controlled, math achievement differences between African American and Caucasian was minimized. It also suggests that teachers can begin to narrow the achievement gap in their own classrooms. Teachers can identify those children that struggle with math due to less advanced cognitive developmental level.

Teachers can teach students how to conserve and classify as opposed to rote memorization.

McCall et al. (2006) examined the growth patterns for students in grades third to eighth grade enrolled in low-income schools and minority students compared to students enrolled in higher-income schools and Caucasian students. The study contained three components which were: an examination of overall status and growth using mean scale scores and scale score differences within a single school year, analysis of overall status and growth using a multilevel model spanning two years with multiple test, and detailed examination of scale score status and growth by score point.

In component one of the study, students in grades third through eighth grade took the Northwestern Evaluation Association tests and the sample included a variety of districts but not the largest. The focus was on African American, European American and Hispanic American differences. The results of this component indicated that an achievement gap existed between Caucasian students and African American students, and an achievement gap exists between Caucasian students and Hispanic students. This finding is consistent with similar research that has been conducted. In component two of the study, McCall et al. (2006) examined the student achievement trends in reading and math. Four datasets were created for the examination and a two level hierarchical model was used for the analysis. The results of this component confirm the student achievement gap between minority and non-minority students, and there is no evidence that the student achievement gap is shrinking. In the final component of the study, the same data that was utilized in study one was utilized. The student growth as a function of the student's score was examined to determine whether students that start with the same achievement but

differ in ethnicity show similar patterns of growth (McCall et al, 2006, p. 33). The results of this component indicated that minority students in schools with great poverty make less growth than their peers. The minority students also lose progress during the summer.

McCall et al. (2006) concluded that the student achievement gap couldn't be measured using traditional methods. The study does not make any accommodations for teacher low teacher expectations and the inequality of access (p. 43). Students that begin school with the same level of achievement are leaving with different levels of achievement. In order to understand the achievement gap, schools (administrators, parents, and teachers) must have a clear understanding of achievement data from a status and growth perspective.

Stiefel et al. (2006) examined the performance of New York City's elementary and middle school students on standardized tests and measuring and exploring the size distribution of the racial and ethnic gap performance. The New York City school system is the largest school system in the country. There are 1.1 million students, which come from a diverse background. The question for this study is the extent to which school policies contribute to and can ultimately help ameliorate, racial and ethnic disparities in performance.

In order to analyze the study, several related regression strategies were utilized to study the role of schools in explaining racial test score gaps among elementary and middle school students in New York City. The elementary students were students in the fifth grade (70,638 students) while the middle school students utilized the eighth grade (55,921 students). Students who were in special education full time, other, or Native

Americans race, who do not take the test, were not included in the sample. The standardized tests used for the study were New York State English Language Assessment or CTB/McGraw-Hill Test of Basic Skills in reading and California Achievement Test or New York State Math Assessment. A model was utilized to analyze individual student test scores, and wherever possible the model was utilized to estimate for the fifth and eighth grade. A limitation to consider for this study was the number of schools that were not segregated. There were many schools that were segregated and could not be utilized for the study, and schools with 5 students of each race were utilized. The distribution of raw-within school test scores, based on regression with race specific school fixed effects, shows that African American and Hispanic students achieve lower than their white peers. One explanation for within race gaps simply reflects unmeasured differences between population's different races. In analyzing school characteristics with-in school racial test score gaps, in fifth grade, Asian, Hispanic, and white students do worse in schools with larger enrollments. In eighth grade, black students do worse in schools with larger enrollments. Teacher variables (i.e. experience, degree, etc.) are correlated with higher test scores.

Stiefel et al.(2006) states the current test score gap is explained by the last year race gap. The test score gap is explained by racial and ethnic differences in poverty rates and differences in limitations in English proficiency. There is a difference in poor students and non-poor students' performance on standardized assessments, making the argument for a poverty gap. There is the importance of the language variables, for when students score below the 40th percentile on the LAB test and are eligible for programs to address limited English proficiency. There is also an importance of individual

characteristics in determining the test score outcomes. These students perform considerably better than otherwise similar students. ESL and bilingual education may help to reduce the Hispanic-white gaps. This study did not determine any easy answers for how schools can accomplish the reductions of the test score gaps.

In summary, many scholars have explained the student achievement gap in multiple ways. The explanations have some similarities. The studies support the argument that the resolution of the student achievement gap will come from the school and family. I will further investigate the schools and families as it relates to closing the student achievement gap.

Schools and the Student Achievement Gap

Schools have been researched because of their ability to improve student achievement and to close the student achievement gap. Many ideas specifically address schools and their ability to close the student achievement gap. Ineffective schools are one of the first factors to cause, and not close, the student achievement gap. Levine (1991) and Lezotte (1991), the U.S. Department of Vocational and Adult Education (2005), and Weber (1971) all assert characteristics found in effective schools. Cotton (2000), Davis and Thomas (1989), and Fullan (2000) shared the notion of strong instructional leadership is necessary to improve student achievement. Reynolds (1999) and Schweinhart (1997) share the idea of expanding enrollment in preschool programs, while Haller and Davis (1980) suggests reducing ability grouping and curriculum tracking as a way to explain the student achievement gap. Borman et al. (2003) provide evidence

supporting the idea that instructional intervention will aid in closing the student achievement gap.

Oakes (1982), Winfield (1986), Alexander et al. (1987), Thompson (2004), and Gay (2000) suggest ideas that impact the teachers' ideas and perceptions. Apple (1990), and Banks and Banks (2007) share the curriculum explanation on student achievement gap. Ladson-Billings (1994) and Sleeter (2001) share the pedagogical explanations for the student achievement gap. In the following paragraphs, I will share the research findings on the proposed ideas about a school closing the student achievement gap.

Effective Schools

In order to close the student achievement gap, schools must be effective in their collective efforts. Levine (1991), Lezotte (1991), Morand et al. (2007), and Weber (1971) presented indicators of school effectiveness, including the following seven tenets: 1) safe and orderly school, 2) clear school mission, 3) strong instructional leadership, 4) high expectations for all students, 5) increased opportunities for learning and student time on task, 6) frequent monitoring of student progress, and 7) positive home and school relations. George Weber (1971) conducted a one-year study of effective elementary schools, identifying many of the same factors. Weber (1971) found strong leadership, high expectations, an orderly environment, and the frequent monitoring of student progress. In addition, Morand et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative study of 32 schools in South Carolina that have closed the achievement gap. The purpose of the study was to provide information and characteristics of these schools so that the characteristics can be shared with other less successful schools. Based on the *No Child Left Behind* reporting categories, students are expected, from different demographic groups, to make adequate

yearly progress on measures of student achievement (Morand et al., 2007). This study takes into account the environment/climate of the school. Gap-closing schools, as considered in this study, were observed to have a positive school climate. Home-school relationships were significant characteristics, from the perspectives of teachers in these schools. Trust in leadership has also emerged as a central research theme. If a school becomes effective and embraces the characteristics of an effective school, the student achievement gap can close.⁵

Instructional Leadership

Cotton (2000), Davis and Thomas (1989), Fullan (2001), and the U.S Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (2005), shared that, through strong instructional leadership, a successful school can be created to address the student achievement gap. According to Fullan (2000), effective leaders are the key to large, sustainable education reform. A principal characterized as an instructional leader is the first step in improving student learning. The principal must do more than encourage math and reading, but the principal is expected to interpret, implement, and enforce district, state, and federal policies, and mobilize teachers' energy and capacity (Fullan, 2000). In addition, the principal is to lead the school to assure that student achievement occurs for all children. Instructional leaders intervene when necessary and serve as agents of change by understanding the process of decision-making and involving others in the process.

⁵ It is noted that the development of an effective school does not necessarily support the student achievement gap. Effective schools will help improve student achievement, important for education leaders in their efforts to develop a setting in which the achievement gap can close.

These individuals understand that change takes place over time, and that effective communication is essential (Cotton, 2000).

The U.S Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education [US DoE] (2005), conducted a study on four high schools that were able to close the achievement gap and sustain their success over time. These high schools were located in Texas, California, and Indiana. The U.S. Department of Education held a series of focus groups to learn how administrators and teachers worked to narrow and close the achievement gap. Common themes appeared in the studies. The school culture held high expectations for students and featured learning supports to help students meet expectations. There was emphasis on accountability and assessment to determine if additional help was needed. The culture fostered a collaborative and optimistic attitude (US DoE, 2005).

The schools' curriculum aligned with standards-based instruction, and changes in class schedules allowed more time for instruction and engaging teaching techniques. The schools had to embrace change and recognize its difficulty; resources were needed, and federal policies served as the catalyst. The schools for this study were selected because they demonstrated success over time. The administrators of these schools held high expectations for staff, and they served as facilitators or coaches. In addition, administrators helped to develop strategies for success and removed any barriers that stood in the way of teachers' ability to implement their plans (US DoE, 2005).

Administrators engaged in curriculum alignment efforts, to make sure that instruction in reading and math directly covered expectations for what students should know and be

able to do, per state and district standards. Administrators adopted different class schedules to offer more time for instruction, especially in math.

Leadership in the twenty-first century requires the ability to interact effectively with people from backgrounds different from one's own - an ability that requires real-life experience. According to Tatum (2007), leadership takes practice, and every leader needs to find ways to affirm identity, build community, and cultivate leadership within the school. Tatum (2007) maintains administrators must ask themselves, how do students see themselves in the environment? Who is transmitting messages to students in their daily interactions in classrooms and school hallways? It is noted that, without an effective school and instructional leadership, the student achievement gap will not be closed.

Increased Enrollment in Preschool

According to Schweinhart (1980) and Reynolds (1999), research relating to enrollment in preschool programs indicates that students who attend compensatory preschool programs earn higher test scores. Schweinhart (1980) conducted a study on the Perry Preschool Project. This longitudinal study conducted on 123 high-risk African American children. The students were of low socioeconomic status, had low IQ scores and were of high risk for failing school. The research participants were placed in the High Scope Intervention program. The results of this research were varied but supported the increased enrollment of students in preschool programs

Reynolds (1999) conducted a study on the Child Parent Center in Chicago. This study was a federally funded investigation of the effects of an early and extensive childhood intervention in Central-city Chicago. The study traced the scholastic and social

development of students. One of the findings was that increased enrollment of students in childhood intervention programs helped to raise student achievement.

Ability Grouping and Tracking

Haller and Davis (1980) conducted a study on racial imbalance in grouping, using 49 self-contained classrooms serving 943 fourth- through sixth-graders in five school districts. They interviewed teachers since they were responsible for constructing reading groups, and determined that 78% of the white students had more ability, better work habits, and fewer behavioral problems than black students. Since black and white students were (and are) not equally distributed across groups, ability grouping will contribute to the black/white achievement gap since group placements affect how much students learn. This unequal representation attributed to the achievement gap.

Instructional Interventions

Instructional interventions do not specifically aim to close the black/white achievement gap. Instructional interventions are utilized to help students at risk for failure. For example, Borman et al. (2005) examined the intervention program *Success for All*. This initiative was developed at Johns Hopkins University, and was based not on race, but reading research. It coincidentally benefitted African American children. *Success for All* involves 90 minutes of small group instruction, and 20 minutes of one-to-one tutoring. Conclusions were that it is not necessary to use different instructional methods or curriculum for students, based on race. The research maintains that all children learn more when students, home, and school are well matched. The research is not conclusive.

Ideas, Perceptions, and Expectations of Students

Ideas and perceptions are crucial in explaining the student achievement gap. Oakes (1982) found that student attitudes were distributed across curriculum tracks in ways consistent with the ideas of Bowles and Gintis (1976). Oakes reported that students in the low track see themselves as inadequate in school, but do not blame the school for their current low position. In addition to student ideas, teacher perceptions and ideas are also an explanation for the student achievement gap. Teacher expectations are critical to the success of the students.

Many researchers studied the impact of a teacher's expectations. Winfield (1986) conducted a study on teachers' belief in inner city youth. She stated that a teacher's belief can be categorized along four dimensions: 1) seeking improvement, 2) maintaining the status quo, 3) assuming responsibility, and 4) shifting responsibility. Four types of teacher behavior develop from these four dimensions: 1) tutor, 2) general contractor, 3) custodian, or 4) referral agent. A *tutor* is a teacher who believes that students can improve and believe it is the teacher's responsibility to help students improve. A *general contractor* believes that improvement is possible but it is the responsibility of someone else within the school, such as paraprofessional, aide, etc. A *custodian* believes that there is not much that can be done to help the students and does not look for help for the students. A *referral agent* does not believe that there is much that can be done to help the students and shifts the responsibility to help the students to other personnel (such as special education teachers, school psychologists, etc.). These low expectations are also compounded by the teacher's assimilationist perspective, that is, desire for all students to conform to the dominant group. This last type of teacher behavior does not validate the

African American or minority student culture (Winfield, 1986). According to Thompson (2003), African American students receive non-challenging curricula based on a teacher's low expectations and disbelief that the students will be successful. This point becomes evident from the number – or lack thereof - of African American students in gifted education (p. 29). Gay, in her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Research, Theory and Practice* (2000) identified five themes that recur in research regarding teacher expectations:

1. Teacher expectations significantly influence the quality of learning opportunities provided to students.
2. Teacher expectations about students are affected by factors that have no basis in fact and may persist even in the face of contrary evidence.
3. Assumptions about a student's aptitude are difficult to change.
4. Teachers tend to believe that white students and some Asian American students are smarter than other students.
5. Teachers who feel less confident about their teaching ability are more likely than others to have low expectations for students.

These five themes, and the ideas presented previously, explain how teacher perceptions and ideas can impact the student achievement gap.

Teacher Bias

Connie Titone in her 1998 article, "Educating the White Teacher as Ally," supports the examination of bias by teachers. She shares the idea that white teachers need to become their student's ally, for education is not a neutral act. She states,

Our personal identities and our professional ones are inextricably connected. To create exemplary professionals, we have to be self-actualized individuals-or at least be working on it. We have to attend systematically to our students' personal development at the same time that we are working on our professional development (p.160).

The courses that are offered during the teacher's university experience and workshops during the professional experience focus more on content, curricula, research, assessment, philosophy, and psychology of the child. These classes do not address issues of race in a critical or systematic way (Kincheloe et al., 1998). Without addressing the issue of race, the status quo is maintained. Since white female teachers dominate the work force, these teachers must become allies to their minority students. They must know self, know others, and know how to take action. In order to know self, the teacher must first understand his or her own culture and grasp how cultural perspectives shape thinking and actions. The teacher must next understand the present-day experiences of people oppressed by society and consider the educational implications of that oppression. Finally, the teacher must understand the politics of education and take action in a professional setting, to aid in the social and intellectual development of young people (Kincheloe et al., 1998).

Curriculum

Apple (2004), Banks and Banks (2007), and the Comprehensive Partnership for Mathematics and Science and Achievement in Urban Schools (CPMSA) (2002) share the ways in which the curriculum and the school impact student achievement. Schools exert their authority and enforce social control via their curricula. Schools select curricula that contain core knowledge. Apple suggests that school curriculum does not contain

humanness (p. 46). *Humanness* refers to inclusion of all groups using that curriculum (e.g., minorities, women). Curriculum does not include multiple perspectives, and the single perspective is a reinforcement of the dominant group. The single white perspective sends the message to students who the Caucasian cultural group has more value and is important than the African American, Hispanic, and/or Asian cultural group because of the need to study the Caucasian cultural perspective. Schools are diverse settings, and students should be presented with examples and models of their existence or presence in the core knowledge.

In 2002, CPMSA conducted a study to aid early 1990s urban schools in providing challenging standards-based curricula and instruction to students. CPMSA provided professional development to the math and science teachers. The results of this study indicated that policies needed to be strengthened and implemented to ensure that all students were receiving a rigorous education, based on the belief system that all children can learn. The curriculum can impact the student's motivation to learn by not including the students in the curriculum.

Pedagogical Practices

Ladson-Billings (1994), Cochran-Smith (2004), and Schmoker (2002) researched the pedagogical practices of teachers and how they contribute to either the exacerbation or the narrowing of the gap. Cochran-Smith's work involved developing social justice teaching for pre-service teachers, and suggests that the most important goal of teaching and teacher education is social responsibility, social change, and social justice. In order to teach social justice, Cochran-Smith created six guiding principles. This pedagogical approach is drawn from the literature related to knowledge, skills, and experiences of

teachers working in diverse urban schools. Teaching practice is tightly linked with knowledge. The first principle is, enable the significant work within communities of learners. This means that the teacher has a deep knowledge of the subject matter and how to translate the knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 66). The second principle is to build on what students bring to school with them - knowledge and interest, cultural and linguistic resources. This means that teachers acknowledge, value, and work from the cultural and linguistic resources as well as the interest and knowledge of their students (p. 69). The third principle is to teach skills and bridge gaps, which means learning how to help students connect what they know to what they don't know, and to use prior skills to learn new ones (p. 70). Principle four is, work with (not against) individuals, families, and communities, learning to appreciate the complexities of working with individual families and communities (p. 74). The fifth principle is to diversify forms of assessment, meaning, use a variety of ways (portfolio, performance, oral, etc.) to assess student progress (p. 75). Principle six is to make inequity, power, and activism explicit parts of the curriculum, encouraging students to think critically about the information to which they are exposed and making explicit curriculum issues (p. 77). Cochran-Smith's research was particularly focused on pre-service teachers.

Ladson-Billings (1994) discussed the notion of culturally relevant teaching for teachers. Culturally relevant teaching uses the student's culture to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. Culturally relevant pedagogy is the opposite of assimilationist teaching. Assimilationist pedagogy occurs when the teacher does not see himself or herself as a part of the community. These teachers attempt to homogenize students into one American identity, and attempt to put knowledge into the students

(Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 34.). Teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy view themselves as artists and believe their students can succeed. Culturally relevant pedagogy helps students make connections and demonstrates the connectedness with all of the students. According to Ladson-Billings, these teachers see the color and culture of their students.

Schmoker (2002) asserts that the real cause of higher achievement is what is taught, and how it is taught. In many schools, what is taught is mismatched with what is assessed. Schools and districts benefit more when standards and instruction are aligned.

The pedagogical work of Cochran-Smith (2004), Ladson-Billings (1994), and Schmoker (2002) was important because it specified how students were to be taught by teachers. In summary, relating to schools, the student achievement gap was explained in multiple ways. The school can close the student achievement gap by executing any of the following actions: becoming an effective school, improving the quality of leadership, increasing the enrollment of the preschool programs, reducing ability grouping, instructional support intervention for at risk students, improving teachers' beliefs and perceptions, and improving teacher content knowledge, instructional delivery and pedagogy.

Urban schools need to be places in which children of color have powerful advocates, to make certain that the teachers are well trained, a challenging curriculum is implemented, and other educational resources inspire students to strive for excellence. It is important to compete in a global economy, and the ability to do so is dependent upon educating all of our students - including students of color trapped in poverty - at high levels (Tatum, 2007). In order to succeed at this task, schools need to be inclusive

environments, affirming student identities and building a school community, which fosters a sense of belonging and cultivating of leadership. It is not only the school stakeholders who have been identified for closing the student achievement gap, but families also have been the focus of research on the student achievement gap.

Families and Student Achievement Gap

The family's role in the student achievement gap includes the following factors: socioeconomic status, race/genetics, parenting, and race. Biddle (2001) discusses the ways in which poverty impacts student achievement. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2001), examined how black-white differences affect educational achievement. Gardere (1999) and Kunjufu (2001) discussed how the parenting actions of African American parents might improve student achievement and impact the student achievement gap.

Socioeconomics

Poverty is a contributing factor to the achievement gap. Poverty, in the education system, is typically defined by a child's free and reduced lunch status, but inadequate heating, food, and shelter can also identify poverty. According to Biddle (2001), many believe that poor children will not do well in school and are more likely to fail. Often, poor parents of children hold minimum-wage jobs that prevent the student's parents from purchasing materials necessary for school success and investing time with their children to complete homework or reinforce the daily lessons. Biddle states, "...the American childhood poverty is at least one and one half times greater than that of any advanced,

industrial democracy, and this means that the problems of this magnitude simply do not appear elsewhere (p. 5).”

Race

A study by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2001), explored the relationship between black-white differences in educational achievement and black-white differences in a variety of educational and economic outcomes. A comparison was made between African American and Caucasian people with similar levels of education and educational achievement. This study produced several major findings. The black-white disparities in employment were, for young adults with similar levels of prior educational achievement, at least one-half smaller than black-white employment disparities for young adults as a whole. Blacks are less likely to go to college than whites, and blacks’ college completion rates were lower than the college completion rates of whites. In elementary and secondary schools, blacks scored lower on mathematics and reading tests than whites. (This also includes students with similar test scores.) The black-white math gap differed in size across grades, but does not show a narrowing of the gap. The black-white reading gap grew wider. This occurred between grades and within two of the elementary school cohorts. This was observed in grades 9 and 12, than for a cohort observed in grade 2. In general, findings show that, in children and young adults with similar levels of prior educational achievement, the educational and economic performance of blacks relative to whites was substantially lower than the performance to whites as a whole. According to the U.S. Department of National Educational Statistics, blacks have a lower level of educational

and economic performance, educational attainment, and earnings than whites. The disparities are frequently smaller and are sometimes entirely absent, for individuals with similar levels of prior educational attainment.

Parenting

In his 1999 book entitled *Smart Parenting for African Americans*, Gardere shares the ways African American parents should rear their children so that the children will be successful students. These recommendations help to support the school system in its quest to educate African American children. First, parents are charged with developing a healthy self-image and esteem in their children. Children with high self-esteem have confidence to succeed in school and life. Self esteem grows from how you are loved, nurtured, and spoken to as a child (Gardere, 1999; Kunjufu, 2001) Secondly, education begins at home and students should be encouraged to love to learn. The love of education can occur via the student's exposure to reading and stimulation through monitored use of a computer and games that require thinking. Thirdly, African American children should not be encouraged to watch hours of television. Watching numerous hours of television at an early age allows students to become passive and internalize negative images and stereotypes portrayed on television. Fourth, parents should read to their children as early and as often as possible (Gardere, 1999). The books should be varied by type (fiction or non-fiction) and genre (poetry, mystery, science-fiction, history, etc.). Fifth, parents who determine their child is not making progress should have their child tutored. Sixth, children ages 3, 4, or 5 should attend a preschool (or Head Start program, for those who cannot afford a preschool program. Head Start is a federally funded program started in 1965 with a \$3.5 billion dollar grant from the federal government. These programs have

provided impoverished families a “head start” to successful schooling, providing students with services such as nutritional programs, academic enrichment, medical care, etc. (Gardere, 1999). The program assists families during home visitation with opportunities to learn from the teachers how to develop the home into a place supporting children and education. Seventh, parents should work in collaboration with the school. Parents should join the PTA or volunteer within the school at least once a year, allowing you to become more familiar with the individuals working with your children 181 days a year.

In *Parsing the Achievement Gap*, Paul E. Barton (2003) analyzed 14 research studies and synthesized the data to identify 14 correlates/factors that impacted student achievement. According to Barton, these factors are both school based (such as rigor curriculum, teacher preparation, teacher experience and attendance, class size, technology assisted instruction, and school safety) and home based (such as parent participation, student mobility, birth weight, lead poisoning, hunger and nutrition, reading to young children, television watching, and parent availability). Barton concludes, if the home and school factors are addressed, then student achievement will occur.

In summary, the African American families can assist in closing the student achievement gap. Many of the factors related to poverty and socioeconomics impact student achievement but parents working with the school are critical in helping to close the student achievement gap. This is important lesson of parent involvement in the schools. Although many schools are struggling with African American students not achieving, some schools have African American students achieving and closing the student achievement gap.

Academic Achievement and African American Students

Dr. Douglas Reeves and the Heritage Foundation conducted additional studies in schools demonstrating closure of the student achievement gap. The results provided support for a gardening metaphor, and some of the results were similar. From 1995 to 1998, Dr. Douglas Reeves researched performance assessment in schools known as “90/90/90 schools,” that is schools with 90% of its population eligible for free and reduced lunches, 90% of its population ethnic minorities, and 90% of its population meeting or exceeding high academic standards on academic achievement tests. In these schools, five common characteristics emerged from the research. These characteristics were: 1) focus on academic achievement, 2) clear curriculum choices, 3) frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement, 4) emphasis on nonfiction writing, and 5) collaborative scoring of student work (Reeves, 2000).

These 90/90/90 schools focus like lasers on student achievement. In the school facilities, visitors can see data and student displays showing student improvement. The students’ deficiencies are the focus. Teachers and administrators strategize ways to promote student improvement. The 90/90/90 schools choose a curriculum emphasizing reading, writing, and math, to improve student achievement. Students are assessed frequently, and those in need of improvement are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency. Students are not belittled for doing poorly but are encouraged to do better in the future. The students are required to make a written response in each assessment and are frequently scored by an external scorer. The 90/90/90 schools demonstrate the clear and convincing characteristic of effective teachers and

administrators using techniques with no externally imposed method of instruction (Reeves, 2000).

In addition to the 90/90/90 schools, the Heritage Foundation conducted a study on 21 high-performing, high-poverty schools. This study showed seven common traits for high-performing, high-poverty schools. The first trait is that the principal must be free to decide how to spend money, how to hire, and which curricula to teach. It is important that the principal is empowered. The second trait is that principals use measurable goals to establish the culture of achievement. The principal sets a vision for the school, and every teacher must be held accountable to achieve the goal. These schools make college the student's goal. The third trait is that master teachers, leaders within the schools that keep the mission of the school focused on student achievement, bring out the best in a faculty, which is the only way to improve student achievement. Trait four indicates that rigorous and regular testing leads to continuous student achievement. Testing is the diagnostic tool that best enforces a school's goal and ensures that teaching and learning of the curriculum occurs. The fifth trait is that achievement is the key to discipline. Schools will succeed when expectations are for achievement of all students. Trait six indicates that the principal works actively with parents to make the home a center of learning (Carter, 2001). Lack of parental involvement is the first excuse given by students for non-achievement, but principals must work with parents to help their children to be successful. The seventh and final trait is that successful schools support effort that creates ability. Students are expected to work hard.

Reviewing the case studies of schools, which closed the student achievement gap, reveals similar strategies used by these schools, supporting academic achievement of

African American students. These schools are examples to other schools, which are not closing the student achievement gap.⁶ In summary, the student achievement gap has been and is an issue for African American children. The students have had to obtain support from the judicial system, federal, state, and local policy, additional funding, instructional interventions, etc., to gain access to education. There are examples of schools closing the student achievement gap for others to follow in the field, but the achievement gap remains.

Theoretical Lens

Accelerative Factors Theory

Taylor, Orgass, and Kouyate (2007) created a theory for closing the student achievement gap. This research was written to introduce *accelerative factors theory* (AFT), as a strategy to use to understand how to accelerate achievement to close the racial achievement gaps in America (p. 1). It is critical to close the racial achievement gap because gap closure has slowed and comprehensive reforms have failed to close the gaps. The framework encourages state and national policy makers to work with community, school leaders (administrators, parents), and scholars to create a national policy agenda focused on closing the student achievement gap.

There are four reasons for the collaboration between state and national policy makers and community, school leaders, and scholars: there are moral, constitutional, communal, and economic reasons. It is a moral responsibility, that education is for all children, and a student's non-achievement is a social injustice. Education is a

⁶ It is acknowledged by the researcher that the 90/90/90 schools and 21 high-performing, high-poverty schools have similarities, but there are some small differences in their strategies used to close the student achievement gap.

constitutional right, as written in the Declaration of Independence, for the achievement gap to be closed and African American students to learn as their classmates. It is a communal responsibility to make certain that African American students achieve and have better quality of life. Lower educational attainment directly relates to diminished earning and career options. The student achievement gap impacts the economy, and the nation is impacted by the student achievement gap. According to Taylor, Orgass, and Kouyate (2007), it is an American responsibility to accelerate the closure of the student achievement gap.

Accelerative factors theory consists of seven constructs necessary to accelerate achievement. *Soil* is the first construct to accelerate the achievement. The soil is a metaphor for the students whose literacy and numeracy skills may have been unattended or underestimated by caregiver, school, neighborhood, and media environments (Taylor et al, 2007). It is recommended that students be introduced to stories of African Americans who overcame the challenges of reading and mathematics. Teachers should also communicate to the students that they are able to overcome learning challenges by working hard and putting in more time and effort.

The *seed* is the second metaphor for curriculum and pedagogy. The curriculum should be rigorous. According to Taylor, Orgass, and Kouyate (2007), a rigorous curriculum is structured around clearly aligned state, national, or international standards.

The *root* is the third metaphor, for a student's culture. The culture of a student is dependent on the teacher's ability to support cultural questioning, emotional, and social competence.

The *environment* is the fourth metaphor, for the context of the students. The context includes parents, peers, churches, organizations, and neighborhoods, and all of these groups must be involved in order for the student achievement gap to be closed.

The *gardener* is the fifth metaphor, for the teacher. The teacher must possess personal, professional, and communal attributes critical in accelerating the achievement of African American students. It is recommended that teachers show a positive respect for the students in their classes, promote and sustain high expectations of students, and use feedback to enhance a sense of efficacy and enjoyment of teaching.

The *gardener support* is the sixth metaphor, for the administration. The administrator must be knowledgeable and provide resources to help teachers to accelerate the student achievement gap.

The *gardener school* is the final metaphor, for teacher and administrator training. The training provides information for how the AFT components work together. The data will be analyzed by the accelerative factors theory.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT), undergirded by neo-Marxist theories and Marxism, examines the social superstructures in a society that practices hegemony by marginalizing persons along the lines of race, class, and gender. Marxism, and neo-Marxist theories, viewed schooling as part of the larger social order that oppressed and maintained the underclass workers in the proletariat. Apple (1975) and Giroux (1981) argued that schools function to reproduce social stratification via the hidden curriculum. Apple defined *hidden curriculum* as:

The hidden curriculum in schools serves to reinforce basic rules surrounding the nature of conflict and its uses. It posits a network of assumptions that, when internalized by students, establishes the boundaries of legitimacy...the fact is that these assumptions are obligatory for the students, since at no time are the assumptions articulated or questioned (p. 99).

With schools as political structures that maintained hegemony, oppression along the lines of race, class, and gender prevailed. Thus the purpose of education was to educate the oppressed, so that they could resist or overcome oppression (Freire, 2000). The main focus of *critical race theory* enabled people to reflect and critique dominant superstructures in society and question hidden agendas relating to the curriculum.

CRT sought to challenge the dominant hegemonic practices that oppressed marginalized groups in society. CRT developed from a need to confront specific racial issues not addressed by critical theory. Lynn (1999) explained critical race pedagogy as the daily encounter of racist practices experienced by African American educators which made their positions unique, and maintaining cultural identity by teaching children about African American experiences. He further argued for a liberatory pedagogy, which challenged the dominant Eurocentric epistemology.

Critical race theorists not only challenged the mainstream liberals and conservatives in the legal academy, they also addressed the role of racism in American life by questioning the legal treatment of people of color. Crenshaw et al. (1995) posited that *critical race theory* “aims to examine the terms by which race and racism have been negotiated in American consciousness, and to recover and revitalize the radical tradition of race consciousness among African American and other peoples of color.”

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), *critical race theory* is based on three basic factors:

- *Ordinariness*: Racism is ordinary - the usual way society does business. Colorblind or formal conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can thus remedy flagrant forms of discrimination (p. 7)
- *Interest convergence*: Racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically), so large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate racism.
- *Social construction*: Race and races are products of social thought and relations. Races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient. In this dissertation, the theme of interest convergence and ordinariness will be used to illuminate how race is addressed in an educational setting.

In summary, the research literature on the student achievement gap (See Table 1) will be used in this study to create themes for the research data and to present the findings. Taylor's *accelerative factor theory* will be used to analyze the data and examine the ways in which stakeholders are minimizing the student achievement gap. *Critical race theory* will help to illuminate the findings within *accelerative factors theory*.

In the next chapter, the strategy in which the student achievement gap will be explored will be detailed. This will be the methodology section of this research.

Table 1 Student Achievement Gap Key Characteristics

<i>SAG Topics</i>	<i>Author</i>
Student Achievement Gap	Barton (2003); Bennett et al. (2004); Bifulco & Ladd (2006); Campbell, Hambo, & Mazzeo (2000); Cooper & Schleser (2006); Education Trust (1999); Ferguson (1998,2000,2005); Fryer & Levitt (2002, 2006); Haycock (2001); Hedges & Nowell (1999); Jencks and Phillips (1998); Jenkins (2006); McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury, & Houser (2006); McWhorter et al (2000); Murrell (2007); Myers, et al. (2004); Ogbu (2002); Rothstein (2004); Steifel et al (2006); Symonds (2004);Thompson (2007);U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (2005)
Student Access Historical Events	Anderson (2007); Fultz (2004); King (1993); Margo (1990); Woodson (2003, 2004)
Schools	Barton (2003); Carter (2000); Haller (1980); Kannapel & Clements (2005); McPartland, Morand et al. (2007); Nation at Risk (1983); National Commission Excellence in Education (1857,1936,1983,2006,2008); NCLB (2001); Reynolds (1999); Schweinhart (1980); Taylor, Welch & Thomas (2007);Tyack & Cuban (1995); Reeves (2000); United States Supreme Court Cases (1896, 1938, 1950, 1954)
Effective Schools	Cotton (2000); Levine & Lezotte, (1999); Weber (1971); Purkey and Smith (1982); Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore (1995); McLaughlin (1978)

SAG Topics (cont.)	Author
Principal (Instructional) Leadership	Blase & Blase, (1987); Chung, & Miskel, (1989); Davis & Thomas, (1989); Dewey, (1916); Fullan, (2000); Halverson et al. (2005); Hoy & Miskel, (2005); Kaplan, Nunnery & Owings, (2005); Leithwood and Riehl, (2004); Marzano, (2005); Sergiovanni (1996), Tatum (2007)
Teacher Practice	Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson (1987); Allington & Cunningham (2002, 2003); Apple (1990, 2004); Banks & Banks (2007); Borman et al. (2005); Bowles and Ginitis (1976); Cochran-Smith (2004); Ferguson (1998); Gay (2000, 2004); Kincheloe et al. (1998); Ladson-Billings (1994); Oakes (1982); Schmoker (2002); Sleeter (2001); Thompson (2003, 2004); Winifield (1986)
Race and Student Achievement	Anderson (2007); Apple (1975,1979); Bali & Alvarez (2004); Becker & Luthar (2002); Bowles & Ginitis (1976); Boykin (1986); Carter (2003); Delpit (1995); Fordham (1996); Fryer & Levitt (2003); Giroux (1981,1983); Giroux & McLaren (1989); Howard (2003); Jacobson et al. (2001); Lynn (1999, 2006); Myers, Kim, & Mandala (2004); Noguera & Akom (2000); Phillips (1998); Phillips et al. (1998); Sharp & Green (1975); Sorensen & Halinan, (1977); Tate (1996);Watkins, Lewis, & Chou (2001); Yeakey & Gordon (1982); Yeakey & Bennett (1990); Young (1971)
Assessments and African American	Baydar, & Greek (2003); Borman & Dowling (2003); Card & Rothstein (2004); Chubb & Loveless (2002); Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor (2006); Colman (1966); Elliot & Fuchs (1997); Hedges & Nowell (1998, 1999); Hilliard (1991); Kim & Herman (2004); Murname, Willett, & Levy (1995); Neal & Johnson (1996); Todd & Wolpin (2004)

SAG Topics (cont.)	Author
Academic Achievement and African American	Alson (2003); Jordan & Cooper (2003); Perry & Hilliard (2003); Polite & Davis (1999); Sizemore et al. (1983); Spencer, Markestrom, & Adams (1990); Steele & Aronson (1998); Stinson (2007); Taylor (2003)
Family Factors	Barton (2003); Biddle (2001); Ferguson (2005); Gardere (1999); Greenwood & Hickman (1991); Kunjufu (2001); Seefeldt (1985); US. Dept of Education National Center for Education Statistics(2001); Voydanhoff & Donnelly (1996)

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to discover how stakeholders of an elementary school (administrators, parents, and teachers) have closed or is closing its student achievement gap. Based on the in-depth understanding the researcher desired to gain, qualitative case study research methods were deemed the most appropriate. It is not the intent of the study to generalize the results of closing the student achievement gap by the school to other schools. Instead, the strategies can be transferred to other similar schools. Public document analysis, observations, and interviews created the data to understand the strategies employed by one school to close its student achievement gap. Once the data was analyzed, the researcher gained insight into how the school stakeholder's closed the student achievement gap.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methods and procedures employed in this study. The researcher's lens, research design, sampling strategy, procedures, methods of data collection, and data analysis procedures will be discussed in detail. This chapter concludes after addressing the trustworthiness of the data and the ethical concerns considered.

Practitioner Scholars Lens

In reflecting on how I view student achievement gap, I believe that my lenses for looking at this problem are both practitioner and scholar. The practitioner scholars lens is derived from clinical psychology field (Stoltenbert, et. al, 2000). It is defined as a science

practice relationship that has a productive interaction of theory and practice in a primary practice based approach to inquiry.

As an administrator, I utilize my practitioner scholar lens in my daily work. For example, I have been employed in a public school district for 12 years. This district has a large student achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students. The challenge presented to the administrators of the district, by the superintendent (three years ago) was, “What are you going to do to eliminate the student achievement gap in this district?” The room in which the administrators sat remained silent, and no one responded. Looking at the administrators, none of the principals could articulate how they were going to close the student achievement gap. I am not certain of their thoughts, but I knew that I was uncertain how I would close the achievement gap in the district. I definitely had ideas about the school of which I was principal - but not the district. The superintendent presented the longitudinal data on the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students. This data indicated that, for third-grade students, the 2005 gap was 34%, the 2006 gap was 30%, and, in 2007, the gap was 34%. The statistics were alarming and angered and frustrated me as an administrator, because the African American children were not achieving. The parking lot and side conversations seemed to resonate with the same sentiments of frustration and anger, but quickly focused on teacher, parent, and student quality. I agreed that some of these concerns were factors, but the teachers, parents, and students could not be the only reasons for this problem. There must be more to the problem and issues of the student achievement gap within the district. I wanted to learn more about the student achievement gap. I began to read more on the topic and enrolled in the doctoral program to further study. Studying has helped to

make me a scholar. This is one reason why I utilize the practitioner scholar lens for this research study.

Additionally, it is important to me that I help students overcome obstacles preventing them from attaining a quality education. As an elementary student, I had a difficult time learning to read. I was unable to connect the letter name and letter sound relationships to read and understand what I was reading. Instead of my first grade teacher providing me with additional help, she referred me to receive special education classes. My first grade teacher shared with my family that I would receive additional help for my reading difficulty if I would attend special classes. I attended one class and was grouped with the mentally and physically handicapped students. I did not receive additional help during this weekly special class time. I remember not reading that day but drawing circles on the board while my nose was pressed on the board. I was embarrassed and angry. I refused to attend any additional classes, and I pleaded with my family to support me and not send me to the weekly special classes. My family agreed with me and asked the school to allow me to work with the school reading specialist to improve my reading. In addition to working with the reading specialist, my family involved me with Sunday school classes and Vacation Bible School, which gave me more of an opportunity to read and practice reading. The teachers of the classes at my church were certified and taught me how to become a better reader.

I feel I was fortunate, for I had the help of my family and church. They supported me and helped me to persevere through the challenge of learning to read. As a practitioner, I believe it is my responsibility to help students as I was helped. As a researcher, this incident also helped shape my perspective on educating children by

wanting to know how to best educate students. Consequently, I approach this study critically in investigating how school stakeholders (principal, teacher, and/or parents) eliminate the student achievement gap. Lincoln and Guba (2000) define the process of reflecting critically on self as researcher... (p. 183)” as an important part of my researcher lens.

Case Study Research Design

The single case study research design was used in order to gain an in-depth understanding of stakeholder perspectives, experience, and administrator practices closing the student achievement gap (Stake, 2000). The rationale is to provide insight into the complex issue of the student achievement gap and how a school is closing the gap. It is important for the district in which the school resides to have this information, which is not generalizable, but transferable, to help improve student achievement. This method has been used in numerous areas of study (psychology, sociology, political science). Case studies can be intrinsic, instrumental, or collective (Stake, 2000). This research will utilize an intrinsic case study. An intrinsic case study helps a researcher gain a better understanding of a particular situation. In this study, the data gathered from the interviews, observation, and document review will provide an essential understanding of how the local school stakeholder’s are eliminating the student achievement gap.

The case chosen offers an opportunity to learn about a complex social phenomenon of closing of the student achievement gap (Stake, 1998; Yin, 2003). Frederick Douglas Elementary School (FDES) was chosen for this study for two reasons. First, based on the published standardized assessment data for two years, the school met the criteria established for *Dame Dame schools*. Dame Dame schools are schools that

have closed the achievement gap or used ingenuity to close the gap. Second, the district in which the study occurred has a 30% student achievement gap in math and reading between the Caucasian and African American students. Third, the district has not been able to close or minimize this gap for all schools, but certain schools within the district have closed and/or minimized the gap. Finally, the school district has an agreement for improving the quality of education that African American students receive and closing the student achievement gap is part of the agreement. These are the reasons why the student achievement gap warrants further investigation.

A methodological review of the literature revealed several examples in which qualitative case studies were utilized: Blase and Kirby (1992); Gilrane et al. (2008); Johnson et al., (2000); Pena (2000); Smith (2006); Stringfield (2007). In all of these qualitative case studies, the authors were interested in gaining a better understanding of a complex phenomenon. Each study had predetermined criteria used to select participants, and the number of participants was between 10 and 30 for each of the studies. In some of the studies, administrators were instrumental in directing and assisting with the study implementation. The methods for data collection were interviews, document analysis, and observations. For example, Pena (2000) conducted a case study in which she reviewed the parental involvement of Mexican American parents of a school in Texas. Pena interviewed 24 parents, 4 school staff, and 2 administrators. The parents were able to identify factors impacting parental involvement and offered suggestions for improving involvement. These factors included teacher attitudes, parents' feelings of welcome, school staff communication (both frequency and method), and a shared understanding between teachers and parents of parent involvement. My study similarly aims to report

how administrators, parents, and teachers helped identify the problems and solutions to the problem. This solution is my quest in learning about the student achievement gap from administrators, parents, and teachers.

Stake (2000) asserts a case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied. A researcher needs to determine what can be learned from a single case. I chose to conduct an intrinsic case study to learn about a specific case (school) eliminating the student achievement gap, allowing me to learn more about this specific school. This study does not attempt to build a theory or generalize.

Site Selection

The case chosen offers an opportunity to learn about a complex social phenomenon of closing of the student achievement gap (Stake, 1998; Yin, 2003). Frederick Douglas Elementary School (FDES) was chosen for this study for two reasons. First, based on the published standardized assessment data for two years, the school met the criteria established for *Dame Dame schools* (Taylor, Orgass, and Kouyate (2007)). Dame Dame schools are schools that have closed the achievement gap or used ingenuity to close the gap. Second, the district in which the study occurred has a 30% student achievement gap in math and reading between the Caucasian and African American students. Third, the district has not been able to close or minimize this gap for all schools, but certain schools within the district have closed and/or minimized the gap. Finally, the school district has an agreement for improving the quality of education that African American students receive and closing the student achievement gap is part of the

agreement. These are the reasons why the student achievement gap warrants further investigation.

Purposeful sampling strategy was used to select the school from which to collect data. Purposeful sampling entails selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). The site school was selected as a Dame Dame candidate based on a two-year review of the State Assessment, mandated each year. The following criteria were used:

1. The school used creative and/or ingenious ways to accelerate the closing or to close its achievement gap.
2. The school has a concrete a record of closing or accelerating the closing of its achievement gap.

The school could meet one or both of the criteria. The site school, Frederick Douglas Elementary School, met both criteria. Frederick Douglas utilized the resources provided all schools to improve the quality of math instruction provided to students through the use of technology and a technology coordinator. In addition, Frederick Douglas has accelerated the closing of the gap by improving their test scores in mathematics from majority of the students being non proficient to being proficient and outperforming their peers within the district. In addition, proximity was also a consideration for the researcher, to enable regular and consistent visitation of the site. Frederick Douglas Elementary School has been a neighborhood school for more than 20 years. According to Higgins Public Schools , a neighborhood school is a school whose student population is derived from children who live in the community. For three years, the school has become a partial magnet by emphasizing a language to the students. A

partial magnet is a school that receives both students who apply to the school and students who are from the neighborhood. The school has had four principals in 10 years, and the staff has had 50% turnover in the past three years. Although staff turnover is high, only two of the 40 staff was new teachers (fewer than five years experience). New community partners have become involved with the school. The school population is approximately 300 students: 87% African American, 8% Caucasian, and 5% other (Asian, Hispanic, and multi-racial). There are 40 teachers and staff who work with the students. In Frederick Douglas Elementary School, the Pennsylvania state standardized assessment test scores improved by 50% in one year in mathematics and 40% in one year in reading. This significant growth and change in less than one year is worth studying.

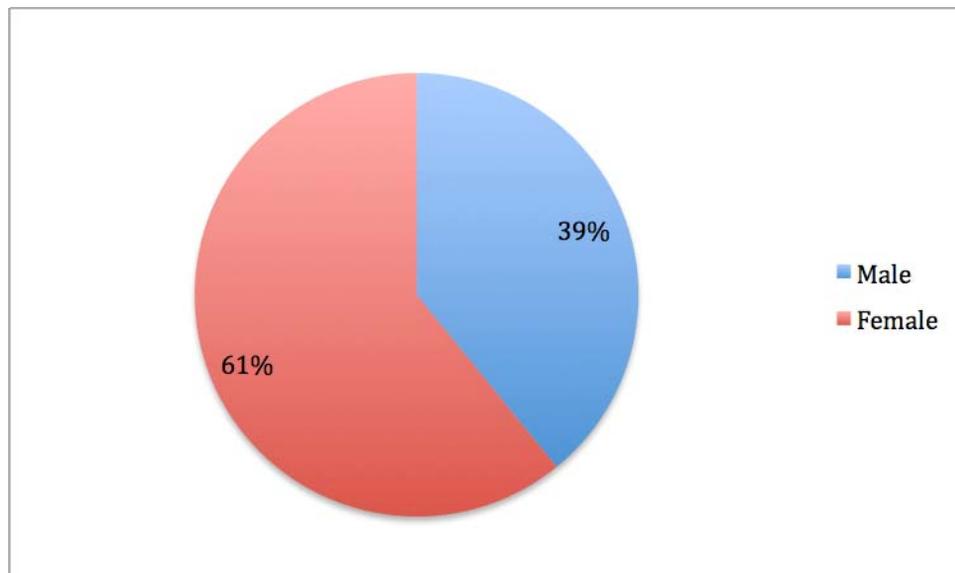
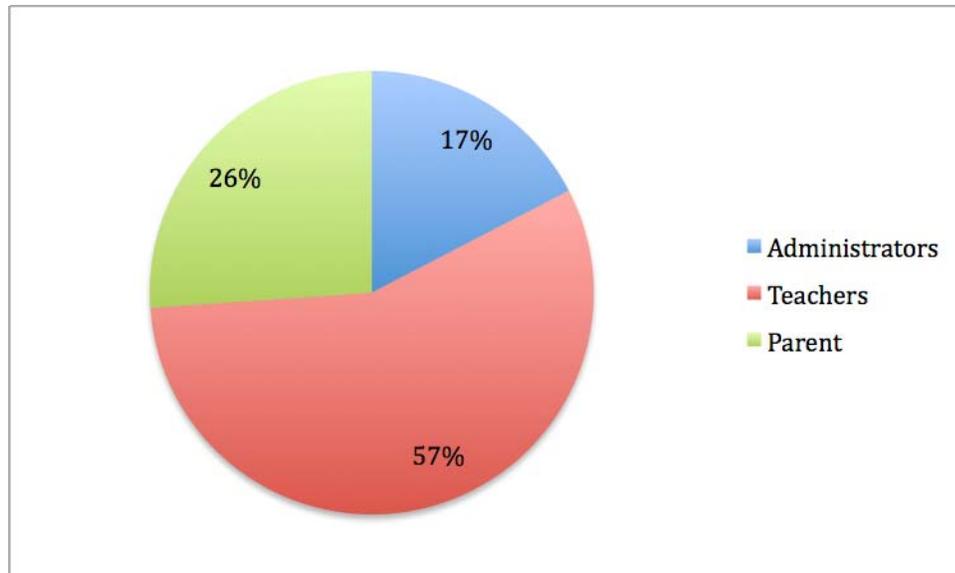
Participants

In order to collect a variety of viewpoints and perceptions of a school closing the SAG, the effort was made to include former and current administrators, teachers, and parents from the years 2002-2008. Thirty-two potential participants were identified for this study, but only 23 participants volunteered for the study and shared their insights. The current and former principals were contacted during the month of September and their assistance requested, to obtain participants for the study. Each principal provided names and contact information for those who would provide a rich story and perspective on the student achievement gap. Once the names were provided, the researcher contacted the participants by either e-mail or telephone during the months of September and October.

Using purposeful sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), the twenty-three interviews of administrators, teachers, and parents were all connected to the site in either a current or former capacity. The administrator category included the principal, central office administrators, and curriculum coaches. Four administrators were interviewed, three men and one woman. All of the administrators were experienced administrators and served as an administrator for multiple years. All of the administrators had degrees in education. Thirteen teachers were interviewed, ten women and three men. Six of the teachers were former employees, and seven of the teachers were current employees. All of the teachers with the exception of one taught for more than two years. Six parents were interviewed for this study, three men and three women. All of the parents were current parents and former parents did not participate in the study. The principal recommended all of the interviewees, as individuals vital in helping the school close the student achievement gap. An effort was made to balance these interviews categorically, racially, and by gender. Each of the participants is described in Figure 3.

A focus of this study is to learn from the schools how they are eliminating the student achievement gap. It was vitally important to interview a variety of individuals for this study, to learn from the perspectives of those involved with the school and eliminating the achievement gap. Patton (1990) states that there must be logic behind the selection of interviewees, and the information should be rich. The interviewees were selected purposefully for the interviews because they were perceived to help improve student achievement and close the student achievement gap.

Figure 3 Interview Participant Descriptions



Data Collection Procedures

According to Yin (1994), the six most common data collection techniques are from 1) personal documents, 2) archival records, 3) interviews, 4) observation, 5) participant observation, and 6) physical artifacts. This research study collected data from interviews, public documents, and observations. Personal documents will not be utilized because it is particularly important to protect the anonymity of the school and the participants, and thus public documents were studied instead of individual student or school data. The following paragraphs describe the data collection strategies.

Interviews

Prior to engaging in dialogue with the interview participants, a university and district IRB was completed to request permission to conduct a study and work with district personnel. Upon IRB approval, a letter of introduction and informed consent (see Appendix A and B) was given to the current principal and immediate former principal. The letter introduced the research study, established confidentiality, and requested participation. During the initial contact, the researcher inquired about their willingness to participate and the potential availability of participants for face-to-face or telephone interviews. In addition, the researcher attended a staff meeting to request current staff participation in the study. Staff members were able to learn about the study and sign up to indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

Face-to-face and telephone interviews were scheduled to occur at an agreed upon time between the researcher and participant. The interviews were designed to last one hour to one hour and 30 minutes. The face-to-face interviews lasted between 15 minutes

to one hour. A semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C) was utilized for data collection so that the questions asked by the researcher and the responses of the participants would be consistent and themes would be easier to identify.

Twenty-two face-to-face interviews were conducted for this study during the months of October to December. One telephone interview occurred in this research study. The informed consent (Appendix B) and interview protocol (Appendix C) documents were e-mailed to each participant. The participant completed the informed consent prior to the interview. During the phone conversation/interviews, the researcher responded to any of the participant's questions, noting specifically that the participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The participant agreed to take part in the study. After reminding the participant of the purpose of the study, the researcher began the interview. The interview protocol was followed, and the interview was recorded.

The researcher conducted and recorded all interviews in a digital audio format. During each interview, field notes were taken to describe the researcher's insights and reflections of the interview process (Marshall & Rossman, 1997). The field notes collected during the research study were brief descriptions of interviews with each participant, including dates, times, settings, and brief description of the impressions or quality of data conveyed in the interview. This space allowed for researcher comments including thoughts, feelings, or questions about the interview. Later, the field notes were turned into memos of the interview using Atlas ti, a software program specifically designed for qualitative data analysis. According to Glesne (2006), memos are useful to free the mind and perspectives. This was used as an early analysis strategy. The digital

interviews were transcribed by the researcher or transcription service. All transcription service interviews were reviewed by the researcher by listening to the recording and correcting the transcription for accuracy. The transcripts (see appendix D) were sent to the participants once the researcher removed all identifiable information. The participants were able to review the transcription to determine its representation of the interview.

Public Document Review

In addition to interview transcripts, public school documents (i.e. website, staff handbook, monthly calendars, parent and student handbook) and environmental pictures (pictures of the school environment) were taken at the study site, to draw rigor for the study. Documents reviewed for this study were the parent and student handbook, staff handbook, meeting minutes, monthly calendar, website, newspaper articles, and environmental pictures. All environmental pictures taken of the school environment were strictly of the environment and not of the participants or students. All pictures will be edited to remove any identifiable markers. According to Cresswell (2003), the advantages of document review and audiovisual materials are to enable the researcher language and words of the participants and an unobtrusive way to collecting data.

Observations

In addition to interviews and document review, observations were made of the school environment. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), field observations are detailed descriptive recordings as field notes of events, people, actions, and objects in the setting. The main emphasis of the observations was to look for patterns of behavior and relationships. The observations occurred 16 times throughout the four-month study

(Table 5). During the observations, the date, time, location, participant category, and the observation of participants were recorded in a log. The researcher served as a non-participant in the observations. Observations occurred in the main office, classrooms, hallways, and outside of the school. It was also very important to observe a variety of individuals who were administrators (principal), teachers, and parents. This was the strategy to obtain rich information and data.

When combined with interviews, observations can be valuable in validating the data. The observations were used to note the actions of adults associated with the school to discern if it is the same as presented by the interviewees who were determined by the principal.

Table 2 Researcher's Observation Log

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Observation</i>
10/13/08 Monday	10:00-10:30	Main Office	Principal	Greeting parents and talking about student progress with a family. Conference Day
10/22/08 Wednesday	2:30-3:30	Main Hallway	Teachers	End of the day. Teachers are dismissing students and passing out homework making sure students have coats
10/27/08 Monday	4:00-4:30	Front of School	Parents	Parents are arriving to pick up students from Afterschool program. Teachers and Parents are talking at the end of the day
11/07/08 Friday	8:00-8:30	Front of School	Parents	Black and Gold Day! Parents bring students to school dressed in black and gold. A parent has to run behind a student who does not want to be late to school.
11/10/08 Monday	3:30-4:30	Main Office	Principal	Warm greeting from office staff. Principal has daughter who attends school, she is in the office receiving tutoring from a staff. Principal talking with teachers as they leave, prior to our interview. Encouraging words and things to do are shared. Snacks are in office for any student who did not get picked up. VIP day!
11/18/08 Tuesday	11:30-1:30	Playground	Parents	Parents are outside helping students at recess. Parents and staff make certain that students play safe and resolve student conflicts.
11/19/08 Wednesday	4:30-5:30	Classroom	Teacher	Positive images are and quotes are in the classroom for students to view daily. Clear expectations are written. T has technology in the room to use during educating the students
11/24/08 Monday	12:30-1:00	Main Office	Principal	Pick up documents. Principal working with student who had a difficult time during lunch with a classmate. Very respectful tone toward students. Parents were contacted to share the issue and discipline consequence
12/04/08 Thursday	10:00-11:30	Second Floor Hallway	Teachers	Students are engaged in learning. Teachers are respectfully talking to students; not screaming. Adults (Student Teachers) working with a small group of students in the back of the room [3 to 1 Project]
12/08/08 Monday	4:00-4:30	Classroom	Teacher	Teacher is working with student teacher and correcting student work. Classroom is bright and a lot of books an materials in the room
12/09/08 Tuesday	4:30-5:00	Classroom	Teacher	Teacher is correcting student work. Reviewing student progress with Student Teacher. Room is neat and bright. Technology in the classroom and materials for math instruction
12/10/08 Wednesday	11:00-2:30	Main Hallway	Parent	Secretary provided a tour of an incoming parent. Teachers were walking students to lunch. Parents are tutoring students in the French classes and math classes

Table 14 (Cont.)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Observation</i>
12/17/08 Wednesday	12:30-1:00	Main Hallway	Parent	Parent volunteering and tutoring students
12/18/08 Thursday	1:30-3:00	Cafeteria	Principal Parents Teachers	Musical Program. Very festive occasion in the cafeteria. Parents are volunteering to help the programs. S are encouraged
12/19/08 Friday	8:30-9:30	Classrooms	Teachers	Teachers are welcoming students. Bon Jour is heard from many classrooms
12/23/08 Tuesday	8:00-9:00	Front of School	Parents	Parents bring students to the school. Students are hugged and kissed and wished a good day.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a time consuming process, and the analysis for this study involved the act of organizing, structuring, and interpreting data gathered from interviews, document analysis, and observations during the research study. Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe data analysis as "...a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating process. It is the search among data to identify content for ethnographies and for participants 'truths' (p. 150)." An accumulation of 100 or more pages of text data was collected. According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), it is critical for researchers to be able to organize, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful bits of data. As a way to manage the data, the transcribed interviews were placed in a Microsoft Word file. Then, Microsoft Word's comment function was utilized to find the predetermined categories from the literature review found during the conversation. The codes were then placed in a coding scheme aligned to the research literature (see Appendix E). This allowed for the researcher to make decisions about the data and determine emerging themes and recurring patterns in the data. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), this strategy is considered interim analysis.

Once the interim analysis was completed for all of the interviews, the Microsoft word files were loaded into the Atlas ti software for future data observation and management.

Atlas ti

Atlas ti is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software tool used by qualitative researchers to manage and analyze large amounts of qualitative data. In addition to managing text, Atlas ti manages annotations, concepts, and complex structures including conceptual relationships that emerge in the process of interpretation (Muhr, 1991). The program helps to make sense of the data and retrieve useful information from all of the collected, raw data. Atlas ti also allows for audio-visual material (photographs) to be incorporated into the data and analyzed. I included the environmental photos in the data for analysis. According to Muhr (1991), the goal of the tool was to assist the human interpreter, but cautions that automation of the analysis can eliminate the contextuality of human understanding. Table 3 details the steps followed in using Atlas ti for further data management and discussion.

Table 3: Researcher’s Use of Atlas ti Software (Muhr, 1991)

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Research Actions</i>
Creation of hermeneutic unit. Research project container/file of all collected or created data.	I created the hermeneutic unit and entitled it SAG (Student Achievement Gap) study
Selection of text documents to be analyzed	All transcribed interviews and environmental pictures were imported into the hermeneutic unit
Reading of the text	The interim analysis allowed for me to read the text and recognize the pre-determined codes from the literature. The initial coded data was printed out and used to help with coding in Atlas ti
Open Coding	The data was initially coded based on the research questions, which were derived from the literature on the student achievement gap
Axial Coding	I utilized selective codes relating to existing and newly created codes in the data
Memo - Allows comments to occur on selected text	I used this function to create memos necessary for data triangulation. I created comments and summary memos in order to record my thoughts, feelings and questions about the data

After the data was coded (open and axial), the emergent themes and patterns were identified (See Appendix E). The data themes were categorized by the literature review on gap closure student achievement. The theoretical lens (*accelerative factors theory*) was deductively implied. The purpose was to assist in determining if the theory did or did not appear in the data to impact student achievement and which constructs did not appear in the data, accelerating the achievement gap. In addition to the *accelerative factors theory* analysis and the application of *critical race theory*, to discern what else was

happening within a setting supporting the learning of African American students., The accelerative factors theory components were used to determine the occurrences within the interview data of the administrators and teachers. The timeframe reviewed was 2003-2005 and 2006-2008. These timeframes were selected based on the current and former years of the administrators and teachers.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) assert multiple methods of data collection or triangulation as a strategy that adds rigor and depth to an investigation. The data used for this study will be triangulated in order to gain an in-depth understanding and contribute to the story of the school eliminating the achievement gap

In order to create credibility and trustworthiness, all efforts were made to ensure the study's trustworthiness, including multiple methods of data collection, accurate field notes and impressionistic memos, member checking, and triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). By observing the school setting, interviewing the participants, and analyzing the documents, I was able to personally observe the phenomena that participants describe as well as others that they do not mention. Though I electronically recorded the interviews, I believe the trustworthiness was based on the field notes and memos I took throughout the process. Writing down quotes and reflections, and taking photographs, during and immediately after the data collection process contributed to the richness and accuracy of the findings (Wolcott, 1990). Finally, to confirm the accuracy of the meanings constructed in the analysis process, I reviewed the themes resulting from the coding process with participant member checking.

Ethical Considerations

Marshall and Rossman (1999) deem it important to consider ethical issues during the entire research project. In order to maintain an ethical study, the district and university Internal Review Board approved the study. All of the research participants signed informed consent documents. The participants were reminded that they did not have to remain in the study if they felt uncomfortable.

The data utilized in the study did not involve the students who attend the school, because the students were not an approved group to include in the study. In addition, to protect the students, all environmental pictures did not contain student names. The staff members participating in the study received pseudonyms. Each participant collaborated with the teacher in identifying a pseudonym. All identifiable information was removed from the transcribed interviews. These ethical considerations were taken into consideration to protect the students.

The results of the research will be presented in the next chapter. I will share how I made sense of the data and my interpretations of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to discover how a K-12 school (administrators, parents, and teachers) closed or is closing its student achievement gap. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the data collected for the research study. The following steps were utilized to analyze the data. Initially, a capacity building framework was utilized to organize how the data would be organized for analysis. The research questions, method to answer those questions, the source to answer the questions and the connection to the theoretical framework was first considered in Table 4.

Table 4 A Capacity Building Framework for Answering Research Questions

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Connection to Theoretical Framework</i>
1. What are the experiences of the stakeholders (administrators, teachers and parents) with the student achievement gap?	Conduct interviews based on protocol and observations	Admin. Teachers Parents	Review the experiences to determine how the school is addressing student achievement and addressing the student achievement gap
2. How do stakeholders at these schools describe and explain the student achievement gap between Caucasian and African American children?	Conduct interviews based on protocol	Admin. Teachers Parents	Understanding the context of the case
3. What are the specific strategies being used by the stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents) to address the SAG with African American students?	Conduct interviews based on protocol, document analysis, and observations	Admin. Teachers Parents	Review of strategies to determine how the student achievement gap has been minimized by using Taylor's notion of <i>accelerative factors theory</i>

A two-layered approach was utilized to make sense of the data. After organizing the data, an interim analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) was utilized to help with reading of transcripts and increase the familiarity with the data. This was important because the researcher did not transcribe all of the transcripts. The interim analysis allowed for cleaning of the data and to identify codes that appeared within the data. Once the codes were identified, the codes were recorded in a coding scheme (Appendix E) that helped to look at the frequency of the codes in the data and connect the codes to the literature. There were initial codes and secondary codes that were refined based on the interviews, which revealed themes in the data. The interview data was then utilized to answer the research questions based on the participants in the research study.

Prior to answering the research questions, the background data on the participants yield a notable finding. This is particularly important in an era in which charter schools are challenging public schools for school choice in educating students because of the failure of many public schools in educating students. In addition, educators are questioned on their ability to educate students versus non-educators to educate students as in home-schooling options. All of the principal and teacher participants have an education degree, and all of the administrators have a master's degree. Also, eight of the teachers have a master's degree. All of the parents have a high school degree and all parents have attended post secondary school. In addition to having advanced degrees, all of the teachers (with the exception of one) and all administrators have attended a university or college in the state of Pennsylvania. This observation is notable in recognizing the preparation of the principals and teachers by the universities and colleges in the state of Pennsylvania. In addition to an educational background, all of the teachers

and administrators are experienced educators. The current staff represents 70 years of experience in education and the district. In addition to years of service, the teachers and administrators have dedicated their teaching experience to Higgins Public Schools.

Higgins Public Schools is an urban district in the northeastern section of the United States. The district contains approximately 30, 000 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to High school. The district population comprises 75% African American students, 20% Caucasian students and 5% Other Students, which includes Asian, Hispanic, and Native American. The district schools are divided into neighborhood schools and magnet schools⁷. Since the No Child Left Behind Legislation that was signed into law in 2002, the district has been unable to demonstrate student proficiency on the state standardized assessments. Based on the inability to make significant progress, the district is in corrective action, which means failure to make improvement could result in a state take over of the district. The district has been involved in multiple years of school reform initiatives focused on improving the quality of education that students receive. The student achievement gap is significant, for the African American students are achieving 30% lower than the Caucasian students. Within the district, Frederick Douglas Elementary School has been a school that has made significant improvement during the recent reform initiative, which began during the 2006 school year.

Frederick Douglas Elementary School is a school that was built in the early 1900's as a neighborhood school. The school has had an influx of programs to support

⁷ Neighborhood Schools are schools that educate students living in a geographical area surrounding the school as identified by the district and home address. Magnet Schools are schools that educate students based on a parent application to the program of choice based on a school emphasis (i.e. language, technology, etc.). The magnet students are selected based on a lottery and may live in any location in the city.

the students that attend the school, but the programs have changed as new district administrators and school administrators have worked in the school. Currently, the school is a partial neighborhood and French magnet school. The school was merged three years ago with the district French magnet to support the declining population of the school. In addition, the school leadership changed three years ago, and the school administrator made many changes in the teachers that worked in the school. He was able to successfully remove ineffective teachers that worked in the school through progressive discipline and issuing unsatisfactory ratings to poor teachers. The school population comprises 84% of its student population of African American children, 9% is Caucasian students and 7% is other students. The school also contains two regional special education classes, which are classes that provide support for students from the entire district. Prior to 2006, the achievement of the school had been inconsistent. Currently, the school has been academically successful on the standardized assessment tests one of the three years since 2003. Since 2006, Frederick Douglas Elementary School has been academically successful each year demonstrating academic student growth each year on the Standardized assessment tests.

Research Question 1

What are the experiences of the stakeholder's (administrators, teachers and parents) with the student achievement gap?

The parent interviews indicated that the parents' experiences with the student achievement gap was a sense of responsibility for helping to resolve the problem and parents would advocate for the students to receive a quality education. The parents shared

that if they work collaboratively with the school and teachers then they could close the student achievement gap. In the quote from Ms. Robyn, a parent, shares how parents can advocate for the students to have a quality education:

And so you know, our French teacher worked with the neighborhood students who came into the magnet and many of them got As and Bs. And then the board said, this was like in January or February, the board said to those parents, “Your child can’t get into R. Wright School⁸. She said this to the fifth grade parents. Your child can’t get into R. Wright School unless they also take an oral exam.” And an oral exam in French at that level is highly difficult, really difficult because they’re not taught at the oral level. You know, our curriculum is a strictly written curriculum. Our school is the only one that feeds into R. Wright for French. So if only the ten Easterly kids got in, how are ten kids going to support a French teacher at R. Wright? We needed the 20 to 30 other kids who were - who decided to support the French program and motivated their children to get A’s and B’s. I mean it was just wrong. So, two parents filed grievances and we worked together for - you know, we tried working with the magnet office, but they were really rigid and were not willing to work with us. So we went to Hillary Austin (Board Member) and talked to her and I brought up something that I knew from my experience at Easterly is that if a third, fourth or fifth grader came in there, they were tested upon entry for fluency and were not allowed into the class if they didn’t pass the test. They had to go back and get tutoring.

The parent interviews revealed the accelerative factor theory component of

⁸ R. Wright School is the Middle school the students will attend after Frederick R. Douglas School

environment. This means that the parents are involved in the school in order for the student achievement to improve and the student achievement gap to be closed. The parents also demonstrated their involvement through volunteerism. In addition, the selected quote from Mrs. Robyn, a Caucasian parent, demonstrates the interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, Dixson & Rousseau, 2006) principle of Critical Race Theory by her willingness to advocate for African American students since her students would benefit from her assistance. Mrs. Robyn helps other parents to file grievances for the African American students to be accepted into the French program at Richard Wright. Ms. Robyn recognizes the importance for all of the students becoming a part of the French program, for her students will benefit from the African American students attending the program. The French program would end unless the African American students participate in the program.

Based on the teacher interviews, the interviews indicated that the teacher's experiences with the student achievement gap were one of working with the parents to close the student achievement gap. During observations, the teachers were taking various opportunities (dismissal time, admittance time, recess, conferences, etc) to meet and talk with parents about their child's academic and behavioral progress. The conversations focused on the student assessments and schoolwork. A quote from the interview of Mrs. Horne, a teacher, shares how she works with parents that do not understand the current math program:

And I've had several parents come in that didn't necessarily understand the everyday math, because it is different from how we were taught. So I've had

some parents come in and sit in on math lessons; and I've given them student reference books.

The teacher's interviews and observations demonstrate the accelerative factors theory component *gardener*. The teachers exhibit the personal, professional and communal attributes necessary for closing the student achievement gap (Taylor et. al, 2007). The teachers are respectful of the families and are willing to assist the families and students in the education process.

The selected quote displays the strategy of the teacher preventing social stratification via a hidden curriculum (Apple 1975, Giroux 1981) of Critical Race Theory. Mrs. Horne would not allow for the parents and students to accept not understanding mathematics. She made her instruction transparent and not hidden or a mystery as to educating her students. She helped to eliminate the hidden curriculum by educating the parents and students through additional opportunities for the students and parents to learn the math curriculum.

Based on the administrator interviews, the interviews indicated that the administrator's experience with the student achievement gap was one of collaboration with teachers and parents to close the student achievement gap. Based on the observations, the administrator would assist parents and teachers by meeting and talking with them in the school. The administrator required meetings of the teachers that focused on student data, and the administrator organized parent meetings to allow for teachers to discuss the student progress. The administrator also discussed student academic progress and behavior with parents. The discussions centered on how could they improve their child's academics and behavior. In addition to working together, the administrator

maintains high expectations for the students. In this selected quote from Mr. Columbus, he shares his belief about the students learning:

Again, I believe in them. You give me three kids and I think I can improve three kids. You give me 100, I think that I can improve 100 - each and every one of those 100 kids. I just believe that any child is just waiting for us to crack that code or give them the information in a particular way that they're willing to accept and move that particular student. They're just waiting on us to give them the information at the right level and in the right way.

The observations and interviews of the administrator revealed the *gardener support* component of the accelerative factors theory. This shares how the administrator was able to provide support for the teachers to help close the student achievement gap. This was done from the administrator provided time for the teachers to review the data and meet with parents to share student progress. The administrator also displayed the accelerative factors theory principle environment. The administrator helped to create an environment that was focused on closing the student achievement gap through collaborating with the parents and teachers.

Research Question 2

How do the stakeholders of these schools describe and explain the student achievement gap between Caucasian and African American children?

Most parents except one reveal that they believe the student achievement gap is a result of parents not teaching their children and indicate that the student achievement gap

is an issue. For instance, Mr. Jay shares in his interview the following belief about parents not teaching their children:

A big one is parents – there’s been a, for whatever reason, parents are not sending their children primarily to learn. They’re using the school as some sort of daycare or just a place that the kids can go where they know there’s a good presumption that they’ll not get into too much trouble. But they’re not sending them to school – they’re not setting good examples at home so these children bring in these bad kinds of ways of doing things into the schools. There’s just no other explanation for me.

Mr. Mann is the only parent that had not heard of the student achievement gap, but shared he believed the issue was a result of teacher expectations. Following is a quote from Mr. Mann sharing his belief about the student achievement gap:

Actually, I’ve not heard of anything in that, student achievement gap. So, I would probably venture to say that depending on what you’re actually speaking about, because I’ve not heard that term used, I might know what you’re talking about, but I know that’s exactly, what it is, I’ve never heard the term in any meetings that I’ve been in... The gap – I think when you said the dedication of the teachers was the biggest thing. And I don’t want to put everything on the teachers, because I believe a lot of education starts at home...

The teachers’ interview data suggested the issue exists due to a difference between African American and Caucasian students on standardized assessments. Mrs. Smith shares in her response, “Well generally, it is thought about in terms of race.” Dr.

Chloe, a teacher, shares that the issue is a result of students not having instruction provided by parent or teacher. :

Okay, since I was working at the time for Reading Grant, which is based upon No Child Left Behind, a federal program. A major point of No Child Left Behind and Reading Grant is helping all students achieve and working to eliminate that achievement gap that does exist. Higgins public schools is no different from any urban schools or the rural schools that suffer from gaps in their achievement levels. So I was schooled in the achievement gap, learned a lot about it through my work with No Child Left Behind and Reading Grant. The district did buy into the No Child Left Behind and did buy into Reading Grant. I think one of the biggest things has been teacher buy in, having teachers believe that all kids can achieve. Certain kids may take longer to reach various benchmarks. Certain kids might need more experience, more exposure. We find with some of our achievement gap issues, our kids start off with a very large gap in their oral language.

Mrs. Young was the only teacher who could not define the student achievement gap, indicating that the student achievement gap was more connected with education.

The administrators describe the student achievement gap as an outcome of the lack of home preparation or experiences. Mr. Gofer shares in his response the outcome of the standardized assessment has helped to indicate the student achievement gap. He states:

We always knew that there was an achievement gap in the district and we particularly looked at the racial achievement gap, but I also looked at – I was – I

thought that, in my own mind, that it was more of a socioeconomic achievement gap. That the kids who would come to school, not based solely on race, but I thought based upon, more significantly, was their socioeconomic background who came to school not as prepared as other students with a lack of experiences and support system to help them in the system. That's what I knew of the achievement background – or the achievement gap. Now, that's something that was always something that we tried to focus on also and tried to come up with many different kinds of strategies to address that.

Mrs. SP indicates in her responses that the student achievement gap occurs because the students are not learning, and that is based on the actions of the administrator. She states:

I have an issue with the SAG. It is hard from me coming from a school like Matthew Elementary and students were achieving. I think it is a lot of stereotyping. All children can learn extremely well. I put that on the administrator. It is what the administrator expects from the staff. It does not matter if the students are green, purple, Black or blue. There should not be this huge gap between our Children. We proved that at Matthew Elementary and at Victory Elementary. We had a population of 100% African American It is the same thing at FDES. When I first started, it was 50/50 African American and Caucasian

The stakeholders in this school have an inconsistent definition for the student achievement gap. When asked the question to define or describe the student achievement gap, the teachers and principals were able to define or describe the student achievement

gap. The quote from the interview of Ms. Jane illustrates this description or definition of the student achievement gap:

You know what, just in the past year or two I've heard more about it as far as a pretty large discrepancy between the achievement of African American students and other students. I don't have figures and percentages and numbers, but I know that there is a large enough gap there is a concern, and we have tried – this might be jumping to another question, but we have really focused on how to get these children to achieve and to hold the same expectations for all children that come into FDES, especially

When asked the same question of the parents, the parents were unable to define or accurately describe the student achievement gap. This is of concern when determining how the school is attempting to resolve the problem, without a common definition among the stakeholder groups. One explanation for this inconsistent definition is based on the percentage of African American students attending Frederick Douglas Elementary School (FDES). African American students comprise 87% of the student population, and Caucasian students comprise 8%, clearly, the majority of the students are African American. Although the definition or explanation is inconsistent and does not support the definition in the literature, the stakeholders indicate that the student achievement gap is an outcome of standardized assessment issue.

Research Question 3

What are the specific strategies and practices being used by the stakeholders (administrators, parents and teachers) to address the achievement gap with African American Children?

Based on the administrator and teacher interviews, the interviews indicated that the strategies and practices used by stakeholders to address the achievement gap with African American children was professional development opportunities to improve the quality of instruction. Many of the professional development opportunities are continuous. This means that the professional development was not offered once or twice but was a time of study on improving instruction. The professional development was specifically designed to help teachers and administrators know what to do when students do not have the prerequisite skills in math and reading. In the selected quote from Mrs. SP, an administrator, refers to the professional development utilized to improve the quality of instruction:

We had the teaching center at Booker T. This was the best professional development. In the 30 years, this was thorough professional development. As a district we were all on the same page. At that time we were using the Madelyn Hunters strategy for lesson plan design. That we were all taught the same way. Everyone, no matter the school, we did the same way. If you go from place to place, the students go from place to place, we were all doing the same thing. I think this is where lost out. Once they stopped the professional development at Booker T. Washington Center, the district did not provide any for a long time, unless it was in-house. The professional development was six weeks in length and it was very thorough. Additionally, the head start students and teachers would

work with the Kindergarten teachers and students to help them to know what was expected at the kindergarten level and to help with the missing professional development.

Additionally, the selected quote from Rachel, a teacher, indicates the importance of professional development in improving instructional practice:

As a reading coach, we were front loaded with professional development. We lost most of our summer that first year. The summer of 2000, we spent three weeks at the union building. It was intense and it provided us with a long-range plan. Prior to that it was really hit or miss approach that the district used with professional development. It was the coaches responsibility to bring professional development to the buildings and work with the teachers.”

The data of the administrator and teacher revealed the accelerative factors theory component, *gardener school*. This means an example of the professional development utilized to improve the quality of instruction that students receive.

In addition to answering the research questions, I applied AFT to all of the findings to discern if the school was indeed accelerating student achievement and closing the gap. This strategy is the second layer of the analysis for this study. Taylor, Orgass, and Kouyate (2007) make specific recommendations of how schools can close the student achievement gap. Atlas ti helped me to connect the findings to AFT. The seven components of AFT are: Soil-literacy and number skills, Seed-curriculum and pedagogy, Root-student’s culture, Environment-context of the students which includes peers, churches, neighborhoods, Gardener-teacher, Gardener Support-administration, Gardner school-teacher and administrator training. I disaggregated the data to determine if the full

components of AFT were more prevalent in the school now with the achievement improving. I reviewed the data from two-time periods 2003-2005 which represents the era of the school prior to the current school staff and administrators and 2006-2008 which represents the current school staff. The assessment scores were consistent with AFT and that the school was accelerating achievement and closing the student achievement gap. In table 5, the table was utilized to display the results of the analysis. The empty cells indicated that AFT was not found.

Table 5: AFT Analysis of Data Chart

AFT	Administrators		Teachers	
	2003-2005	2006-2008	2003-2005	2006-2008
Soil	<p><u>Mrs. SP:</u> The expectation was for every child to achieve and be successful. We had those expectations and we started those expectations in the head start. We worked from the Head Start up to the 5th grade. This is what is expected for the students. The Head Start staff and the kindergarten staff can give tips to each other and the parents on how to educate the students.</p>	<p><u>Mr. Columbus:</u> I expect for the students to be in school. I expect them to be in school on time. I expect them to be prepared to learn. I expect them to be open to learning and it is my job to deliver that education to get them to expand upon some of their current knowledge that they receive from home, their previous schooling years or just their experience along. It's our job to expand them, to give them that information so that we can exchange information so that they can know a little bit more of that then.</p>		<p><u>Observation:</u> In classroom, student's responds to a writing prompt, How to keep MLK's dream alive. Pictures of MLK and prominent African Americans are in the hall a picture as evidence</p>
Seed		<p><u>Memo:</u> District developed a professional development plan for the administrators to aide in principal knowledge of instruction and pedagogy</p>		<p><u>Memo:</u> District participated in a rigorous reading curriculum adoption. This curriculum was more aligned with state standards and a professional development plan was created for teachers to improve their instruction and pedagogical knowledge in reading and mathematics. Goals and expectations were more clear</p>
Root			<p><u>Rachel:</u> I provide professional development to the parents to help the parents know how to help their children. I also provide for the parents one to one help.</p>	<p><u>Mrs. Horne:</u> I've had several parents come in that didn't understand the math, because it is different from how we were taught. I have had parents come in and sit in on math lessons.</p>
Environment	<p><u>Mrs. SP:</u> Very Important people club. It is the program in which the students received ribbons for Achieving student academic and behavior success. The students received ribbons for things such as 5 books for 5 bucks. This was a raffle and students would read 5 books and have an opportunity</p>	<p><u>Observation:</u> VIP continues at the school. The VIP celebration appears on the school calendar. Talks with a student having behavioral difficulty during lunch</p>		<p><u>Observation:</u> Teachers are talking with parents after school regarding student success and progress. Teachers support students in the afterschool program.</p> <p><u>Miss. Jane:</u> I think that just having very good communication with parents, and that's not always easy to do, but it's so necessary and needed, and just making sure that they clearly understand what their child's strength and weaknesses are and being able to sit down with them at conferences and –</p>

				well, we have one in the beginning of the year, Experienced Teachers
Gardener	Experienced Principal-30 years	Experienced Principal-12 to 15 years	Experienced Teachers	
Gardener Support		Mrs. Columbus: I think my past work with working with USA Selection, getting a lot of background on what to do with kids who are not performing up to standard and learning how to work, to move that school, that student, that parent really helped me a lot when I first became – my first principal job. Working with USA Selection, I thought, was a big boost in understanding how to teach and how to move a school		
Gardener School		Memo: District offered professional development	Memo: Professional development offered by coach and district large in-services	Memo: Professional development offered by coach, district in-services, professional development site to provide consistent training opportunities, teaching and learning visits to help with professional development needs within schools
Occurrences	2	6	3	6

In conclusion, *accelerative factors theory* (2007) assisted in analyzing how the school closed the student achievement gap. As you observe in table 5, all of the components of *accelerative factors theory* were discovered in the current research data. Taylor’s notion of closing the student achievement gap existed in the data for this school. This finding suggests that Taylor’s strategy can help close the student achievement gap. In the final chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study and make recommendations for the school and similar schools. Critical race theory also helped to discern how the stakeholders in this setting were managing race or racism. It is clear that the stakeholders are aware of race and acknowledge the race of their African American students. The stakeholders discuss African American children and how to help the African American children

become educated. In general, the stakeholders being aware of African American children, working with African American parents to improve the education of the students and discussions amongst the teachers and administrators of how to help the students manage race and racism. Negative racialized perspectives about African American students are not allowed to be pervasive in the school.

In the selected interview quote, Mrs. Jeannine discusses how it was for students to not understand a concept or be thrown out of class for misbehavior. As a teacher in that setting, she did not support this action and provided support for the student to help them be successful. She did not permit the students to be unsuccessful because of their race or parents. She contacted the parent and requested their assistance, had high expectations for her students, and demanded that the adults around her remain responsible for the student learning:

“I don’t want to sound negative, but I was always one who my kids are going to have, you know, they my black kids. If we got to sit here all day long we’re going to make sure you get this, so that was always my issue. I would make sure that whatever it took. It was a phone call. I’d say something like, “Okay, your child needs so and so and so and so, and here’s what you must do as a parent, and you must request this, but don’t say I said request it.” It was things like that that I would do.

ML: So you would really kind of help your parents. You’d kind of educate your parents.

Mrs. Jeannine: Um hum. And make sure because that was always my issue that t hey don’t understand how African American family works, and what you

see as being negative or disrespectful, it's not that. It's the way the family works, and they were so fast to say, "Oh, he's acting up," and throw him out, grab him out in the hallway. And I would move them back in the classroom. They'd look at me, "Well, he's so and so and so." "Yeah, but he can't learn out there." So I got in trouble a lot. I got in trouble a whole lot 'cause I moved them back in the classroom and did things like that. But, yeah, that was always my sore point. Our kids will get it."

Mr. Columbus reports how it was for teachers to have low expectations for their students. He as an African American male recognizes this belief by teachers, accepts his responsibility in not correcting the issue last year, and works diligently to improve teacher expectations of students. He recognizes how race can impact student learning if permitted by the teachers:

What - in my school, there is no achievement gap for math. The achievement gap exists at this school for reading and I think that - again, I go back to what I wish I could do when I first got here. I don't believe that sometimes, getting teachers to believe that African American kids honestly have the capability and - to actually learn text at a level that kids that are Caucasian can. I had to move the teachers to that belief and I was not successful in doing that last year. Therefore, the achievement gap that we closed so greatly the previous year went down. Moving - to moving teacher's ability to understand African Americans are the biggest roadblocks I see here at this school.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This final chapter provides a brief review of the larger body of research to which the study contributes, a review of the findings as they relate to *accelerative factors theory* and *critical race theory*, a discussion of this study's implications for urban educational leaders and participants, a description of a proposed theory, and suggested areas for future research.

Research

This research study contributes to the larger body of research on the student achievement gap. As described in chapter two, the term *student achievement gap* refers to the disparity between African American and Hispanic, and Caucasian students, on standardized assessments (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Meyers et. al, 2004). In addition to standardized assessment, this study acknowledges the consistent struggle for a quality education African American and Hispanic students receive in US schools. Additionally, this study intended to examine the day by utilizing the *accelerative factors theory* for the findings. Additionally, the findings were reviewed through a *critical race theory* lens.

The research literature suggests there are multiple strategies to use when closing the student achievement gap. They focus on achievement (Ferguson, 1998; Reeves, 2000; Schmoker, 2002), clear curriculum choices (Apple, 2004; CPMSA, 2002), frequent and rigorous assessment (Borman & Dowling, 2003; Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Hedges & Nowell, 1998, 1999), collaborative scoring on student work (Reeves, 2000), empowered principals (Blase & Blase, 1987; Chung & Miskel, 1989; Marzano, 2005), measurable goals (Carter, 2001), master teachers and leaders (Carroll, 2004; Haycock, Jerald, &

Huang, 2001; Thompson & O'Quinn, 2001), working with parents (Blase & Blase, 1987; Fullan, 2000), and supported effort (Carter, 2001). The research literature has not identified a specific strategy in which the student achievement gap can be closed. All of the successful schools had many of the same strategies, but some strategies varied dependent on the school type (i.e. high school, vo-tech charter, etc). This is a challenge when attempting to apply the strategies to a school.

The purpose of this research study was to discover how an elementary school (administrators, parents, teachers) closed its student achievement gap. *Accelerative factors theory* (2007) was an appropriate framework, to observe the school stakeholders work in closing the student achievement gap by accelerating student achievement. The theory components are soil, seed, root, environment, gardener, gardener support, and gardener school; all these terms are metaphorical for components of a school. At Frederick Douglas Elementary School, the components appear in the school in this manner:

Soil (Antecedents): At the research site, the stakeholders (administrator, teacher, parent, and community) shared a belief in the student's ability to achieve to a high reading and mathematics level. The observations and interviews support this component. The newsletters, calendars and website support the belief of high achievement for the students. This message was evident in the school environment and is also shared with the students daily from the staff. The students affirm this belief in their enthusiasm to attend school. An observation was made of a student running to school to avoid being late.

Seed (Curriculum and Pedagogy): The district has a rigorous curriculum that utilizes research based strategies and state standards to teach the students. The teachers

utilize the curriculum in math, reading, social studies, and science in their daily instruction. In order to improve the pedagogy, the stakeholders (teachers, parents, and administrators) participated in professional development that helped to improve the quality of education that students receive. The interviewees discuss the importance of the professional development offered to improve the quality of instruction. The professional development that was most effective, according to the teacher and principals, was the in-depth study on a topic for multiple days and weeks during their workday.

Root (Culture): The data revealed that the culture of the school was one that focused on improving the academic performance of the students. Instruction was provided in a myriad of ways (large group, one to one, small group, technology, etc.) to the students. The instruction was reinforced and the students were expected to reach mastery. In addition to the academics, the stakeholders supported the students by encouraging positive behavior and focusing on the positive through a positive school wide behavior system that rewards positive student behavior. The school stakeholders collaborated to improve the instruction students received, for parents and community members volunteered and sat in on lessons taught by teachers to learn how to best educate their child.

Environment (Context): The data revealed that the stakeholders worked in collaborative environment to educate all of the students. The environment was focused on student achievement. The teachers and administrators discussed with parents the student's academic progress. The faculty meetings and Parent Teacher Association were focused on improving student achievement. Many of the observations displayed the focus of the school. The stakeholders shared their commitment to improving their standardized

assessment scores and the quality of instruction the students received. The stakeholders did not allow the race of the students, which was predominately African American, to indicate that they could not be successful.

Gardener (Teacher): Based on the interviews and observations, the teachers were committed to improving the quality of education that students received. The teachers were involved in the after-school and lunch programs to help students improve. The teachers wanted to improve their instruction. Many of the teachers arrived to school (7:30 am.) early and remained late (6:30 p.m.) to make decisions by using data on how to improve the quality of instruction that students receive. Many of the teachers taught for five or more years and had advanced degrees. The teachers feel accountable for students not achieving and that it is their responsibility to educate the students.

Gardener Support (Administrator): The current administrator, during his interview, shared his variety of experiences in education. He was a teacher, counselor, vice principal and principal. He has been an employee in the district for 15 years and has a master's degree and has started classes in a doctoral program. He attends professional development sessions several times a month to improve his practice. He has a vision for his school of high student achievement and shares his vision with parents and teachers. They support his vision and help him to achieve the goal of improving instruction for the students. He helps to encourage an environment of communication between the stakeholders by allowing meetings and continuous education.

Gardener School (Teacher and Administrator Training): The district offers continuous professional development opportunities to its teachers, administrators and parents. The professional development shares strategies to improve the instruction that

students receive in schools and at home. The school also provides professional development to address school-based issues and improve instruction and the ways in which everyone is working together. The professional development sessions are offered several times a month and on a topic of improving instruction and pedagogy.

In this research study, these components were aligned to research literature on academic achievement and African American students. In the analysis, all of *accelerative factors theory* components existed. The achievement of the school was improving for the current students now more than previously. Therefore, the school is closing the achievement gap based on *accelerative factors theory* within the site.

In addition to *accelerative factors theory*, the research data was analyzed through the *critical race theory* lens. The theory was used to determine how race operated in this setting. The interviewees and observations allowed for discernment about the race of the children is recognized and discussed positively. The stakeholders wanted the best possible outcome, high achievement, for all of the students. Every stakeholder (administrator, teachers and parents) seemed to be aware of the student's needs due to data reviewed and shared in meetings and discussions. The data analysis seemed to help determine what is needed to support the students. The stakeholders managed issues of race through discussions and everyone was responsible for the achievement of the students. When issues of race were in need of discussion, the teachers and administrators discussed these issues. The staff avoided the excuse of not seeing color or color blindness. Race was not ignored or allowed to be an excuse for not achieving. It is noted by the researcher that the majority of the student population was African American, but the stakeholders did not avoid the discussions, and as shared in an interview, the teachers

and principal held themselves accountable for the African American children not achieving as others in the district. Based on the observations and interviews, it is also possible that the issues of race and racism are being managed effectively and thus students achieve in this setting.

Implications for Participants and Educational Leaders

Based on the research literature and study, there are several implications for participants and education leaders. First, it is important that the stakeholders, who include parents, teachers, and administrators, work together to close the achievement gap. All stakeholders must have a role in helping to close the gap. As in the research site, the teachers and principal were not able to close the gap without the assistance of the parents and community organizations. The administrators and teachers were responsible for creating an environment for everyone to work together. The environment must be welcoming of everyone to participate and come to help the students to achieve. At the research site, the environment was so that everyone felt welcome. Second, in working together, the stakeholders will be able to close the gap by accelerating the student achievement. The school was focused on student academic achievement and used their time to meet and help the students achieve. A school focused on student achievement appears to be a powerful organization for increasing student achievement. Third, the stakeholders must manage issues of race and racism. They did this by talking about the student needs and embracing positively the race of the students in order to help the students achieve. In the following paragraphs, I will detail the three points important for the stakeholder's.

As suggested in chapter 4, it was evident that prior to the current administrator and staff, the research study site did not make high achievement based on the test scores. The student achievement gap existed and was not closing. It is important that the school stakeholders, who included parents, teachers and administrators, continue to work together to close the achievement gap. The research has yielded success for this school and the participants should continue to use the strategies that have helped improve the student achievement and close the student achievement gap. As in the research site, the teachers and principal were not able to close the gap without the assistance of the parents and the community organizations. This notion of working together allowed for the school and consequently students to obtain resources and support that were essential in improving student achievement. The resources included but were not limited to role models from the communities, services such as tutoring and parent assistance, financial resources for student incentives and volunteers in the school to assist with school programs. These resources were beneficial to students and families in the research study. In reflecting on the visits in my field notebook and Atlas ti memo, I focused on the following quote from Mr. Mann:

Mr. Mann: So, I know it's unfair to you all, but in our job and profession, you know, if we can show the paperwork, we can get the money. So, it's really - we definitely had to be inventive this year. Because like I said, we weren't going to be able to work with all the non-proficient kids, because the school has their own program. So, they needed to - if I'm working with kids to get B's and A's now, the majority of them are B and A students. Well, I can't really show hey, yes, we go these kids. Now they are A and B students. They were already A and B

students. Okay, so we want to give you money. Show me other ways that you're helping these kids and what their doing. Well, we had kids who were always in the office. We had kids who were always fighting. We had kids who weren't making it to school on time. We had kids who were doing this. So, what did we do? These are things that we did to help that, which most of the time, if you get kids - if you can just meet their needs, most of the other stuff will come.

Mr. Mann, a community representative and parent, shares his ability to provide an afterschool program option for all students in the research site. The school district has a pre-determined set of students (non-proficient students) who can participate in the district afterschool programs. Mr. Mann is not limited to the students he can accept in the afterschool program offered by the community organization that he is employed. Mr. Mann, a parent and community organization employee, also shares of his awareness in the need by meeting with Mr. Columbus and the staff to learn of school needs. This afterschool program is beneficial in helping all children achieve to high levels, and the afterschool program can provide options to parents and students to prevent students from going home alone. It is an important option for parents in a day that prevents parents from remaining at home because of work requirements. If the students who are proficient on the standardized assessment but barely maintaining proficiency, the after school program can also help those students be successful. According to Huang et al. (2000), afterschool programs are an important strategy to offer all students, for this is time to give student's individualized instruction and help improve their skills. All students in this district need to benefit from an after-school opportunity. The ability to offer maximum

support and help to all students came from the assistance provided from a parent and community partner.

Second, it was not until the acceleration model of achievement was put into place that the student achievement increased and the student achievement gap closed. The themes from this research are aligned and the student achievement gap at this site is closing. The stakeholders should embody the elements of the accelerating achievement framework in the school. *Accelerative factors theory* is one of the many school reform theories that help to identify schools that are successfully closing the student achievement gap. The recommendations provided by the original research are still valid and needed. The recommendations by Taylor et al (2007) were:

- Convening a Statewide and regional conferences that profile the magnitude of racial achievement gaps and solicit ideas on how to accelerate the closure of these gaps
- Issuing a national call for reforms that accelerate the closure of racial achievement gaps
- Providing special recognition to schools that have successfully transitioned on justice attainment estimates
- Acknowledging state school or centers of education that have included in their instruction for teachers and administrators information on reforms that accelerate the closure of racial achievement gaps
- Implementing a technical assistance plan to train and monitor school district on methods that accelerate the closure of racial achievement gap.

In addition to these recommendations, as a current practitioner, it is also important that the research on accelerating the achievement gap must be accessible for all stakeholders. It is not enough to provide information on how to close the achievement gap to educators. It is the responsibility of everyone to educate the children who attend schools. No one organization can be effective without the assistance of others. It is my belief that this research should become a part of a website that provides research to all stakeholders about closing the achievement gap. The website should link to other websites like the Harvard website entitled, Achievement Gap Initiatives. The website could also provide training sessions for stakeholders on how to begin the work of closing the student achievement gap. The more that the research is organized the easier it will be for the stakeholders to use the research and close the student achievement gap. Ease of information access will help to inform others on the work of accelerating the achievement gap.

Finally, *critical race theory* allowed for the researcher to observe how race was operating in the research site. According to Lazos-Vargas (2003), CRT applies insights to how race is functioning to critique rules, norms, standards, and assumptions. Racism is endemic and can occur frequently in a setting. It is the responsibility of the stakeholders to develop a school culture free from racism. In schools, racism can have a negative impact on the student's ability to learn. In order to create this culture free from racism, schools must first recognize the race of all children who attend the schools and celebrate the diversity of ethnic cultures in the school. As in the research site, the stakeholders were aware that African American children attended the school and that educating the students was important. African American students should not have to reject their culture

to be accepted or successful in the school culture. The stakeholders are responsible for developing a culture of racial acceptance. It is the responsibility of everyone. Second, teachers and administrators must be held accountable for removal of racism from a school environment, and the parents and community organizations are able to assist in the removal of racism within a school culture and hold the teachers and administrators accountable. The parents and community organizations being visible in a school through volunteerism and becoming a member of the parent teacher organization can aid in racism removal. This is particularly important to African American students. Finally, we are our brother's keepers. This simply means that we are all responsible and should assume the responsibility for the student's achievement. If it is that the parent's are unable to become involved with schools because families are attempting to work and make enough money for daily living, the community should invest in the student's future and become involved. Helping children achieve is very important not only to the students but to our world and economic survival of the world.

The professional development provided to the stakeholder's must include cultural awareness and pedagogical awareness of African American people. The more school stakeholders are culturally aware the better they will be able to support the needs of the students. For example, African American history can be incorporated in the student's daily instruction when everyone recognizes the importance of it for students.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

There is a need for future research studies on closing the student achievement gap that provide further insight into the methods that should be used to close the student

achievement gap. This study adds an important step toward learning more about the steps taken by one elementary school to close the student achievement gap. The amount of interviews were minimal and thus causing a limitation for the study. Additionally, this study examined racism within closing the student achievement gap. This examination needs a more in-depth study of racism within schools. I suggest that an ethnographic method be utilized in future studies in order to deepen the understanding of this work of the stakeholders and racism in school settings.

Additionally, one limitation that is worth noting is the lack of student participants in the study. For future research, studies of this kind, which focus on parents, teachers, and administrators, would benefit from including students. The students could have provided additional insight into what was occurring in the setting. The student participation and perception of improvement of achievement will help to complete the story of how a school is closing the student achievement gap.

Finally, more effort must be taken to document how stakeholders work together to accelerate student achievement. The *accelerative factors theory* provides a good framework for what needs to be present in schools to close the student achievement gap. Schools must also be aware of racism that prevents students from achieving and closing the student achievement gap. As in the research site, the principal and staff had discussions about race and did not avoid discussing the issue when the topic would present itself. The staff did not follow the color-blind (we don't see student color) ideology that is often supported in schools. This race awareness through will allow for all stakeholders to have high expectations for students and not make excuses or have low expectations because of the student's race. This study contributes to the field of education

leadership and community involvement by recommending the involvement of all stakeholders in closing the student achievement gap

REFERENCES

- Adelman. (1998). *Answers in the toolbox*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Alexander, R. (2000). *Culture and Pedagogy: International Comparison*. MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Alexander, K. Entwisle, D. & Thompson, M (1987). School Performance, Status Relations, and the Structure of Sentiment: Bringing the Teacher Back In*. *American Sociological Review*. 52(5). 665-682.
- Allington, R. & Cunningham, P. (2002). *Schools That Work: Where Children Read and Write-Second Edition*. Boston: Allyn Bacon.
- Anderson, J. (2007). The historical context for understanding the test score gap. *The National Journal of Urban Education & Practice*, 1(1), 1-21.
- Apple, M. (1990). *Ideology and curriculum* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Apple, M., King, N. (1975). What do Schools Teach? *Curriculum Ideology*. 6(4). 341-358.
- Applebaum, B. (2003). White privilege, complicity, and the social construction of race. *Educational Foundations*, 17(4), 5-20.
- Bali, V., & Alvarez, R. (2004). The race gap in student achievement scores: Longitudinal evidence from a racially diverse school district. *The Policy Studies Journal*, 32(3), 393-413.
- Banks, J. & Banks, C. (2007). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. New Jersey: Wiley Publishing.

- Barton, P. (2003). Parsing the achievement gap: Baselines for tracking progress. *Policy Information Report* (No. PIC-PARSING). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Bennett, A. Bridglall, B.L., Cauce, A.M., Everson, H.T., et al. (2004). All students reaching the top: Strategies for closing academic achievement gaps *Report of the National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.
- Biddle, B. J. (2001). Poverty, ethnicity, and achievement in American schools. In B. J. Biddle (Ed.), *Social class, poverty, and education*. London: Routledge Falmer. 1-30.
- Bifulco, R. & Ladd, H. (2006). School choice, racial segregation, and test-score gaps: Evidence from North Carolina's charter school program. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 26(1), 31-56.
- Blasé, J. (1987). Dimensions of Effective School Leadership: Teachers Perspectives. *American Education Research Journal*. 24(4), 598-610.
- Blasé, J. & Kirby, P. (2000). Bringing Out the Best in Teachers: What Effective Principals Do. California: Corwin Press.
- Borman, G.D., Hewes, G.M., Overman, L.T., & Brown, S. (2003). Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 73, 125-230.
- Bowles, S., Ginitis, H. (1975). *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradiction of Economic Life*. New York: Basic Books.

- Braun, H.I., Wang, A. Jenkins, F., & Weinbaum, E. (2006). The black/white achievement gap: Do state policies matter? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 14(8).
- Brown v. Board of Education*. 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Campbell, J. R., Hambo, C. & Mazzeo, J. (2000). *NAEP 1999 trends in academic progress: Three decades of student performance*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Carter, S. (2001). *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High Performing, High Poverty Schools*. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation
- Chenowith, K. (2007). Inside a Philadelphia success story. *American Educator*. American Federation of Teachers. Summer 2007.
- Chubb, J.E. & Loveless, T. (2002). *Bridging the achievement gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press
- Chung, K. & Miskel, C. (1989). A Comparative Study of Principals Administrative Behaviours. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 27(1).
- Cochran-Smith. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
- Coleman, R. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- Comprehensive Partnership for Mathematics and Science Achievement (CPMSA). (2002). *Raising standards and achievement in urban schools: Case stories from*

- CPMSA in Hamilton County/Chattanooga and Newport News public schools.*
National Science Foundation.
- Cotton, K. (2000). *The Schooling Practices that matter most.* Alexandria, VA:
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Crenshaw, K., Gotunda, N., Peller, G. & Thomas, K. (eds) (1995). *Critical Race Theory:
Key Writings that Informed the Movement* (New York, New Press).
- Cresswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five
traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn: The blueprint for creating schools that
work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Race, inequality and educational accountability: the irony
of no child left behind. *Race, Ethnicity and Education.* 10(3). p. 245-260.
- Davis, G.A., & Thomas, M. A. (1989). *Effective schools and effective teachers.* Boston,
MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Delamont, S. (2002). *Fieldwork in educational settings: Methods, pitfalls and
perspectives* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction.* New York:
New York University Press.
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (1997). *Critical white studies: Looking behind the mirror.*
Pennsylvania: Temple University-Philadelphia.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.*
Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Dixson, A., & Rousseau, C. (2006). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song*. New York: Routledge.
- Education Trust. (2005). *The Funding Gap 2005*. Washington, DC: Ed Trust, Inc.
- Ferguson, R. F. (1998). Can schools narrow the black-white test score gap? In C. Jencks, & M. Phillips, (Eds.), *The black-white test score gap* (pp. 318-374). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Ferguson, R. F. (2007). *Toward excellence with equity: An emerging vision for closing the achievement gap*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Fryer, R., & Levitt, S. (2002). *Understanding the black-white test score gap in the first two years of school*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Fryer, R., & Levitt, S. (2006). The black-white test score gap through third grade. *American Law and Economics Review* 8(2), 249-281.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fultz, M. (1995). African American teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Powerlessness and the ironies of expectations and protests. *History of Education Quarterly*, 35(4) 401-422.
- Gardere, J.(1999). *Smart parenting for African Americans: Helping your kids thrive in a difficult world*. New York: Kennsington Publishing Corp.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Research theory and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming a qualitative researcher: An introduction*. Boston: Pearson.

- Gilrane, C, Roberts, M., Russell, L. (2008). Building a community in which everyone teaches, learns, and reads: A case study. *The Journal of Education Researcher*. 101(6) p.333-351.
- Giroux, H. (1981). *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Giroux, H. (1997). Rewriting the discourse of racial identity: Towards a pedagogy and politics of whiteness. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(2), 285-320.
- Greenwood, G. & Hickman, C. (1991). Research and Practice in Parent Involvement: Implications for Teacher Education. *Elementary School Journal*, 91(3), 279-288.
- Haller, E. & Davis, S. (1980). Does Socioeconomic Status Bias the Assignment of Elementary School Students to Reading Groups. *American Research Journal*, 17(4), 409-418.
- Halverson, R., Prichett, R., Grigg, J, & Thomas, C. (2005). *The new instructional leadership: Creating data-driven instruction systems in schools*. (WCER Working Paper No. 2005-9). Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Haycock, K. (2001). Helping all students achieve: Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership*, 58(6), 1-12.
- Hedges, L. & Nowell, A. (1999). Changes in the black-white gap in achievement test scores. *Sociology of Education*, 72(2), p. 111-135.
- Hilliard, A. (2002). A response to the National Research Council report minority students in special and gifted education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, p. 1-35.

- Hoy, W., & Miskel, C. (2005). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Jencks, C., & M. Phillips, M. (Eds.). (1998). *The black-white test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Jeynes, W. (2004). Parental involvement and secondary school student educational outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Harvard Family Research Project: The Evaluation Exchange*, X(4), 6.
- Johnson, J., Livingston, M., Schwartz, R. & Slate, J. (2000). What Makes a Good Elementary School: A Critical Examination. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93(6), 339-349.
- Johnston, R. & Viadero, D. (2000). Unmet promise: Raising minority achievement. The achievement gap. *Education Week*. 19(27).
- Kannapel, P. J., & Clements, S. K. (with D. Taylor & T. Hibpshman). (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools*. Lexington, KY: Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence. Retrieved May 20, 2008, from <http://www.pritchardcommittee.org>
- Kaplan, L., Owings, W., & Nunnery, J. (2005). Principal quality: A Virginia study connecting interstate school leaders' licensure consortium standards with student achievement. *National Association of Secondary School Principals*. 89(643), 28-44.
- Kincheloe, J., Steinberg, S., Rodriguez, N., & Chennault, R. (1998). *White reign: Deploying whiteness in America*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

- Klein, D. (2002). Beyond *Brown v. Board of Education*: The need to remedy the achievement gap. *Journal of Law and Education*, 31, 431-457.
- Korchnak, L. (1998). *Case law and common sense: An educator's guide to Pennsylvania school law*. Allison Park, PA: Educational Services Publishers.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Harper
- Kunjufu, J. (2001). State of emergency we must save African American males. Chicago IL: African American Images
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dream keepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U. S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-67.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. & Hoffman Davis, J. (1997). *The Art and Science of Portraiture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lazos-Vargas, S. (2003). *Critical race theory in education: Theory, Praxis, and recommendations*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Leithwood, K. & Riehl, C. (2003). What We Know about Successful School Leadership. AERA-Division A. (Suppl).
- Levine, D.U. (1991). Creating effective schools: Findings and implications from research and practice. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 72(5), 389-393.

- Lezotte, L.W. (1991). *Correlates of effective schools: The first and second generation*. Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products, Limited.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Little Rock Central High 40th Anniversary*. (2000). Retrieved March 9, 2009, from <http://www.centralhigh57.org/>
- Lopez, G. (2003). The (racially neutral) politics of education: A critical race theory perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(1), 68-94.
- Lynn, M. (1999). Toward a critical race pedagogy: A research note. *Urban Education*, 33(5), 606-626.
- Lynn, M., & Parker, L. (2006). Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research on U. S. schools. *The Urban Review*, 38(4), 257-290.
- Margo, R. (1990). *Race and Schooling in the South, 1890-1950: An economic history*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Marzano, R., Waters and T. McNulty, B. (2005). *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*. Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.
- Meyers, S., Kim, H., & Mandala, C. (2004). The effect of school poverty on racial gaps in test scores: The case of the Minnesota Basic Standards Tests. *Journal of Negro Education*, 73(1).

- McCall, M., Hauser, C., Cronin, J., Kingsbury, G., and Houser, R. (2006). *Achievement Gaps: An examination of differences in student achievement and growth*. Northwest Evaluation and Association.
- McMillan, J. & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.
- McWhorter, J, Noguera, P, & Akom, A. (2000). Explaining the black education gap. *The Wilson Quarterly*, 3(24), 72-91.
- Morand, D. M., May, J. Distefano, C., Mindrila, D., Rawls, A., & Gay, J. (2007). Climate for high achievement: A study of gap-closing schools in South Carolina. South Carolina Educational Policy Center, University of South Carolina. Retrieved May 20, 2008, from <http://www.sceoc.org/informationforeductators/2008annualreport.htm>
- Muhr, T. (1991). Atlas/ti-A Prototype for the Support of Text Interpretation. *Qualitative Sociology*. 14(4). 349-371.
- Murrell, P.C., Jr. (2001). *The community teachers: a new framework for effective urban teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCES). (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: NCES.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. (2002). Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425.
- Noguera, P. (2003). *City schools and the American dream: Reclaiming the promise of public education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction. (2000). Closing the achievement gap: Views from nine schools. Raleigh, NC: Division of Accountability
Retrieved October 2008 from
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/closingthegap/ninechools>
- Oakes. (1982). Classroom social relationships: Exploring the S. Bowles and H. Ginitis hypothesis. *Sociology of Education*, 55. 197-212.
- Ogbu, J. (2002). Black American students and the academic achievement gap: What else you need to know. *Journal of Thought*, (Winter), 9-33.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pena, D. (2000). Parent involvement: Influencing factors and implications. *The Journal of Educational Research*. 94(1), 42-55.
- Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. (2003). *Young, gifted, and black: Promoting high achievement among African American students*. Massachusetts: Beacon Press.
- Plessy v. Ferguson 163 U.S. 537 (1896).
- Pressley, M., Raphael, L., Gallagher, J. D., & DiBella, J. (2004). Providence-St. Mel School: How a school that works for African American students works. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96, 216-235.
- Reeves, D. B. (2000). *Accountability in action: A blueprint for learning organizations*. Denver, CO: Advanced Learning Press.
- Rosenwald schools initiative*. (2009). Retrieved March 9, 2009, from
<http://www.rosenwaldschool.com>

- Rothstein, R. (2004a). *Class and schools: Using social, economic, and educational reform to close the black-white achievement gap*. Washington, DC: Teachers College Press.
- Rothstein, R. (2004b). *Reforms that could help narrow the achievement gap*. Washington, DC: Teachers College Press.
- Schmoker, M. (2002). The real causes of higher achievement. *SEDLetter*, 14(2). Retrieved May 20, 2008, from <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedletter/v14n02/1.html>
- School data direct*. (2009). Retrieved March 9, 2009, from <http://www schooldatadirect.org>
- Schweinhart, L. and Weikart, D. (1997). Lasting differences: The high/scope preschool curriculum comparison study through age 23. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
- Seefeldt, C. (1985). Parent Involvement: Support or Stress? *Childhood Education*, 62(2), 98-102.
- Simpson, R., Lacava, P., & Graner, P. (2004). The No Child Left Behind Act. *Intervention in School and Clinic*. 40(2), 67-75.
- Stake, R.E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oakes, CA. Sage.
- Steele, C., & Aronson, J. (1998). Stereotype threat and test performance of academically successful African Americans. In C. Jencks, & M. Phillips, (Eds.), *The black-white test score gap* (pp. 401-430). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Stiefel, L., Schwartz, A., & Ellen, I. (2007). Disentangling the racial test score gap: Probing the evidence in a large urban school district. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 26(1), 7-30.

- Stringfield, S. (2007). Improvement in academic achievement among African American students over time: National data and an urban case study. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 76(3), 306-317.
- Symonds, K.W. (2004). *After the test: Closing the achievement gaps with data*. Naperville, IL. Learning Point Associates.
- Tate, W. (1996). Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 22, 195-239.
- Tatum, B. (2007). *Can we talk about race?* Boston: Beacon Press.
- Taylor, J, Orgass, S., Kouyate, M. (2007). Closing Racial Achievement Gaps in America. Department of Africana Studies, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA.
- Taylor, J. Welch, O., Thomas, JAW. (2007, February 3). Profile of Racial Achievement Gaps. Implications for Educational Policy. Invitational presentation made to the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Retreat, Philadelphia, PA.
- Thompson, G. (2004). *Through ebony eyes: What teachers need to know but are afraid to ask about African American students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Thompson, G. (2007). The truth about students of color and standardized tests. *Leadership Association of California School Administrators*, (January/February), 22-38.
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)*.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1995). *Digest of education statistics 1995* (NCES 95-029). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2001). *Educational achievement and black-white inequality 2001* (NCES 2001-061). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2001). *The condition of education 2001* (NCES 2001-072). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). *The nation's report card: Geography 2001* (NCES 2002-484). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. (2005). *Closing the achievement gap: Lessons from successful schools*. Retrieved May 20, 2008, from http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/facts/ctag_rpt.pdf
- Vanderhaar, J., Munoz, M., & Rodosky, R. (2007). Leadership as accountability for learning: The effects of school poverty, teacher experience, previous achievement, and principal preparation programs on student achievement. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 19*, 17-33.
- Villenas, S., Deyhle, D., & Parker, L. (1999). Critical race theory and praxis: Chicano(a)/Latino(a) and Navajo struggles for dignity, educational equity, and social justice. In *Race is...race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Voydanoff, P. & Donnelly, B. (1996). Risk and Protective Factors for Psychological Adjustment and Grades Among Adolescent. *Journal of Family Issues, 20*(3), 328-349.

- Winfield, L. (1986). Teacher beliefs toward academically at-risk students in urban school. *The Urban Review*. 18(4), 235-267.
- Wolcott, H. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research*. California: Sage
- Woodson, C. (2004). *The Mis-education of the negro*. Chicago, IL: African American Images.
- Yancy, G. (2008). *Black bodies, white gazes: The continuing significance of race*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

October 10, 2008

Mr. Columbus,

During the 2008/2009 school year, I will be conducting a research project that is to learn how K-12 school leaders (teachers, principal and parents) respond to the student achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students on standardized assessments in schools with high achieving African American students. This is an invitation for you to take part in the study as an interviewee and observed participant.

Since you have been involved with the success of the school, your participation in this study would prove to be extremely beneficial. Your school could serve as a model for many schools in the United States that have a student achievement gap by offering your insights about the success of your students and school.

If you decide that you would like to participate in this study, an interview (face to face or telephone) will be scheduled at a time and location that are of convenience to you. Before the interview begins, you will be asked to sign a consent form, however you will be free to withdraw at anytime without giving a reason. The interview will last approximately one hour and will be digitally recorded. I will be the only interviewer and all of the contents of the interview will remain confidential, including your name.

Additionally, upon your approval, I will request access to your parents and teachers (either a addresses or a meeting), public documents that support the achievement of African American students (i.e. staff handbook, student handbook, parent notices, etc) and visit your school to take photographs of your school environment. The purpose of this request is to learn more about strategies that are employed within the school to support African American student achievement. Like the interviews, you will be free to terminate the visit or request the return of documents at any time.

I will contact you by telephone and/or e-mail in the next few days to respond to any questions you might have regarding participation in this study. At that time, if you agree to be interviewed, a mutually agreed upon time and place will be arranged.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to hearing about your experiences with the student achievement gap and helping African American students achieve.

Sincerely,
Monica D. Lamar, Student
Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Education Leaders
Duquesne University

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent⁹

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY (Face to Face)

TITLE: A School Responds to the Student Achievement Gap: A Qualitative Study

INVESTIGATOR: Monica D. Lamar

ADVISOR: (if applicable:) Dr. Rodney K. Hopson

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate your thoughts feelings and insights as to how a school responds to the student achievement gap. You will be asked to participate in an interview, which will last 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The interviews will occur at an agreed upon time between participant and researcher. The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. All recordings will be destroyed after transcription.

The principal and teacher interviewed participants will be asked to provide public school documents (not student documents) that relate to the student achievement gap (i.e. staff handbook, student handbook, parent notices, classroom procedures, etc.)

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

There are no risks greater than those encountered in everyday life. If the examination of how a school responds to the student achievement gap can identify how others might think about or respond to the issue, then it will be helpful in helping to improve the quality of education student's receive.

COMPENSATION:

Participants will receive a \$10.00 gift card. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. An envelope is provided for the return of your response to the investigator.

⁹ The Duquesne University approved consent forms will appear at the end of this dissertation

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. Each participant will be provided a pseudonym before beginning the interview by the researcher. After transcriptions of the digitally recorded interviews, the files will be destroyed. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. Your response(s) will only appear in summaries. All materials will be destroyed five years at the completion of the research.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Monica D. Lamar, at telephone or email her at. I may also call or contact Dr. Rodney K. Hopson at or Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board .

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

A School Responds to the Student Achievement Gap

Date: _____ Interviewer: M. Lamar

Interviewee: _____ Telephone: _____

School Involvement: _____ Principal _____ Parent
_____ Teacher (Grade Level/Subject) _____

Interview Start Time: _____ Interview End Time: _____

Interview Type: Telephone / Face to Face

I appreciate you taking the time to participate in my research study on the Student Achievement Gap and How a School responds to the Student Achievement Gap. In our time today, I am interested in hearing your story and insight as to how you assist with your school with student achievement and help to eliminate/minimize the student achievement gap. I am particularly interested in learning from your perspective as a (Principal, Parent or Teacher).

In order to begin our study, I have to review with you the informed consent document and obtain from you your agreement to participate in this study.

Review the Informed consent document, and remind the participant the following:

You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

I will also digitally record our conversation. This will ensure that I accurately capture your responses. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name or involvement in the school. I will assign a pseudonym to report your responses. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Background

- Please share with me your educational background and any pertinent experiences that you have had that have prepared you to work at this school (Teachers and Principal).
- How long have you or did you work at the study school? Did you enjoy working at this school? Why or why not? Is there one thing that you would change about working at this school?

- Have you participated in any professional development that has helped you perform your job effectively?
- Did you have a mentor during your time at the school? What did you learn from your mentor? (Principal and Teacher)

(Probes: Schooling, Professional Development, Professional Experiences, Years of Svc.)

Background (cont.)

- Please share with me your educational background, where did you attend school? (Parent)
- Did you select to send your child to this school? Why did you choose this school? (Parent)
- What educational expectations do you have for your child's school? (Parent)

(Probes: Educational Experience, History, and Expectations)

Research Question One: Description of SAG

- The student achievement gap is a current issue in education, what do you know or have heard about student achievement gap issue in your district or your school? (All)
- As a parent, what are ways that you have been encouraged to become involved in your child's educational experience? (Parent)
- As a leader, how have you encouraged your parents to promote student success? (Teacher and Principal)
- As a leader, how have you encouraged your teachers to promote student success? (Principal)
- How has the school district or central office employees supported your school to promote student success (Principal)?

(Probes: Policy)

Research Question Two: SAG Reality

- How does your child feel about coming to school everyday? How do you feel about sending your child to the school (Parent)?
- How has your school eliminated or prevented the student achievement gap from occurring in your school? (Teacher and Principal)

- What are some of the unique programs offered at this school that make you believe that student's will be successful? (Parents)

(Probes: Programs, School Reform, Culture)

Research Question Three: Strategies of SAG

- Your school offers programs to improve student success, what are the most important events, activities or programs that you have at this school that benefit your students? What about your African American students? (All)
- What happens at your school when students begin and are not socially and academically ready for school? (All)
- Do you consider yourself an advocate for your children? If yes, what are ways that you advocate for your students? (All)
- What are your interactions with the community as it relates to your school? (Principal)

(Probes: Programs, Policies, Curricula, Staff, Parenting, and Leadership)

Research Question Four: SAG Response

- Why do you believe the children achieve in this school? (All)
- What are the student expectations? Are these expectations particular to this school? (All)
- What are staff expectations? Are these expectations particular to this school? (Principal and Parent)
- What are the school's expectations for African American students? (Principal)
- What role do you play in the success of all children at this school? What about African American children? (All)

(Probes: Elimination of racial injustices in the school, Neutralize institutionalized racism, Caring environment)

Conclusion of Interview:

Is there anything that you would like to share that I may or may not have asked during this interview?

APPENDIX D

Transcribed Interview

Mrs. Young (Teacher)

December 23, 2008

1. ML: Please share with me your educational background and any pertinent
2. experiences that you have had that have prepared you to work at this school
- 3.
4. Mrs. Young: I have a degree from Maya Angelou University in Elementary
5. Ed./Early Childhood Ed. I also received my masters degree from IVY
6. College in Elementary Ed. I was originally hired by Higgins Public Schools
7. Multicultural Education office. I worked as a partner teacher for three
8. years. I taught every grade from K to 8 and I received training in conflict
9. resolution and learning styles.
- 10.
11. ML: How long have you or did you work at the study school? Did you enjoy
12. working at this school? Why or why not? Is there one thing that you would
13. change about working at this school?
- 14.
15. Mrs. Young: I have been at FDES for 13 years. I enjoy working here. The
16. staff is very supportive and helpful. We have 'FDES Family' motto that
17. seems to embrace any new staff members as well. We are also fortunate to
18. have many great and supportive parents.
- 19.
20. ML: Have you participated in any professional development that has helped you
21. perform your job effectively?
- 22.
23. Mrs. Young: I have participated in many professional development sessions.
24. Some have been more helpful than others but experience in the classroom
25. has been the most beneficial for performing my job effectively.

26.

27. ML: Did you have a mentor at the school? What did you learn from your mentor?

28.

29. Mrs. Young: I did not actually have a mentor. However, I have been teaching

30. 1st grade with the same person for almost the entire time I have been at

31. FDES. We work very closely together and have learned a great deal from

32. each other. We often brainstorm about the best ways to reach our goals. We

33. share all our materials and lessons. We often reflect on what seems to be

34. working and what we need to change.

35.

36. ML: The student achievement gap is a current issue in education, what do you

37. know or have heard about student achievement gap issue in your district or your

38. school?

39.

40. Mrs. Young: I just know that we are working hard to try and close the

41. achievement gap.

42.

43. ML: As a leader, how have you encouraged your parents to promote student

44. success?

45.

46. Mrs. Young: Nightly homework keeps parents involved and informed with

47. what is happening in the classroom. We also host an annual end of year

48. program after which we invite the Kindergarten parents to stay for an

49. informational meeting about first grade expectations. Materials are given

50. for parents to work with over the summer with their child.

51.

52. ML: How has your school eliminated or prevented the student achievement gap

53. from occurring in your school?

54.

55. Mrs. Young: We have high expectations for all students. We also have many

56. support periods where we can meet individual needs with differentiated

57. instruction.

58.

59. ML: Your school offers programs to improve student success, what are the most

60. important events, activities or programs that you have at this school that benefit

61. your students? What about your African American students?

62.

63. Mrs. Young: Our after school tutoring program and East Ministries program

64. seem to be the most beneficial programs we offer.

65.

66. ML: How are your classrooms divided each year?

67.

68. Mrs. Young: The previous grade level team composes the next year's class

69. list. Each class is mixed by ability, gender and race.

70.

71. ML: What happens at your school when students begin and are not socially and

72. academically ready for school?

73.

74. Mrs. Young: Parents are notified and interventions are put into place. If it

75. agreed to by all, a child may be placed back in a previous grade to acquire

76. the skills necessary to succeed.

77.

78. ML: Do you consider yourself an advocate for your children? If yes, what are

79. ways that you advocate for your students?

80.

81. Mrs. Young: Yes, I am definitely an advocate for the children. I constantly

82. share my concerns about the amount of pressure being placed on young

83. children. They never seem to have time to enjoy school. I work hard to

84. make sure that doesn't happen in my classroom.

85.

86. ML: What are the student expectations? Are these expectations particular to this

87. school?

88.

89. Mrs. Young: Our student expectations are the same as the district in that we

90. expect all children to meet the standards set forth by the state. We work

91. hard to make sure that students who have met expectations receive more

92. challenging work, and students who have not met expectations receive

93. differentiated instruction to help them to meet the standards

94.

Transcribed Interview

Mr. Jay (Parent)

December 17, 2008

- ML:* Perfect, thank you. ____ that outside. And I will be taking notes during this session, just kind of recording, capturing everything that's being shared with me. Okay. Could you please share with me, we're starting with our background section of this first, your background. Please share with me your educational background and where actually did you attend school?
- Mr. Jay:* I went to Colin Powell School and the Paris University. I have not graduated. I'm like a semester away from graduating, so I'm a licensed real estate professional. I'm a master of landscaping company so I'm also – I'm a master gardener.
- ML:* Oh nice.
- Mr. Jay:* Some of those credentials, but yeah, I mean I come from a family where, I mean, just of very committed educators at all grade levels. My mom was an elementary school teacher and aunts and uncles that taught at all different grade levels and I have a – one of my grand aunts was the head of the foreign language department for the state and you know, a lot of things like that. So education's real important to our family. I have cousins that are principals right now at different schools in the district and a vice principal, so education is very important to us.
- ML:* That's great.
- Mr. Jay:* And public education particularly.
- ML:* Any reason why specifically public education?
- Mr. Jay:* Well, I think that to have a chance to do well, you need, at a minimum, just some basic skill sets to function. And if you look at what kind of options people had prior to the creation of the public education system, pretty much, you know, across the country, people didn't have a lot of options because they couldn't lift themselves out of conditions they weren't happy with. And since we've had that combination of different types programs, people have been able to go in a lot of different directions that they definitely would not have otherwise have been able to.

And I think one of the big things for me in my generation is I think the quality of education needs to rise again because it has diminished, I think. If you look at all the, you know, achievement gap statistics and things like that and it actually, if you look at how public education's funded and you look at the hemorrhaging of populations within school districts, Hendersonville is a good example of that, but a lot of major cities, since the funding is on a per capita basis, whether it's a school like Colin Powell School.

I went to Colin Powell School and I watched Powell's population tank because of safety concerns and people that were interested and concerned enough and had the resources or knew their options took their kids out. So the kids that we were really responsible for a lot of the problems there stayed there, concentrated the problems, made it worse, but as student population drops, they're required to – I mean your budget drops for your school. So you have to start cutting things. Well, the first thing you cut are the music and arts programs and elective programs and the language arts, foreign language programs.

And then you get to a point where you pretty much have the best basic of basic education in a context of an inarguably unsafe environment where kids were getting assaulted and robbed and things like that. This is going on. And so you have this kind of thing happening pretty comprehensively across the district with rare exception, honestly. And the budget of the school district is diminishing dramatically.

You get to a point where the viability of the system becomes a question, I think, where the only schools people want to really get their children into are the magnet schools because the other schools, the neighborhood schools are inarguably sub par. So you have folks, I think, that are pushing for voucher programs and things like that, which harm public school systems also and I think that it's – you know, there's an attack against public education and with all the problems we have in society, if the public education system collapsed, it would be exponentially worse.

So that's kind of one of the reasons why – I mean, I've questioned public education. I've recently even contemplated putting my child into private schools because I have to do what's best for my child. But at the same time, I want to advocate for my child and other children because you know, oftentimes, it's the children that don't have advocates that get the sub par education and are ill served by the system that get into crime and different problems and end up victimizing your child ten years down the line. That's how

I view it. So it's very important to me personally and again, from – I have a family of folks that have committed a couple of generations to that stuff, you know. So it's anything I can do to help close that, I try to do it. You know?

ML: That's great. 'Cause you know, it is challenging because we do get a lot of people that want to remove their children from public ed for these reasons that you're counting, safety, as one of the most paramount –

Mr. Jay: That's the foundational issue.

ML: Yeah. And I mean, I don't know if it's so much do you question the quality of education?

Mr. Jay: I don't question the quality and commitment of most of the educators. I think most of the educators I've experienced, and I have a 13-year-old – my brother is 13 years younger than I so I got to watch him come through the public education system, you know, a significant amount of time after I did, so – and at that time, there was a lot of good things happening and there's still a lot of good things happening.

Don't get me wrong, but I think the advent of this hyper-emphasis on testing, it's a big part of the issue because teachers aren't able to spend as much instructional time teaching as they are preparing kids to do well on these tests. And there's a different skill set in terms of the notion of teaching children to think and reason and figure out problems is different from getting them to do well on the tests. So there's those kinds of things.

A big one is parents – there's been a, for whatever reason, parents are not sending their children primarily to learn. They're using the school as some sort of daycare or just a place that the kids can go where they know there's a good presumption that they'll not get into too much trouble. But they're not sending them to school – they're not setting good examples at home so these children bring in these bad kinds of ways of doing things into the schools. There's just no other explanation for me.

I mean, my son doesn't get into fights and he doesn't call people out, their names, because at home and at church, he's getting that message that that's not acceptable. And he knows if he comes back with that, with a report that some of that stuff is going on, there's gonna be very serious consequences. And clearly, some other children are not getting that. they're just not.

So that's why I think, it's – and that's, I think it was one of the central problems that we're having and it's almost no question that that's an issue. But the bigger challenge is what do you do about it. How do you make somebody do that or not have their children exposed to like, excuse my language, but booty shaking stuff on the TV or crazy music with you know, kind of derogatory language about women and cursing and things like that. How do you make a parent do that in a society where we have freedom of expression and all this stuff?

It was societally understood maybe, I don't know how long ago, but at some point in the past that that stuff was unacceptable and now it's become acceptable and you have parents validating the behavior and then the kids bring that behavior into the schools and they're looking at the teachers and they're, you know, people in positions of authority in the schools as though they're wrong because their standard has become this on the corner behavior as I call it. That's normal. And so to sit in class and learn and behave and not call people out of their name is their standard. So the challenge, the big challenge is how do you turn that around. School districts alone can't turn that around.

ML: No, they can't. I think it takes the collaboration between parents, between community organizations and maybe somewhere that's where we've kind of lost and gone awry, the partnerships are not there nearly like we need them to be to kind of help.

Mr. Jay: See, I'm really wondering if – because even with all those things, if you have parents that – it's a choice – that choose to have their children exposed to kind of what I would consider antisocial elements at home. See, I think it's anti – it's uncivilized for – some of this behavior's uncivilized. To think it's okay to be fighting all day and being combative in the streets and schools and each other around in their house and then coming to school and do the same thing. That's uncivilized and antisocial. That's kind of how I frame it. But how do you make somebody change that?

ML: I think hit upon it. I think you hit upon it when you talked about education and exposure and experience. I think that if you asked me that question, that's what I think about, I mean because you don't know anything different until you're taught something different. You know?

Mr. Jay: Sure. The thing though is that there's a lot of children that are coming to school and the reason there are consistent problems and

behaviorally is because their standard, what they think is normal, is the stuff they're getting in the street and at home. You know? So like if the only place you come and you get more positive standards, is school, then you think school is crazy. You think that the people at the school, they're wrong. And that's what I'm wondering how you change.

You know, because it's, you know, we are part of what molds us is our environment and what we're exposed to, inarguably so, you know. I don't know if it's – because what's happening is kids are killing other children. So it's – and those of us that have children that are well behaved and they're not – that doesn't, you know, you just last night, a 16 year old got killed on his birthday and things like that. It's every day here now.

So I'm wondering if it isn't time to like sit down, not just with teachers and administrators and parents, but also political representatives and legislators to start talking about not just punitive consequences for parents that allow this type of thing to happen, but also rewards for parents that do, maybe it's tax credits or whatever. But something has to be done beyond what's being endeavored, what's being done right now because it's not working yet.

And I think that maybe if you had a situation where, I don't know, I mean you can't put children out of the public education system either because they have a right to education, but my child has a right to learn and if the class is being disrupted – now FDES doesn't have a huge problem. I know Miles Davis Academy doesn't have a huge problem with that stuff. But there are schools where that's definitely – the children that are going there and are well behaved can't learn because the teacher's spending so much time disciplining a handful of kids that are crazy.

ML: Right. You're right. And so tell me once again, why did you select to send your child to our site school?

Mr. Jay: It was – well, I sent him there for pre-K 'cause I lived in Hyde Park at the time. And I watched the school. I mean, I kind of used those two years and I looked at other schools also. Mrs. SP who was the principal at the time, was great and very committed. The staff, there were a lot of good teachers. I knew some – a few of the teachers. So I talked to them and I, you know, kind of just watched. I just was trying to pay attention to what was happening at the school. And there were a lot of good things happening at the school. And then Mr. Columbus came in when my son was in

kindergarten and that was the year they did the – they closed a bunch of schools and they moved the magnet program too. And Easterly had a very good reputation and their program, everybody know that ever had a child in Easterly loved it.

ML: Yeah.

Mr. Jay: So that was one of the main reasons I kept him at FDES for kindergarten up to now. But yeah, just – there was a good –

ML: He's in what grade now?

Mr. Jay: He's in second grade now.

ML: Okay.

Mr. Jay: But there was a strong commitment to working with parents and then the teachers were very committed to working with each other between grade levels and all of that and trying to really make sure that, you know, when your child goes from kindergarten to first grade that the kindergarten teachers are conferring with the first grade teachers to find out which children will be best service in which classes and these type of things, which I think is something that's probably supposed to happen comprehensively, but really doesn't oftentimes. But they were very serious about it and they took it very seriously and he learned.

I mean, that's the other thing. I mean, I saw his skill sets broaden and deepen and get more firmly established. And the other thing, it was not a crazy rowdy environment either. There were a lot of parents that were on site, just very consistently, and that was really encouraging. That was exciting to see. You know?

And there weren't a lot of – you know, a lot of the parents at FDES are very probably low to moderate income parents, but regardless of that, they were still committed to making sure their kids were well behaved and made their best effort to do what they're supposed to do. And the alternative, 'cause I moved from Hyde Park to Baileysville and we live in Fredrickton now. But the feeder school that he would go into where we live is terrible.

ML: Okay

Mr. Jay: It's terrible. In every area it's terrible. So the children –

ML: What feeder school is that?

Mr. Jay: I think it's Welton School. I hate to say that, but it's terrible.

ML: It's okay.

Mr. Jay: The children, when we lived in Baileysville particularly, there was a lot of kids around, they couldn't read at all. I mean, they can't read. They can't read. They don't have any basic skills and I was hearing that there were very adversarial – there was a very adversarial dynamic between the administrator and the parents, for example. This administrator, from that I was told, you know, didn't even use proper English. So I mean if your principal is using poor English and doesn't recognize that they're using broken English, what kind of standard is that for teachers and students?

ML: Right.

Mr. Jay: It's unacceptable. So – but what I kind of – as I kind of spread out through the district and looked around and visit schools, it wasn't a unique situation. So I said, "Okay, he's at FDES, so it's a good school. It's a solid school. People are very serious and committed to education and putting together that team of parents and teachers and, you know, if you go to church, you go to church. I believe that that's a big part of it too.

ML: Right.

Mr. Jay: You know? But yeah, that's why. That's why I kept him at FDES.

ML: Okay. I think that's great.

Mr. Jay: Of course Davis Academy comes very highly recommended also.

ML: Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Jay: But another thing, philosophically for me is that FDES was a really – was a solid school with solid staff and committed people there, but it had some bad years prior to that. And so the community in which FDES resides, you know, Easton and Hyde Park, which is predominantly white totally ostracized the school and cut it off.

So now FDES is like, I think it's almost 100 percent African American, which I don't have a problem with. But I like the idea of a predominantly black school being a high performing school. I like that. I think that's a good example to put out there. And, you know, the white families who have kids at FDES love it. They

don't have any problem with it. You know, so – and so it's – I like the idea of defying stereotypes, not just as an individual or a family level, but at the level of an entire school with hundreds of kids in it. I like that.

ML: Okay.

Mr. Jay: So Davis Academy was a great school and if I wanted to just put him somewhere where there was a long track record of great stuff, Davis Academy would have probably been my first choice. But since FDES was on a good track, I wanted to be a part of making a change, a positive change or building something else where I could build it, where I could help build it. You know? That was important to me.

ML: That's – I think that those are important things is being a part of the process and I'm hearing you say that you've been a part of the process since the pre-K program and now into the second grade year.

Mr. Jay: I don't have a choice.

ML: Those are important things.

Mr. Jay: I don't have a choice. Like, the people in my family don't – they take it so seriously that, like, I mean my great grandmother, like was responsible for integrating the Higgins Public Schools.

ML: Nice.

Mr. Jay: Yeah, so I don't have a choice. It's kind of – it's – I've been around that stuff so long. My mom, she taught August Wilson School would go up in the projects daily and she'd take us, you know, sometimes. And I'd see her in these scary situations telling folks, you know, really getting through to them, not in a derogatory sense, but really doing good.

ML: This is what you need to do.

Mr. Jay: Right, so she has friendships and I've seen – I mean there's hundreds of people throughout the city that I see her connect with that are adults with children and grandchildren that remember that stuff. So the notion of putting him in a safe school which has a long track record of doing great stuff like Davis Academy versus keeping him at FDES which is kind of like also doing great stuff, but needs committed people to help it get to where Davis Academy

is, was something I wanted to be a part of. You know? And there's other parents like that at FDES, which is cool.

ML: You get no argument. I mean, I think that's a good thing. You have to know your place in a school.

Mr. Jay: And how you can help.

ML: Right and then there's other models for people to be able to see to help kids.

Mr. Jay: Absolutely it's not a fluke, it's not a freak thing.

ML: No, and it's not pretend because our kids all have the capability. I love the one thing and the school defies stereotypes.

Mr. Jay: Oh yeah. I mean it's important to me. I grew up in Hyde Park. I went to FDES when I was a kid. It was an all white school and I was like one of the very few black folks there. There was only like three black families out in Hyde Park at the time. And for the school to do 100 percent reversal in terms of the demographics – and I still have tons of friends in the neighborhood that know what's going on. They just didn't – it was not a good school for a few years.

I think there was an administrator that, unfortunately was a really nice lady and a very qualified capable woman that had some sort of terminal illness. So her illness had her very angry and in pain most of the time, from what I've been told. And so it was just a terrible dynamic between the parents and the teachers and it really destroyed the fabric of that. And she followed Petunia Henry, Dr. Henry, who was – had FDES – just had – was doing great things. My brother was there at that time.

ML: Okay.

Mr. Jay: So it was – I'm thinking it was somewhere in the late '80s, early '90s that things got dicey over there. But the neighborhood totally just pretended it wasn't there and took the children out, you know, and so you know, I have friends who home school their children that live in Hyde Park and friends that have their children going to other schools that have said to me quite candidly that even the demeanor of the children walking home from FDES has changed dramatically. They're not screaming and hollering in the street and acting crazy and throwing garbage. You know? They're doing the total opposite now. So it's cool.

ML: That's great. So the student achievement gap, and we've kind of touched upon it and we just kind of now ask the question. It's a current issue in education and so what do you know or have heard about the student achievement gap issue whether it is in the district or in the school?

Mr. Jay: I mean I think FDES is doing a good job of that. I mean it's – it'd be impossible for FDES to have kind of a – our reading scores, I think, went down last year, but our math scores were very, very good and the reading scores previously were up significantly from before. So it would be impossible for FDES to be a high performing school with an achievement gap given that it's mostly blacks.

But I guess what I'm hearing and what I'm reading is that basically black students are just drastically underperforming their white counterparts and Asian counterparts. And I think Hispanic children are doing somewhat better, but there's still far and away much lower performing than – achieving than their white counterparts.

So again, I think it's – a lot of it is parents establishing a paradigm for their children that's viable. It's a huge part of it. I mean, you know, that's – the teachers and the administrators, you all cannot do it all. If you don't have, you know, when the children go home, if they don't – if the parents and the support network in the community and at home aren't really – say, "Okay, first thing, before we jump on the Playstation, let's get the homework out of the way."

That's what I do with my son. I got him a PSP because last year he got straight A's, so, "Okay, you can get one now." But he had to wait a year. He didn't just get it 'cause he wanted it or 'cause I wanted to play it, which is what's going on at home. Those parents, they want to play the Playstation with their kid or, you know, or before the kids. But no, we said, "No, if you get straight A's or you do, you know, straight As, you'll get it. And so I got him one. You know? So – but now it's your homework first and your PSP. You know? That's it.

But that's just – they're not getting that. And I think the simple reality is that a lot of white families insist on that stuff. It's just there's no other explanation for it. It's not that we can't learn. It's clearly not that we can't learn. If we can learn the lyrics to songs on the radio after hearing them two times –

ML: Sometimes one depending on the song yeah.

Mr. Jay: Right, that's what I'm saying. Exactly. So it's not that we can't learn, that our children can't learn, it's absolutely not the case. It's that I mean, again, I come from a family of folks that, you know, back in the '40s and the '30s when my grandparents and their siblings were at Tiger Woods High School, it was all white. They were valedictorian year after year after year. So it's not about that. It's about parents not handling their business and a community that's, for whatever reason, accepted a really bad standard. You know, we encourage – children think it's cool to be thuggish, to be running around with your bootie showing if you're a girl and this is – these things are lifted up and the parents are encouraging that.

ML: That's right.

Mr. Jay: So it's a standard that we have to – that's, again, I don't think it's something the schools can change by themselves because it's not a – it didn't start in schools, it started at home.

ML: Right.

Mr. Jay: So how do you do that? That's the challenge. I mean, you know, when Dr. Jackie Robinson was here, you know, that was something he was real big on. He'd come and challenge folks. He'd go out and wasn't afraid to say, "Look, you have to do something different at home." You know, he'd come to church – I go to Grace Church. He was up in Grace all the time and he said, "Look, you guys aren't the problem because I know you guys are telling your kids what to do. But you all as a congregation need to get out of these church walls and share it with people that aren't doing that." It's the same – that's the issue. I mean, but you can't force people to do it.

ML: Nope.

Mr. Jay: You know, so it's – that's – for me, it's, you know, it's like how do you change a societal standard once it goes from something constructive and positive to something negative and destructive. I think part of it's gonna have to be some serious consequences. And that's not something that's, you know, Mr Roseton will tell you we can't do that. Oh, we can't? Okay, well the law doesn't allow us to do that? We'll change the laws. That's how I look at it.

You know, the lawmakers are our political representatives. They're supposed to do what we need them to do to have a civilized society. You know, and then you have folks in the African American community that will fight you on some of this stuff. "Well we don't want this."

I say, "Look, we have to have a higher standard." I was talking to Mr. Columbus about this. We have to have a higher standard. We can't have these kids out there killing each other and shooting folks up and hitting old ladies with guns and bullets. It's ridiculous. They need to go. And if they can be rehabilitated great, but if they can't, they need to be out of the way so those of us that understand the value of civilized conduct and like anti – and it's, you know, social versus antisocial behavior can go ahead and straighten stuff out.

ML: I think you hit upon a real critical thing. It starts at home with a lot of this and so it comes with the responsibility, I think that somewhere along the line, we've lost that becoming a parent is a gift.

Mr. Jay: It is a gift. That's right.

ML: It is not your gift, but it is a gift that's bestowed upon you and you received a gift, a blessing, then you take that seriously and not, "Well, it's gonna give back to me."

Mr. Jay: Right, I'm gonna get something because I had a kid.

ML: It's absolute reverse and somewhere along the lines, we've kind of lost that. When you think of the welfare system itself, if I have kids, I get money for having kids, not for parenting, not for taking care of my kids, but for bringing them into the world. And that's –

Mr. Jay: And if I do nothing else, the rest of their life until they're 18, I'll get a check.

ML: I'll get a check.

Mr. Jay: Even if I don't parent.

ML: Right. And that's where we've kind of lost the system. And society's also very similar. So now my kid – and I have a child that has needs. Now they get even more benefit for having a child that has needs. Some of those needs come from my poor parenting. Some of it doesn't, but some of it does.

Mr. Jay: Some of it might be clinical, but a lot of it is behavioral.

ML: So now why do I once again am I taught that I get money for having a child, not parenting, not taking that responsibility.

Mr. Jay: And that's why I say that it's time – it is time – I'm gonna just say it. As I say it privately and I'm gonna start saying it more publicly. It's time to change the laws. It's time to put some different laws on the books that require you to do some of this stuff that we know works in terms of parenting.

ML: What's so funny, I've had the – well, not the argument, but there's been discussion that's saying you have to get a license for everything, but having children.

Mr. Jay: I think that's – I mean that's the real kind of extreme position. I agree with you and it's the highest responsibility that you'll ever have in your life.

ML: 'Cause I think this.

Mr. Jay: You need to get licensed for much less important things. I agree with you 100 percent.

ML: Even if it's nothing but a parenting class because everybody can learn from a parenting class.

Mr. Jay: The problem is in the country we live, this is the thing. America is as a point now where most of its history regardless of what religion you practice, you had the same foundational kind of principles that you didn't rob or steal or kill and do crazy stuff.

ML: True.

Mr. Jay: But at the same time, we're saying, "You have the right to do whatever you want, as long as you don't hurt somebody." And that wasn't challenged until the '60s, '70s maybe. But now, now it's people are really pushing the envelope and saying, "I'm gonna do whatever I want and I'm allowed to 'cause I live in America and we have a Constitution and a Bill of Rights that I can do whatever I want."

[Answers phone]

ML: Excuse me. Yes? Oh, she's in too? Okay. We're finishing up. Can you tell her just to give me a moment please? Thank you. Mrs. Robyn is here.

Mr. Jay: Okay.

ML: Sorry.

Mr. Jay: So I think what it is is I'm not saying we need to sensor things and curtail the bill of rights and curtail the constitutional things, the paradigm, the parameters of the constitution. But clearly, we need to – since kind of the moral kind of standards have not – have diminished to a point where they're non-viable in terms of keeping civil people to act in civilized fashion and in a social versus antisocial manner, you have to do something legislatively to make – to criminalize certain behavior. I mean, you're talking about licensing, to give a license or classes to be – that's why I think that might be a part of stuff like that. You know, now there's an extreme – there are people that have – there's another group of people – you're saying it in a very positive light. There's a whole body of people, a group of folks that believe that they'll take that and extend it to sterilization and all kinds of permanent stuff.

ML: Right, way too far. It's way too far.

Mr. Jay: Right, but it's clearly – only –

ML: How do you balance it?

Mr. Jay: Right and I think in the short term, you know, like what you're doing here at Davis Academy and what we're doing at FDES as other schools that are doing good work, I mean that's what we do right now. But how do we – but the question becomes how do we kind of like supercharge it so it can have a broader effect in a shorter timeframe 'cause it's not happening fast enough. You know what I'm saying?

ML: So as a parent, might as well move through –

Mr. Jay: I know 'cause she's waiting for the interview.

ML: 'Cause we could talk forever, I'm sure.

Mr. Jay: Yes, and we should talk again about this.

ML: That would be great. What are ways that you've encouraged – that you have been encouraged to become involved in your child's educational experiences?

Mr. Jay: Well for me, again, the biggest thing was my family and seeing the constant examples of what can happen when you believe in a child, you know, what can happen when you support a child, what can happen when you facilitate them dreaming and envisioning, those kind of things, but also just what can happen when you talk to a parent and give them encouragement when they're in a situation where everybody around them doesn't care about their kids. You know, so one of the things – like I'm the president of the PTA.

One of the things I love to do is really, you know, I'll see a guy that's doing – that's working hard with his kids or whatever and just try to give him an encouraging word or her an encouraging word or, you know, if they need – if they're looking for some sort of help in different areas and I can point them in a good direction, do that. Just that networking piece with parents is huge. But it can work and it is working in some places so it's just about being part of that connective solution to the problem.

ML: What are any unique programs that are offered at this school that you believe make the students be more successful?

Mr. Jay: One of the things is we incentivize, you know, doing well. We have the FDES Phantom so, you know, if a child does the simplest thing that's kind, you know, whether it's opening a door for a teacher or whether it's picking up some trash when they haven't been told to, the principal will – the FDES Phantom will – the announcements will say, "Hey, this kid – the FDES Phantom saw this one doing something really nice and da, da, da, da, da." And this whole school acknowledges that publicly in the school, for example. That's a big deal. Kids love that.

You know, we're doing the food drive and I don't know if that's a district wide thing or not, but the kids are really enjoying that. You know? They're bringing in hundreds and hundreds of canned goods and boxes of cereal and they realize – one of the things we're getting ready to do is a whole recycling piece that the children have insisted we do.

So that's – you know, hopefully there'll be a science tie in and a math tie in and – but the PTA has been growing well too. It's doing nicely also at FDES so I'm really excited about that. A lot of parents are engaging it and – but I think just incentivizing good

behavior and really just rewarding children publicly in front of their peers when they do the right thing. You know, not just beating them over the head when they don't, but just really giving them a really just that validation when they do good things academically or socially.

ML: Do you consider yourself an advocate?

Jay: Yes.

ML: In what ways do you advocate for your children?

Mr. Jay: I question. I make sure that I understand what's going on with my child and other children. I question school policies. I question district policies. I question teaching styles, not in a confrontational way, but I question it. I need to understand it and I had to have, even Mr. Columbus, I had to explain to him. I said, "Here's the thing. I have one shot at this."

ML: Yeah, you don't get two.

Mr. Jay: So, you know, there is no question that's an unreasonable question and I will ask it and if you can't answer it, I'll go whoever can answer it, but I have a right to have this stuff explained to me and I will – and my child, he deserves an advocate that's going to insist on clarification of everything whether it's the simplest thing or more broader – or a broader thing. That's a big thing for me.

ML: Okay. And this is our last question that we're gonna do. What are the student expectations at the school? What are they expected to do?

Mr. Jay: They're expected to believe in themselves. That's kind of the first thing that you can do whatever you need to do and you can do it well. Of course, they're expected to be respectful of each other. That's big. They're expected to have fun. That's a big one at FDES. They have fun. You know? And there's others, but those are kind of some of the bigger ones. Yeah.

ML: Okay great. Well I thank you so much for this time. You've shared –

Mr. Jay: Do you have a card?

ML: I do.

You've shared more information than -

Mr. Jay: Than you needed. Than you wanted.

ML: Than my questions had originally entertained and so I'm thankful for you for doing that. Once again, you'll get a ten dollar gift card.

Mr. Jay: Oh thank you.

ML: Is there a – and I'm gonna take this back unless you need it. Is there a place you'd like your gift card from?

Mr. Jay: What are the options?

ML: Wherever you normally go.

Mr. Jay: Oh wow. I'm always at Giant Eagle. So that's fine.

ML: There we go. Okay, perfect. I'm gonna transcribe this interview and so –

Mr. Jay: Can I have a copy – 'cause I've done this a couple times with other folks –

ML: You want a copy of the questions?

Mr. Jay: Sure. Actually, that'd be cool.

[End of Audio-39 minutes]

Transcribed Interview

Mr. Columbus (Administrator)

November 10, 2008

ML: Let's go ahead and kinda get started. In order to begin the study, I have to review with you the informed consent document and obtain your agreement to participate in the study. That's this document here. (*Static*) that once again, a school response to the student achievement gap. I'm the principal investigator. My advisor's R. Hathaway

This study is a partial fulfillment of the dissertation of Dunbar University and you're asked to participate in the research to share your thoughts, feelings, and insights. You will be asked to participate in an interview which last one hour to one hour and thirty minutes. The interview will occur at an agreed upon time between the participant and researcher. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. All recordings will be destroyed after transcription.

The Principal and Teachers participate in this will be just asked for public documents, such as your staff handbook, your student handbook, any parent notices that you have, and classroom procedures so they kind of paint the picture of what you're doing here at this school.

Mr. Columbus: Okay.

ML: These are the only requests that will be made of you. There's no risk to you than those encountered in everyday life. If the examination of how a school responds to the student achievement gap can identify how others might think about or respond to the issue, then it will be helpful in helping to improve the quality of education students receive because that's the purpose of it.

As I shared that each participant will get a \$10.00 gift card. However, participation in the project will require no monetary costs to you. An envelope is provided for the return of your response to the investigator, but we're gonna give that hand to hand.

Mr. Columbus: Okay.

ML: You're under no obligation to participate. You are free to withdraw at any time. If you want to withdraw, you can. A summary of the results of this research will be provided to you at no cost, upon request. I just ask that you – that we've read through the above statements and understand what is being requested of you and I also understand that my participation is voluntary, free to withdraw at any time. On these terms, Please indicate that you are willing to participate in this research project.

If you're willing to participate, then I ask you to sign on the participant signature line and then, use today's date. I will certify that.

Okay, great. We're gonna go ahead and get started with some background information. I'm just gonna shut this door.

The first question that I ask for you is just kind of share with me your background and any pertinent experiences that have helped prepare you for the work at this school.

Mr. Columbus: I've worked as a Counselor. I've worked as a Teacher. My educational background is Bachelor's degree, two Master degrees and lots and lots of volunteer work on the educational – educational counseling. My parents – my mother is a teacher and my dad is not educated, but also work with my mother as a – counseling. He has his high school degree.

Other pertinent information may include that – I didn't mention earlier that I was an Assistant Principal. I think that would probably do.

ML: Okay. Sounds good. Our next question is that, how long have you worked at this school and do you enjoy working at this school?

Mr. Columbus: This is – I'm working on my third year at this school at this point and yes, I do. I always grow to love a school a lot more. You find out a little bit more about a school. You always say you can't love a school any more than you currently can and the more you find out about it, the more you can. Absolutely, I do love this school.

ML: If there's one thing that you would change about working at this school, what would it be?

Mr. Columbus: I think that I would like to be able to choose the teachers that work here. If I was able to – when I first came here, if I was allowed to bring in staff members who I knew were working at a high

standard instead of trying to push teachers who weren't at a standard, I would do that.

ML: You'd get no argument from me. In full agreement because I think that, sometimes, when you're trying to move a school and move the agenda of a school, not having people either (a) know how to work or (b) know how to work with you makes it so much longer.

Mr. Columbus: Right.

ML: I swear it almost seems like three years it takes to get a school where you want it to be.

Mr. Columbus: Absolutely.

ML: Have you participated in any professional development that has helped you perform your job effectively?

Mr. Columbus: I think my past work with working with USA Selection, getting a lot of background on what to do with kids who are not performing up to standard and learning how to work, to move that school, that student, that parent really helped me a lot when I first became – my first principal job. Working with USA Selection, I thought, was a big boost in understanding how to teach and how to move a school.

ML: Did you have or do you have a mentor and then, what did you learn from this mentor if you have one?

Mr. Columbus: I was never given a mentor, but I chose Dr. Holiday when I first became a Principal. She didn't choose me. I chose her.

ML: What are some of the things that you've learned from Dr. Holiday?

Mr. Columbus: Some of the things that I've learned from Dr. Holiday was really, learning how to work with parents. We talked a lot about parenting and a lot about dealing with the administrative people above principalship and how to get some of the things you need. Working with her, which was a great boost to my – with me, also, learning those things may take, sometimes, three to five years and being able to get someone to tell you about 'em your first year was a big help.

ML: Okay. Move to the next part, about – really, now, about student achievement gap. It's just a current issue in education and I'm just wanting to know, what do you know or heard about the student achievement gap issue in your school or either, in the district?

Mr. Columbus: What – in my school, there is no achievement gap for math. The achievement gap exists at this school for reading and I think that – again, I go back to what I wish I could do when I first got here. I don't believe that sometimes, getting teachers to believe that African American kids honestly have the capability and – to actually learn text at a level that kids that are Caucasian can. I had to move the teachers to that belief and I was not successful in doing that last year. Therefore, the achievement gap that we closed so greatly the previous year went down. Moving – to moving teacher's ability to understand African Americans is the biggest roadblock I see here at this school.

ML: As the leader, how have you encouraged your parents to permit student to be successful in school or student success?

Mr. Columbus: I meet with my parent group there's – it's great this year. They always ask, "What can we do this month to help you with reading," 'cause I told 'em my focus is on reading and they ask me monthly, at our meetings. I meet with two of the people on the executive board so that they can go back to their parent group that meets on weekends to deliver, how can we help the school move towards improving their reading.

[Phone Call Interruption]

ML: Okay. You were just kind of recounting how you encouraged your parents to work with student success and just indicating that you meet with your parent group, basically, monthly to help with improving in achievement. It basically helped them that way. Is there anything else that you do with that parent group in that meeting? You meet with them. Do you –

Mr. Columbus: We talk about things that are – that they like that's going on in school and we try to make – stop big things – small things from becoming big things. They wanna know why something happened or I explained to them was going to happen so that they're not caught off guard when something is sent home or – it's just working as a good parent group to work through to make sure that what I'm going to send home is sufficient. Sometimes, I've been told I need to add a little bit more information or take some information off.

ML: Okay. when you have worked with teachers. How have you then, also, encouraged your teachers to promote student success?

Mr. Columbus: Again, the biggest thing for me is belief. I always want my teachers to believe that they can – that African American kids can and will do good as long as you expect them to do good. I always ask for them to give a little bit more than they gave yesterday or I want them to understand that a student worth, a student ability on an intimate level. If I come to you and I asked you about a particular student, you should be able to tell me or have it at your ready to tell me exactly all the weaknesses and the strength that this one particular student has and what are you doing to work on that? I want to make sure that the teachers receive enough professional development so them working on a weakness or a strength, that they are capable of doing that. What can I do as administrator to help you make sure that we're meeting the needs of these students?

ML: Okay. How has the school district or central office employees supported your school to promote student success?

Mr. Columbus: I won't say that it's been greatly helpful, but I'll say that some of the things that – some of the workshops are helpful, but I think it could be a lot more helpful than it is. Instead of looking for ways to tear down something, how can I first work to improve it? Make that person, that whatever better first? Or school – closing schools.

ML: Especially successful ones.

Mr. Columbus: Yeah.

ML: Okay, moving along. There's a little bit of stuff on that one. Your school offers programs to improve student success. What do you think are the most important events, activities or programs that you have at this school that benefit your students?

Mr. Columbus: Are you asking me outside of the regular educational –

ML: Yes.

Mr. Columbus: – or during the regular educational process?

ML: How about we go both?

Mr. Columbus: Okay. During the educational process, I believe that instruction is first and foremost, the key. I don't care what interventions I do, that if they're not being – if the regular instruction is not good, interventions aren't gonna help because the person giving the interventions is a person who is delivering the instruction also. I'll

say that my instructions over a regular school day is most important that it is delivered at a high standard.

As far as outside of that, I believe that getting kids to read is, to me, very important for me to get students, to encourage more of them to read and to make sure that teachers are working with parents identifying what a student's strengths and weaknesses are. A parent should never be in the dark as to what we're working on your child – trying to improve your child's academic achievement. Informing parents and possibly, giving them some assistance in helping a student, I think, is our keys that we've tried to work on.

ML: Now, do you have after school program? I know that you do extended year program. Would you find that those are also beneficial?

Mr. Columbus: Somewhat, but I really believe in – no. I don't – I think that they have some – there's success, but I think, in the interventions that are sent home and working with the parents and getting students to extend their understanding and mastery of particular keys in reading or in math are most important. That's not always possible in the after school because we have an agenda set by the district as to what we can and cannot do. It could be a little bit more successful, but because my hands are tied on what I have to do, it's not as successful as I would like it to be.

ML: Yeah. This is a sidebar, but I think, since they've changed it and they've gone to the centralized program, that they have really destroyed the effectiveness of the after school –

Mr. Columbus: After school.

ML: – program. Because, I used to feel that the kids that were kind of in the middle, their scores were a boost because they need that extra time that they don't always get because we constantly focus on the lower kids. But it's those ones that are just right there that can bend or twist your scores. They may be proficient, but they're low proficient, not necessarily high proficient.

Mr. Columbus: Right.

ML: Yeah.. Okay. That's just kind of a sidebar, too. What happens at your school when students begin and are not socially and academically ready for school?

Mr. Columbus: We try to identify them and we work with our counselor, but I believe the first step is just, sometimes, letting parents know what's going on. Sometimes, it has helped and if that's not enough, then we work – we try to write out a plan with – along with our parents and our teachers and the administration as to what we need to do to improve this particular child, both behaviorally and academically. Sometimes we can work it out during the school year and sometimes we can't. I'm not one to like to put a child in special ed if we don't need to. I like to work out the problem, if possible.

ML: Do you consider yourself an advocate for your children? If yes, what are ways that you advocate for your students?

Mr. Columbus: I definitely consider myself an advocate for them because what I do is when I approach a particular problem, I wanna know, what can we do to help that particular child? We're not always – I need to control – these are the things that I can control, the things that I do and the things that the teachers should be doing, but as far as what the child is – he's waiting on us or she's waiting on us. How to deliver, how to find that particular key and that's what we need to look for. We need to control the things that we do, which are myself and the teachers and say, "How can we improve," because we don't want it ever to be said that, "If I did this or if I did that." We worked along with the parents to see what we can do for that particular child.

ML: What are your interactions with the community as it relates to your school?

Mr. Columbus: I try to attend as many community meetings as possible. I go to community events. I'm also a former resident of the community, so I know a little bit about what's going on and what people to get in contact with. Stay in touch with the political leaders and community leaders in this particular area, also, just to let them know that they can come to the school and we'll be calling on you and you can call on us for any particular needs, as far as the educational process is concerned.

ML: Alright. Why do you believe children achieve in your school?

Mr. Columbus: Again, I believe in them. You give me three kids and I think I can improve three kids. You give me 100, I think that I can improve 100 – each and every one of those 100 kids. I just believe that any child is just waiting for us to crack that code or give them the information in a particular way that they're willing to accept and

move that particular student. They're just waiting on us to give them the information at the right level and in the right way.

ML: Okay. What are the students' expectations and then, do you think that the expectations that you have are just particular to this school?

Mr. Columbus: When you say, "What are the students' expectations," can you clarify that a little bit for me?

ML: Yeah. What do you expect for students to do?

Mr. Columbus: I expect for the students to be in school. I expect them to be in school on time. I expect them to be prepared to learn. I expect them to be open to learning and it is my job to deliver that education to get them to expand upon some of their current knowledge that they receive from home, their previous schooling years or just their experience along. It's our job to expand them, to give them that information so that we can exchange information so that they can know a little bit more of that then.

ML: Do you think they're just particular to this school?

Mr. Columbus: Absolutely not.

ML: Okay. Let's see. What are your expectations then for your staff?

Mr. Columbus: Be willing to teach those kids and the expectation that, being that I have African American population 90 percent this year, that I expect them to understand that African American kids do not act like kids that are Italian, kids that are Asian, kids that are Polish. They act like African American kids and that's – and Indian kids act like Indian kids in that, when you're willing to learn about the culture and understand their process of learning, that they, too, can learn at a high level and that you're willing to give them that education at a high level, then they will receive it a high level and be able – be more successful.

ML: You've already kind of talked about them as African American children because the next question talks about African American children specifically. What role do you play in the success of all the children at this school?

Mr. Columbus: It's my belief that I'm supposed to be ready to teach kids no matter what level of learning ability that they are on. Being that, if there's a slow learner or a student who learns a little bit more rapidly than

the other, I'm – and all the kids that fall in between that, then I'm supposed to make sure that those kids are being given their information at their particular level so that their learning is not slowed down or sped up too fast for them.

ML: Is there anything that you would like to share that I may not have asked during this interview?

Mr. Columbus: I think, as an educator, I think that I should always be willing to sit here and learn from others, never believe that I have all of the answers and never believe that all the answers are found here at this school. That there's always something out there to help you – help myself, the teachers, or the students learn a little better, learn – and sometimes, work a little harder and smarter at the same time. I always wanna be a continual learner about reading, math, and just the process of learning.

ML: Thank you for your time and your willingness to share your experiences and insights with me. It's vital for this successful story to be shared with others because we need more of our African American children achieving.

Mr. Columbus: Okay.

ML: At this time, I'm gonna transcribe the conversation, and then I will send it to you via email or send it to you so that you can review it. If there's things that need to be added or deleted, we'll do it and you can modify it at that time.

Mr. Columbus: Okay.

ML: You're set to get a \$10.00 gift card after the transcription is sent to you. Is there a place that you would like to receive your \$10.00 gift card from?

Mr. Columbus: You can make it to GetGo.

ML: GetGo. Alright.

Mr. Columbus: Get some gas.

ML: Okay. Any other concerns?

Mr. Columbus: No and I thank you.

[End of Audio-23 min]

APPENDIX E

Coding Scheme

	<u>Stakeholders</u>		Administration 4	Teachers 12	Parents 6
<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Description of Initial Codes</u>	<u>Secondary Codes From Literature</u>			
RQ1: What are the experiences of the stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and parents) with the student achievement gap?	Student Achievement Gap Reality (SAGRe)	-Sch. Cult (School Culture) -Programs (School Programs)	14	38	21
RQ2: How do the stakeholders of these schools describe and explain the student achievement gap between Caucasian and African American children?	Student Achievement Gap Description (SAGD)	-SAG Descript (Student Achievement Gap Description) -Stud Succ. (Student Success)	10	32	13
RQ3: What are the specific strategies and practices being used by the stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and parents) to address the achievement gap with African American students?	Background (Backg.)	-Ed. Back. (Education Background) -Exp. (Experience) -PD. (Professional Development)	17	45	13
	Student Achievement Gap Response (SAGR)	-Expec. (Expectations for Students) -Role Played (Role Play in student success)	13	22	11
	Other	-Care (Care and Concern for Students) -Teach (Teach Students) -Mentor (Mentor from Experience Staff)	8	26	0
	Student Achievement Gap Strategies (SAGS)	-Imp. Event (Important Events) -Unprep. Stud.(Unprepared Students) -Advocate (Advocate for Students) -Commu. Inter (Community Interest)	19	45	22

APPENDIX F

Atlas ti Code Families

HU: SAG Files

File: [C:\Users\Mz Lamar\Documents\Scientific Software\Atlas ti\Text Bank\SAG Files
Hpr5]

Edited by: Super

Date/Time: 03/12/09 07:08:33 AM

Administrator
Assessment
B: Educational Background
B: Professional Development
B: Work Experience
Collaborative Scoring
Community Involvement
Effort is Supported
Empowered Principal
Experienced Teachers and Admin
Focus on Achievement
Measurable Goals
O: Care and Concern
O: Mentor
O: Relationship
O: Teach
Parent
Parent Involvement
Principal & Teacher works with the Parents
Rigorous Curriculum
Safe and Disciplined School
SAGD: Description
SAGD: Student Success
SAGR: Expectations
SAGR: Role Play
SAGRe: School Culture
SAGRe: School Programs
SAGS: Advocacy
SAGS: Community Involvement
SAGS: Events
SAGS: Unprepared Students
Teacher
Technology
Writing

APPENDIX G

Quotations for an Interview from Atlas Ti

28 quotation(s) for code:

SAGD:Description

Report mode: quotation list names and references

Quotation-Filter: All

HU: SAG Files

File: [C:\Users\Mz. Lamar\Documents\Scientific Software\ATLAsTi\TextBank\SAG Files.hpr5]

Edited by: Super

Date/Time:02/19/09 05:32:36 PM

P 1: Coded_Interview_1[1].doc - 1:11 [Mrs. SP: I have an issue with ..] (155:164) (Super)

Codes: [Administrator] [SAGD:Description]

No memos

Mrs. SP

: I have an issue with the SAG. It is hard from me coming from a school like Matthew Elementary and students were achieving. I think it is a lot of stereotyping. All children can learn extremely well. I put that on the administrator. It is what the administrator expects From the staff. It does not matter if the students are green, purple, Black or blue. There should not be this huge gap between our Children. We proved that at Matthew Elementary and at Victory Elementary. We had a population of 100% African American It is the same thing at FDES. When I Lirst started, it was 50/50 African American and Caucasian

P 1: Coded_Interview_1[1].doc - 1:14 [Rachel: I completely agree wit..] (190:205) (Super)

Codes: [O:Teach] [SAGD:Description]

No memos

Rachel:

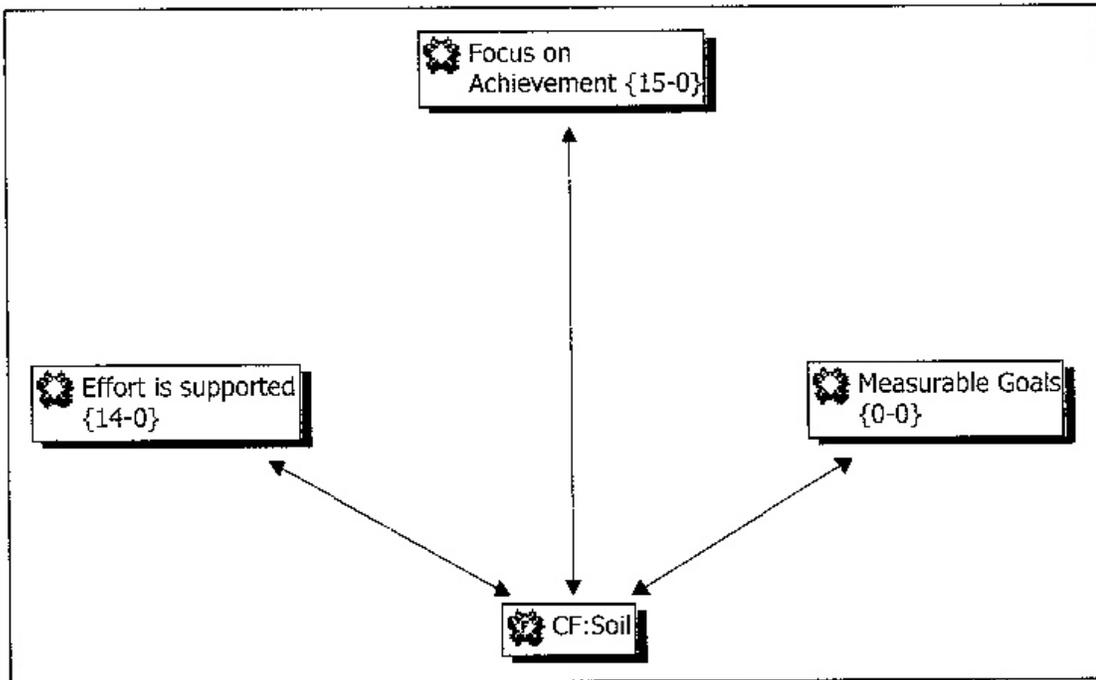
I completely agree with Mrs. SP. I lived in a bubble. I thought Everyone would teach how I taught. I came out of the bubble and Learned that not everyone teaches that way. I was on the Northside. It was 50/50 student population. All of the student's were struggling. At that point, achievement gap was not an issue or a district issue.

At FDES, it was not an issue because everyone was expected to Achieve. Now at my current assignment, I can not get the SAG Out of my mind. I look at data, student, school and district. It is Obvious that there is a gap. 5% of the students could be identified As LS. I guess it was there, but has not been addressed until this Five or six years. It is just no right. What are we doing? It was not A problem because we looked at achievement in general and we Addressed the achievement issues. We looked at what the students Needed and what the children needed. We took that professional Development that we got and did not address it in terms of (race) We looked at learning styles, and I guess we were naiveté.

APPENDIX H

Accelerative Factors Theory (2007) Connected to the Research Literature

Soil





Duquesne University
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: September 8, 2008
Expiration Date: September 8, 2009

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY (Face to Face)

- TITLE:** A School Responds to the Student Achievement Gap: A Qualitative Study
- INVESTIGATOR:** Monica D. Lamar
100-2B Oakville Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15220
Mobile: (412) 600-1093
- ADVISOR: (if applicable):** Dr. Rodney K. Hopson
School of Education-Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders at Office: 412-396-4034
- SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University.
- PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate your thoughts feelings and insights as to how a school responds to the student achievement gap. You will be asked to participate in an interview, which will last 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The interviews will occur at an agreed upon time between participant and researcher. The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. All recordings will be destroyed after transcription.
- The principal and teacher interviewed participants will be asked to provide public school documents (not student documents) that relate to the student achievement gap (i.e. staff handbook, student handbook, parent notices, classroom procedures, etc.)
- These are the only requests that will be made of you.
- RISKS AND BENEFITS:** There are no risks greater than those encountered in everyday life. If the examination of how a school responds to the student achievement gap can identify how others might think about or respond to the issue, then it will be helpful in helping to improve the quality of education student's receive.

COMPENSATION: Participants will receive a \$10.00 gift card. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. An envelope is provided for the return of your response to the investigator.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. Each participant will be provided a pseudonym before beginning the interview by the researcher. After transcriptions of the digitally recorded interviews, the files will be destroyed. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. Your response(s) will only appear in summaries. All materials will be destroyed five years at the completion of the research.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Monica D. Lamar, at (412) 600-1093 or email her at: mlamar1@pghboe.net. I may also call or contact Dr. Rodney K. Hopson at (412) 396-4034 or Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board 412-396-6326).

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Duquesne University
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: September 8, 2008
Expiration Date: September 8, 2009



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY (Telephone)

TITLE: A School Responds to the Student Achievement Gap: A Qualitative Study

INVESTIGATOR: Monica D. Lamar
100-2B Oakville Drive
Pittsburgh, PA. 15220
Mobile: (412) 600-1093

ADVISOR: (if applicable:) Dr. Rodney K. Hopson
School of Education-Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders at Office: 412-396-4034

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate your thoughts feelings and insights as to how a school responds to the student achievement gap. You will be asked to participate in a telephone interview, which will last 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The telephone interview will occur at an agreed upon time between participant and researcher. The telephone interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. All recordings will be destroyed after transcription.

The principal and teacher interviewed participants will be asked to provide public school documents (not student documents) that relate to the student achievement gap (i.e. staff handbook, student handbook, parent notices, classroom procedures, etc.)

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks greater than those encountered in everyday life. If the examination of how a school responds to the student achievement gap can identify how others might think about or respond to the issue, then it will be helpful in helping to improve the quality of education student's receive.

COMPENSATION: Participants will receive a \$10.00 gift card. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. An envelope is provided for the return of your response to the investigator.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. Each participant will be provided a pseudonym before beginning the interview by the researcher. After transcriptions of the digitally recorded interviews, the files will be destroyed. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. Your response(s) will only appear in summaries. All materials will be destroyed five years at the completion of the research.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Monica D. Lamar, at (412) 600-1093 or email her at: mlamar1@pghboe.net. I may also call or contact Dr. Rodney K. Hopson at (412) 396-4034 or Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board 412-396-6326).

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date