THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL AND STATE ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES ON THE BREADTH OF EDUCATION IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS

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BREADTH OF EDUCATION IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS

A Thesis

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Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Abstract of

THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL AND STATE ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES ON THE
BREADTH OF EDUCATION IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS

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Brief Literature Review

Current educational research indicates that accountability policies that were implemented under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) have adversely affected the breadth of education in elementary schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Cankoy & Tut, 2005; Beveridge, 2010). While this trend is observed in most elementary schools, the adverse effects are much more drastic in low-income schools (Jaiani & Whitford, 2011; McCartney 2008). Experiences of other nations demonstrate that education systems can be designed to increase academic achievement while producing well-rounded individuals.

Statement of the Problem

NCLB focused on school accountability to ensure that all students receive a high quality education. However, many educators argue several unintended consequences of NCLB harm the very students it is intended to protect.

The testing regimen of NCLB for language arts and mathematics has led many schools to increase instructional time devoted to these subjects and to the exclusion of other, non-tested subjects. This study explored the effects of these trends on students and teachers in elementary schools in an urban California school district.
Methodology

This study involved a survey of elementary school teachers from the Gracie Mae School District, distributed online through the teachers’ union email. The researcher sent an invitation through union email inviting teachers to anonymously complete an electronic survey. Completed questionnaires were analyzed in order to arrive at the findings and conclusions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Students in the Gracie Mae School District receive increased instructional time in math and language arts as a result of accountability policies. The time dedicated to math and language arts is greater in Title I schools than in schools that are more affluent. Participating teachers believe their students are not being prepared to be knowledgeable adults or engaged citizens. Nonetheless, despite these reservations, teachers also feel intense pressure to increase instructional time in tested subjects.

As NCLB undergoes reauthorization, priorities and mandates in the law must be reconfigured so that students in all schools and communities are educated in all content areas, and teachers are allowed the flexibility to teach.

____________________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Rosemary Ann Blanchard

Date
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

Decades prior to the passage of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999 and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 there were concerns that American students were not adequately being prepared to enter the work force and compete in a global economy. To remedy this concern President Johnson passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with little debate in 1965. At the center of this Act was Title I, which ensured that students, particularly those in high poverty areas would have access to a high quality education. However, the legislation did not seem to improve academic achievement and students continued to lag behind their counterparts in many developed countries. Since its original passage, ESEA has been reauthorized several times. One idea that has always been at the center of the reauthorizations is the notion of teacher and school accountability. Though the PSAA and NCLB were both intended to increase academic achievement, particularly among students in minority groups, current research suggests that many unintentional consequences have arisen as a result of the pieces of legislation. Though these unforeseen consequences are occurring in a large number of elementary schools, they are occurring at a much higher rate in high-poverty schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

One of the most noticeable consequences that has arisen is the notion of curriculum narrowing. In a growing number of schools, teachers are increasing the
amount of instructional time that is spent in language arts and math, the only academic areas that are currently tested in grades two through eleven. The Center on Education Policy (2008) concluded that since the implementation of NCLB, 62% of schools had increased instructional time in tested subjects. As a result of the increase in instructional time to tested subjects, came a drastic decrease in instructional time to social studies, physical education, the arts, and science. Additionally, the classroom pedagogy that is being utilized has also undergone a metamorphosis. In many schools the curriculum has shifted from one that engages several areas of the brain to one that mirrors the format that is used on the state test (Hammond, 2007). Consequently, students, most notably in high poverty schools, are receiving an education that focuses on the comprehension of a myriad of isolated content rather than being given the opportunity to critically problem solve through hands-on, engaging learning activities (Rushton & Juola-Rushton, 2008). While this shift in pedagogy and breadth of curriculum is occurring in elementary schools regardless of socioeconomic status, it is occurring at a much greater rate in high-poverty schools (Jaiani & Whitford, 2011). A study conducted in 2005 by the Center on Education Policy revealed that 97% of high poverty schools had minimum time requirements for instruction dedicated to tested subjects. Comparatively, only 55% of low poverty schools had similar requirements (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). The less rigid time requirements allow teachers in more affluent schools to include non-tested subjects in the curriculum. Meanwhile, teachers in high-poverty schools are required to eliminate non-tested subjects to make more time for instruction of tested subjects and test prep activities. The result of this differing breath of education has ramifications that
reach outside of the classroom. A study by Kahne and Middaugh (2008) found that students who do not receive an education that involves social studies and civics are less likely to be critical thinkers who are actively engaged in their community. In addition to a narrower curriculum, another unforeseen consequence that is attributed to the policies of PSAA and NCLB is an increase in teacher attrition. Historically speaking, low poverty schools have more students who score proficient or above on state mandated tests, and, therefore, are not constrained with invasive state sanctions. Teachers, wanting more flexibility in the curriculum and less sanctions from the State, are transferring to low poverty schools. Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, and Diaz (2004) claimed that the majority of teachers, with the choice between two otherwise identical teaching assignments within a district, would prefer the assignment with lower proportion of high-poverty students. There is very little incentive for high quality teachers to work in low performing schools when the personnel in high performing schools are recognized as “effective” and rewarded while the staff in lower performing schools are labeled as “failing” and publicly scrutinized. Teachers who are new to the profession and are looking for their first job are finding them in high poverty schools. Consequently, students who are in the most need of high-quality, experienced teachers are instead being taught by a revolving door of novice teachers (Omenn Strunk, & Robinson, 2006).

In spite of all the measures to improve academic achievement, students in the United States are achieving at a markedly lower level than their counterparts in foreign countries. Finland, on the other hand, consistently scores at the top of all developed nations on international assessments (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).
Not too long ago, Finland had an education system that looked very similar to that of the United States. However, in the 1970s Finland made substantial changes which are credited for their dramatic improvement. The first change was a shift to an education system that focused on developing high quality teachers. All teachers receive three years of high-quality graduate level preparation, all of which is paid for by the government. In return these teachers are responsible for establishing a rigorous curriculum and mode of assessment that challenges the students in many curricular areas. The second change was a major overhaul in curriculum and pedagogy. The current curriculum is designed to ensure access to a “thinking curriculum” for all students. The focus is an emphasis of how to teach students to think creatively and manage their own learning through all curricular subjects including science, technology, and innovation (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The results of the reform have created an educational system that consistently produces students who score well on international assessments and are critical thinkers who can solve complicated and meaningful problems.

Statement of the Problem

In an effort to improve annual test scores, a substantial number of schools, most notably high-poverty schools, are resorting to drastically increasing the amount of instructional time dedicated to teaching the tested subjects. However, as more instructional time is being dedicated to tested subjects and test taking strategies, a sizeable amount of social studies, science, arts, and physical education instruction is being eliminated from the curriculum. While this trend is universal through elementary
schools, it is happening at a much greater rate in high-poverty schools (Jaiani & Whitford, 2011), where test scores are historically lower than more affluent schools. There is also a growing trend of experienced teachers transferring to schools where test scores are consistently high. Many experienced educators are choosing to teach in schools that historically score well on annual tests because there are no state sanctions and, therefore, more flexibility and creativity is allowed in the curriculum (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). With teachers relocating to more affluent schools, there are openings in high-poverty schools. The current research indicates that these vacancies are being occupied by teachers with less than 3 years of experience (Omenn Strunk & Robinson, 2006).

All of these things combined may have inadvertently created an inequity in education (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Students in high-poverty schools are more likely to receive a narrowed curriculum. Research suggests that when students are educated with a narrowed curriculum that revolves around a test, they are substantially less likely to be critical thinkers, have fewer *real world* skills, and are less likely to be engaged in their community when they graduate high school (Neill, 2003). Conversely, students who attend schools in low-poverty areas are substantially more likely to receive an education that includes social studies, science, the arts, and physical education- all of which have been shown to lead to more success after graduating high school (Buchanan, 2008). Moreover, they are being taught by the most experienced teachers. These students are much more likely to have the skills to think critically, be civically engaged, and go to college.
To examine how high-poverty students in Sacramento County are being affected as a result of current legislation, the following three questions will be addressed:

1. Is there a difference in the breadth of education being delivered to students in high-poverty schools and students in low-poverty schools in Sacramento County?

2. Do teachers in Sacramento County perceive their students are being adversely affected as a result of NCLB policies?

3. Do teachers in Sacramento County believe their students are leaving their classroom/ school with the tools necessary to develop into critical thinkers who are capable of actively engaging in their environment?

Significance of the Study

It is time again to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. While the Obama Administration’s Blueprint for Reform represents a departure from NCLB, it still presents some concerns among educators. Many believe that as long as a single test is used to determine a school’s effectiveness, there will be an implicit incentive for schools to limit the curriculum to only tested subjects (Haertel, 1999). President Johnson’s main purpose in enacting the ESEA was to improve the quality of instruction and academic achievement of high-poverty students. Johnson’s plight continues to be at the center of the NCLB. However, under current legislation, it seems high-poverty students are being the most adversely affected by a narrowed curriculum and teacher attrition (Beveridge, 2010).
In Sacramento County, over half of the students qualify as high-poverty. The percentage of high-poverty students in California is even higher. As the percentage of students who must score proficient increases so will the amount of schools that face increasingly harsh sanctions. With the Obama Administration’s Blueprint for Reform also comes a chance to enact education reform that will increase student achievement, and promote a well-rounded education. Many in education are looking to nations such as Finland and China as a model of what education could be. They are looking at these nations and asking: Would putting more of an emphasis on teacher preparation and a more well-rounded education increase students’ critical thinking abilities, civic engagement and graduation rates? This study will extend the knowledge and examine if students in Sacramento County are being affected by current state and federal policies. Furthermore, if students are being adversely affected, it will be determined how, and to what extent.

This research attempts to garner some insight on how current and potentially future policies implemented under No Child Left Behind and the Blueprint for Reform will affect high-poverty students in Sacramento County. While the researcher will focus on Sacramento County, the results will provide an insight of that is occurring nationally. Hopefully, as the research continues to mount, policy changes will be implemented that promote an enriching education that focuses on much more than a test.
Definition of Terms

**Academic Performance Index (API):** Became the cornerstone of California’s accountability movement under the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999. API requires all students in grades 2 through 11 to take an annual test that measures the academic performance of schools based on students’ achievement in mathematics, language arts and science (grades 5, 8, 10). The API serves two purposes. First, it measures the annual academic growth of each school in the State. Second, it would serves as a means to rank all the schools in the State. It further prescribes a five percent growth goal for each school, based on their baseline score.

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** Mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, AYP requires each state to ensure that all schools and districts make yearly progress in the amount of students who are proficient in mathematics and language arts. According to the mandate, 100% of students will be proficient end of the 2013-2014 school year. In addition, schools are held accountable for the academic achievement of each of its significant student populations. Each state disaggregates the school’s test scores by the various subgroups of students. If any of the subgroups fail to meet AYP goals for two consecutive years, the school is labeled as “in need of improvement”. If a school continues to not meet AYP goals, they face increasingly invasive penalties that range from parent notification of school choice, to restructuring of the school staff, to a state takeover.

**Annual Measureable Objective (AMO):** A predetermined measurement used to determine a state’s compliance the No Child Left Behind Act. States have developed
annual measurable objectives (AMOs) that will determine if a school, district, or the state as a whole is making adequate yearly progress toward the goal of having all students proficient in English language arts and mathematics by 2013-14. In California, the AMOs are the percent of students who must score proficient or advanced in English language arts and mathematics.

**Curriculum Narrowing**: The practice of spending substantially more time on tested subjects. Typically, these subjects are language art and math. In spending most of the instructional time on tested subjects, other subjects such as social studies, science, the arts, and physical education are eliminated from the curriculum.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**: Originally enacted in 1965 as part of President Johnson’s War on Poverty, ESEA is the principal federal law affecting K-12 education. ESEA was created to support the education of the country's poorest children. Congress must reauthorize it every six years. The most current reauthorization was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

**External tests**: Also referred to as a standardized test. External tests are in the same format for all takers. It often relies heavily or exclusively on multiple-choice questions. The testing conditions, including instructions, time limits, and scoring rubrics, are the same for all students. However, sometimes accommodations on time limits and instructions are made for students who are on an IEP.

**No Child Left Behind Act of (NCLB)**: The 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. NCLB increased the focus of academic achievement of disadvantaged students and English language learners.
**Significant Subgroup**: A group of students based on their ethnicity, poverty, English learner status, and Special Education designation. Both California and federal accountability mandates that various data must be reported for significant subgroups of students. To be considered "significant," a subgroup must include either 100 students or a smaller number if they represent at least 15% of the overall school population. For California’s Academic Performance Index, the smaller number is 30. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the smaller number is 50. In order to meet API and AYP a percentage, determined by the AMOs, of all significant subgroups must be proficient or advanced on the annual test.

**Test-Taking Strategies**: A curriculum that focuses on the structure of tests and teaches students skills and strategies that are necessary to increase test scores.

**Well-Rounded Education**: The opposite of a narrowed curriculum. A well-rounded education promotes a curriculum that includes social studies, science, physical education, and the arts as well as mathematics and English language arts.

**Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

This chapter presented an introduction to the study. The remainder of the study includes four additional chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to how NCLB and PSAA have affected the curriculum in elementary schools, and some long terms effects of the legislation. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used to carry out the study. Chapter 4 will offer an analysis and interpretation of the data compiled through
the instrument. Chapter 5 will include a summary, conclusions and recommendations for future study. Following Chapter 5 will be the appendices and list of references.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of related literature surrounding federal and state educational accountability policies. In addition, this chapter examines how those policies affect students, particularly students in high-poverty schools. Finally, this chapter examines how other developed nations approach education, and how they compare to the United States.

History and Future of Public School Accountability

The notion of school and teacher accountability was thrust into the national spotlight under the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. However, decades prior to the passage of NCLB, education reform had been seen as imperative to maintain America’s economic competitiveness with other countries. In 1964 President Lyndon Johnson was elected in a landslide victory and felt the political conditions were right to push his sweeping social reform known as The Great Society. A former teacher who had witnessed firsthand poverty’s impact on his students, President Johnson believed that equal access to education was vital to a child’s ability to lead a productive life. As part of the Great Society and his War on Poverty, Johnson was determined to address the inequalities in education. In 1965, after little debate and no amendments, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed into law. It became the centerpiece of
President Johnson’s effort to improve the plight of poor and minority youngsters (Jennings, 2000). The main purpose of the ESEA was to ensure that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, were entitled to a high quality education. When passed in 1965, the ESEA was comprised of five Titles; Title I being its crowning jewel. Title I ensured that economically disadvantaged schools were receiving sufficient resources so that the needs of all their children were being met. Over the years, most of the Titles have either been done away with or amended several times. However, Title I, with the exception of funding amounts, has largely remained the same.

The ESEA is typically reauthorized every 5 years, and, with the exception of few modifications, remained unchanged until the 1980s. In 1981, amid concern of the growing public perception that the educational system was in a state of decay, Secretary of Education, T.H. Bell, created the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Over the next 18 months the commission would study the strength of the American public education and report back to the Secretary and to President Ronald Reagan. The results contained in the report, A Nation at Risk, were bleak. It revealed that American students were testing much lower than their foreign counterparts in all core subjects. In addition, 17 year-old students did not possess higher order thinking skills or could not draw inferences from written material. Furthermore, America’s public schools had graduated approximately 23 million adults who were considered functionally illiterate by the simplest test of everyday reading, writing, and comprehension. The report further found that standards and expectations had been lowered and textbooks had been *dumbed down* as the lack of interest in education had increased. For instance, at the time of study,
35 states only required a single year of science and a single year of math as a requirement to graduate (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). As a result of this diminished education, students were not being prepared for a future that was increasingly becoming more skilled and technical. The Commission predicted that for the first time in the nation’s history, the educational skills of one generation would not match or surpass the education skills of their parents. The report delivered to President Reagan concluded with, “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have considered it an act of war” (U.S. Department of Education, 1983, p. 1). When the findings in the report came to the attention of the American public, the cry for sweeping reform in education grew even louder.

However, the report did not simply paint a drab picture of education. It also gave suggestions of how to right the sinking ship of education. Among them were improving the rigor and breadth of the curriculum, increasing the school day and year, raising the standards and expectations of high school graduation, and increasing funding to schools. The Commission also gave a recommendation for holding teachers accountable; a teacher’s tenure and retention should be based on an effective evaluation system. For the first time, the public started to openly discuss the immediate need for an accountability system in education.

* A Nation at Risk (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) served as a fuel for the increasing public concern over public education, and its effect on America’s future economic competitiveness. The states responded with a flurry of legislative action
establishing mandates, accountability directives and various other changes in education
policies (Bell, 1993). Many states developed their own commissions to determine the
effectiveness of their education systems and potential reform measure to remedy any
shortcomings. While A Nation at Risk raised awareness and introduced the
accountability paradigm into the education debate, George H.W. Bush was the first
president to lobby for and talk about introducing specific accountability measures into the
public school system.

In 1988 President George H.W. Bush took office under the campaign promise that
he would be the education president. Soon after taking office, he nationalized the debate
on education. However, he wanted to change the focus of the debate from the need for
educational funding to increasing teacher accountability for student achievement. In his
four years as president he continued to push for increased accountability measures.
Before he left office he unsuccessfully tried to push his America 2000 education plan
through Congress. This legislation would primarily focus attention on setting high
academic standards and the testing of those standards as a means of measuring progress.
However, Bush’s education plan was seen by many as not having enough substance and
more of a political move. While the America 2000 education plan ultimately was
unsuccessful in its passage, it continued the dialogue and momentum of the
accountability movement into the next administration.

Where President Bush failed in his attempt to increase accountability, President
Clinton succeeded. In 1994, with bipartisan support, President Clinton reauthorized the
ESEA when he signed the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) into law.
The restructured ESEA focused on setting high expectations for all children, a school-wide focus for improvement, and a stronger partnership between schools, parents, and the community. It further stressed the glaring need for States and school districts to raise student achievement. Finally, it promoted a better integration of federal, State, and local programs as a means for promoting higher student achievement. This amended ESEA was intended to work in concert with another one of President Clinton’s 1994 laws, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Goals 2000 was intended to help States and school districts lay the foundations of reform. The primary focus was to establish content and performance standards. It further called for a system of assessment and accountability in order to determine if children are learning the standards. Finally, Goals 2000 developed strategies to more actively involve parents, teachers and community members in school reform (United States Department of Education, 1998). Goals 2000 was the first accountability mandate and clearly illustrated that the idea of accountability was rapidly gaining a foothold in both parties. The core principles held within Goals 2000 would later materialize in NCLB (Jaiani & Whitford, 2011).

President George W. Bush, like his father, made education a recurring theme throughout his 2000 presidential campaign. At almost every campaign stop Bush stated, “This nation of ours must challenge what we call the soft bigotry of low expectations. Every child can learn. It starts with raising people’s sights and raising expectations and refusing to yield, refusing to accept curriculum that won’t work” (Rosenbaum, 2000, paragraph 3). Passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law on January 8, 2002. In amending the ESEA, the new law
represented a sweeping overhaul of the education system. The overarching purpose of NCLB was to raise educational achievement, close the racial and ethnic achievement gap and ensure that every child in America had the opportunity at a high quality education.

NCLB stands on four common-sense pillars: accountability for results, an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research, expanding parental options, and expanding local control and flexibility (United States Department of Education 2004). The accountability pillar is where the vast majority of the reform rests. It most notably requires that all states continue to develop academic standards and utilize testing and accountability systems that reflect those standards. In addition, states must establish a system of ensuring that all of its teachers are highly qualified. In order to prove that each teacher is highly qualified a teacher must have a bachelor’s degree, full state certification, and prove they are competent in the subject for which they will be teaching—usually by passing a state-sanctioned test. The most polarizing element of the reauthorization was the timeline to improve academic achievement. As part of the accountability provisions set forth in the law, all students must be proficient in mathematics and language arts by end of the 2013-2014 school year. As a means of monitoring a school’s progress towards one hundred percent proficiency each student takes a test that measures their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Student’s test results are then matched to Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) based on proficiency levels in language arts and math. Schools must meet predetermined AMOs each year until the 2013-2014 school year concludes and all of the students are proficient. In addition, for the first time, schools would be held accountable for the academic achievement of each
of its significant student populations. Each state would disaggregate the school’s test scores by the different subgroups of students. If any of the subgroups fail to meet AYP goals for two consecutive years, the school is labeled as *in need of improvement*. If a school continues to not meet AYP goals, they face increasingly invasive penalties that range from parent notification of school choice, to restructuring of the school staff, to a state takeover.

In order to ensure the prosperous future of the State, California needed to make certain that all students were receiving a high quality education that would help them to thrive within the economic and societal complexities of the 21st century. Following the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, California, along with other states, started developing content standards and ways in which to measure the students’ mastery of those standards. While language arts and mathematic standards had previously been adopted in California, it was not until Governor Gray Davis signed the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (PSAA) that California had its accountability system. The cornerstone of the state’s accountability requirements was the Academic Performance Index (API). Under the new law, all students in grades 2 through 11 were required to take an annual test that would serve two purposes. First, it would measure the annual academic growth of each school in the State. Second, it would serve as a means to rank all the schools in the State. Furthermore, it would prescribe a five percent growth goal for each school, based on their baseline score. In addition to establishing a means to measure the academic achievement of California’s students, the PSAA also initiated a system that would identify high achieving and improving schools as well as underperforming schools. If a school was
able to meet or exceed their annual growth goals, they would be labeled as High Achieving or Improving and would become eligible for monetary and nonmonetary awards. If a school did not meet their annual growth goals, schools would be eligible for the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) which establishes an intervention program for schools. Schools in this so-called “underperforming” group receive money for planning and implementing initiatives for improvement (California Department of Education, 1999). If they fail to improve, they are subject to various forms of intervention, including state takeover. The implicit theory supporting this policy package is that a combination of reporting requirements, incentives, sanctions, and technical support will stimulate sufficient interest and engender sufficient capacity for schools, particularly low-performing schools, to do the right thing by producing a high-quality education (Timar, 2003).

Though controversial, the PSAA was now engrained in California’s schools. Former Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O’Connell, boasted in a 2006 speech that California now had two accountability systems- the federal AYP system and state API system.

The state system is a growth model, which I talk about using the track-and-field analogy of the long jump. We want to see progress year after year. The federal system isn’t based on growth; it’s the high jump. It uses a somewhat arbitrary status bar to see how students are doing year after year. (O’Connell, 2006, p. 1)
With the two systems in place, California was ready to move forward into a new paradigm of education that held all schools accountable for the academic achievement of its students.

Even though both political parties strongly supported NCLB at its inception, in the ten years since President Bush signed it, it has become the center of much criticism. Many claimed that the notion of one hundred percent proficiency was not realistic, and as a result, many schools were being labeled as failing even though they were making academic progress. Others claimed that NCLB encouraged states to lower their educational standards so more students would meet their AMOs, and, therefore, reflect well on the state’s educational system. Still others claimed that the use of a single test to determine the quality of a school was unfair and not reliable. It was this outcry from both citizens and politicians on both sides of the aisle that has led to education once again being part of the national debate.

While the ESEA has yet to be reauthorized since 2001, President Obama has heard the public’s trepidation for the NCLB mandates and has introduced his Blueprint for Reform. Accountability will once again be at the heart of the ESEA reauthorization. However, the yardstick that is used to measure a student’s academic achievement and hold schools accountable will vary from previous years. The Obama Administration has suggested departing from the NCLB goal of one hundred percent proficiency. Instead, their goal is, by 2020, that all students will graduate from high school ready for college or a career (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). While this goal may sound like an ambitious one, many believe it provides too much ambiguity, and does not concretely
dictate what students will to be able to do before leaving school. For example, nowhere in the goal does it discuss how graduates will be ready to assume their adult responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society; a notion that the Founding Fathers overwhelmingly agreed should be the main purpose of a public education (Ellis, 2000).

Additionally, Obama’s plan would replace the AYP system which measures the performance of a specific subgroup of students against a fixed achievement target. Obama’s plan, in contrast, would utilize a system that measures the growth of an individual student over time. Assessing an individual student’s test scores would enable a state to label a teacher or principal as effective or highly effective, and reward the school with monies or increased flexibility. The test results, in the same way as under the PSAA, would determine where schools rank among other schools in the state. Schools that fall in the bottom five percent with be required to follow four prescribed reform models. Another departure from NCLB is the adoption of common academic standards. Under NCLB each state adopted their own academic standards, which resulted in 50 different sets of standards. However, Obama’s plan seeks to have all states adopt common standards or work with their public universities to develop college and career-ready standards. Beginning in 2015, only states that are implementing college and career-ready standards will be eligible to receive federal formula grants. It is in these standards that many who opposed NCLB have gained a sense of optimism for change. Not only are there fewer standards which gives students a better chance at mastering them, academic skills are integrated into different subject areas. Whereas the current standards are a list of isolated skills that students need to know for each subject, the
common core standards integrate reading and writing skills into the social studies and science standards. Many proponents of the common core standards view this curricular incorporation as a creative way of validating non-tested subjects. With this new validation and credence many believe the curriculum will no longer be narrowed to only the tested subjects. However, it must be noted that the common core standards alone are not enough to substantiate such a change in the current accountability paradigm. As long as students are only measured on their attainment of isolated skills in specific subjects, that is what they will continue to be taught. If this change is going to happen, either the state test needs to also change to meet the new common core standards, or they must play less of a central role in determining the achievement of a student. The Blueprint for Reform is a departure from NCLB in many respects. However, what is clear is that Obama’s plan will continue to strengthen and move the accountability movement forward.

Though Obama’s plan has yet to become a law, his administration is already moving forward to transform education. In November, 2009 Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, announced the Race to the Top Fund. This fund would reward states that have increased student performance in the past, and are developing innovative ways to continue to increase performance. Forty states and the District of Columbia submitted an application in an attempt to win a portion of the 4.35 billion dollar grant. One point of contention in the grant application was that a state could not have legal barriers to linking student growth and achievement data to teachers and principals for the purpose of evaluation (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Despite strong opposition from
teacher unions, many states changed their teacher policies accordingly to improve their chances of receiving these grants. These issues will arise again during the ESEA reauthorization (Phi Delta Kappan, 2010). With the Obama’s administration dangling the Race to the Top grant in front of states like a carrot, more and more states are likely to increase their means of holding schools and teachers accountable for student achievement.

American schools continue to operate under the NCLB mandate. However, it is widely acknowledged that a reauthorization is needed. From the time A Nation at Risk was made public, people have been demanding an increased accountability of teachers and schools. While the idea has remained, the means and rigidity of this accountability has continued to evolve over the years. Many people still fear that, due to the public education system, America’s future economic prosperity may be at risk. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses 15 year-olds from around the world every three years in the areas of reading, math, and scientific literacy. Of the 34 nations that were tested, American students performed at average or below in all three categories. Secretary Arne Duncan, in addressing the most recent results stated that American students are “Poorly prepared to compete in today's knowledge economy. President Obama has repeatedly warned that the nation that ‘out-educates us today will out-compete us tomorrow.’ The PISA results, to be brutally honest, show that many developed nations are out-educating us” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a). The blueprint introduced by the Obama administration will undoubtedly be debated, and
compromises will have to be made. What is increasingly clear is that the notion of accountability will remain the cornerstone of the legislation.

Narrowed Curriculum

The original intention behind the idea of accountability in education was a well-intentioned one. However, in the ten years since the passage of NCLB there have been unforeseen consequences brought to light. One such consequence was the notion of narrowing the curriculum to only the subjects that are used to measure a student’s proficiency. While many reports blame NCLB as the only contributor to this phenomenon, the mechanisms that would ultimately facilitate limiting the curriculum were put into motion years prior to the implementation of President Bush’s reauthorization. When A Nation at Risk was presented to President Reagan it became very clear that the American education system was not as powerful as once thought. Amid fears that American students, especially ones in high poverty areas, were not receiving the same high quality and rigorous education as their foreign counterparts, politicians began to put policies into place that would remedy this problem. However, as years progressed, American students continued to lag behind the students in other developed nations in areas such as reading comprehension, math and science. In response to this continued educational gap, the accountability policies that seemingly promoted academic achievement became more stringent. Though NCLB has been awarded most of the blame for the negative consequences of increased testing, the accountability movement had gained considerable momentum many years prior to
President Bush’s 2001 legislation. Under the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 California, as well as other states, began developing assessments and annually testing students in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Each state established Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) that would determine the number of students who must score proficient or above on the annual test. The AMOs would continue to increase until the number of students who meet or exceed proficiency in ELA and math at a given school is 100 percent. NCLB mandates that all American students will reach this level by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Furthermore, each significant subgroup within a school must also meet the increasing AMOs. If one of the subgroups fails to meet the AMOs, the whole school is deemed as, “in need of improvement” and interventions must be put into place that will increase student achievement. On paper, without consideration of the many variables within education, this appeared like a good approach to close the achievement gap. However, after its implementation and the number of students who must score proficient drastically increased, teachers and schools started to feel the increased pressure to ensure their students met the state expectation of proficiency.

In the 1990s states started developing their academic standards of what every student should know by the end of each grade. However, under NCLB each state was allowed to develop their own standards. While this gave some flexibility to states to shape their curriculum, it posed a problem for textbook publishers. Instead of being able to focus a textbook on one state’s academic standards, textbook publishers were now being as asked to include the needs of all the states. As a means to satisfy the various
academic needs of 50 states, and the school boards in over 15,000 school districts textbook publishers added to the amount of content in their books. The results in the increased curricular content have been characterized by some as a mile wide and an inch deep. The Third Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) revealed that, compared with other top ranked countries, the typical U.S. 8th grade mathematics books attempted to cover nearly twice as many topics (Kulm, 2007). Consequently, students were being taught at a much more rapid pace in an attempt to cover all the necessary material before they were tested. However, many of the students were not mastering the concepts that were being taught. Instead, they were given an introduction to a myriad of topics and then moving on to something new before they had a chance to deeply understand the material. Modern neuroscience has shown that such fast-paced, serial coverage of topics is unlikely to produce durable understanding. The deepest knowledge results when students have significant control over the learning process, and when fewer topics are studied in greater detail (Hammond, 2009). Furthermore, Rushton and Juola-Rushton (2008) contend that when teachers provide learning environments that give students choices which are created through hands-on activities and allows them to be actively involved in their learning, it engages several areas of the brain simultaneously. When several areas of the brain are engaged, more meaningful and long-lasting learning is occurring and different student learning modalities are being accessed. This type of brain engagement cannot be tapped into when students are given a litany of information in isolation- one of the most common ways of disseminating academic content in the traditional classroom. Feeling the urgency to cover all the information that would be
tested at the end of the year, teachers began giving the quantity of curriculum covered precedence over the quality and depth of instruction that could be done in the past. At its passage, NCLB was hailed by both sides of the political aisle as an effective piece of legislation that would improve student achievement. However, Darling-Hammond (2007) noted that the complex requirements of the law have failed to achieve this goal, and have provoked a number of unintended consequences which frequently harm the very students the law was most intended to help. In drastically increasing the number of students who must be proficient each year, and increasing the amount of content that had to be covered each year, teachers have been forced to alter the way they teach. As a result, there has been a pedagogical paradigm switch from teaching content to mastery to teaching it so students could pass a test. What started as politically popular soon was seen to have many unseen consequences.

One of the most glaring consequences that arose was the phenomenon of curriculum narrowing. As AMOs and the amount of content to be covered continued to increase so did the pressure on teachers to increase the number of students who would meet or exceed proficiency on the annual test. As a result of this increased pressure, teachers began to spend more instructional time teaching math and language arts; the only subjects that are currently used to measure a student’s academic proficiency. With the increase in instructional time dedicated to tested subjects, came a decrease in the amount of time dedicated to social studies, science, physical education and the arts. This shift in curriculum was most glaring in elementary schools where there was only one teacher. In middle and high schools, there are a required number of academic units in
science, physical education, the arts, and social studies that must be completed in order to graduate. However, in elementary school, there are no such requirements. With only one teacher that is responsible for teaching the entire curriculum, it is much easier to decrease the amount of instructional time dedicated to non-tested subjects. In 2008 the Center on Education Policy published a study on the effects of NCLB and the amount of instructional minutes devoted to specific subjects. The report concluded that since the 2001-2002 school year, when NCLB was implemented, 62% of all surveyed school districts had increased the time spent in elementary schools on language arts and/or math. It further concluded that 44% of all the districts who increased the time for language arts and/or math did so by cutting instructional time for elementary school science, social studies, art and music, physical education, lunch, or recess. When the substantial increase in the amount of time that was dedicated to tested subjects was called to task, former Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings quipped, “I’m a what-gets-tested-gets-done kind of gal” (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006, p. 267). To ensure that science was included in the curriculum, Secretary Spellings included science on the list of tested subjects. However, science is only currently tested in 5th, 8th and 10th grades, and remains largely left out of the curriculum.

In addition to devoting more time to math and language arts, many teachers are also spending considerable amounts of class time teaching test-taking skills in an attempt to improve test scores. In one nationally representative survey nearly half of the teachers surveyed said they spent a great deal of their time instructing students on test taking strategies. Another 29% of teachers reported using either state practice tests or
commercial test-preparation materials a great deal to ready students for state exams (Quality Counts, 2001). Teachers were not only increasing instructional time for language arts and math, they were also teaching an arbitrary set of skills that could only be used on a multiple choice test. Cankoy and Tut (2005) further studied this trend of increased test taking strategies. Specifically, they examined the effectiveness of test-driven instruction in mathematics on fourth grade students. One group of fourth grade students spent 70% of class time on test taking skills, a second group spent 50% of class time on test-taking skills, and a third group spent only 30% of class time on test taking skills. They concluded that students who were taught test-taking skills outperformed those who did not on routine math items. However, there was no difference noted in non-routine story problems- the type of problem that promotes critical thinking. In only using a multiple choice test to measure a student’s academic achievement, an incentive system for narrowing the curriculum was inadvertently established. Teachers began being rewarded for abandoning non-tested subjects in the curriculum and increasing the number of instructional time spent on ELA, math and test preparation skills. Cankoy and Tut also studied the effects of this type of instructional model. They found that, while scores may improve students who spend too much time focusing on high-stakes tests, might have difficulties integrating what they are learning or applying their knowledge to real world situations, and, therefore, it produces unproductive and uncritical students. In increasing the time of test taking strategies, educators may be able to increase test scores. However, they are doing so at the potential cost of their students being unable to be productive citizens on tasks that are not tested. Haertel (1999) suggested that the way in which a
student’s proficiency is measured is the cause of teaching a narrowed curriculum. He contested that any test that is perceived as high-stakes has the potential to narrow the curriculum and bend classroom instruction towards the forms that are called for on tests.

Nowhere in the ESEA is it suggested that merely teaching ELA, math and test taking strategies is a fine pedagogical model that promotes a well-rounded education. Most educators will acknowledge that this type of teaching is not the most effective way to deliver content to students. Despite this, many teachers are regularly given explicit pedagogical directives from their site administrators, who are also under increasing pressure to raise scores. Often times these directives are in stark contradiction to what is in the best interest of the students, and best pedagogical practice. For instance, some teachers reported that, as a direct result of state mandates, their schools had instituted policies about curriculum content.

From my experience of being an elementary school teacher at a low-performing school in an urban school in Los Angeles, I can say that the pressure became so intense that we had to show how every single lesson we taught connected to a standard that was going to be tested. This meant that art, music, and even science and social studies were not a priority and hardly ever taught. We were forced to spend ninety percent of instructional time on reading and math. (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006, p.265)

The number of schools that are turning to such tactics is increasing as the number of students who must score proficient is increasing. However, even with
such drastic measures being taken to ensure that students are continually scoring higher on these exams, the number of students scoring proficient or above is still not maintaining the pace at which the bar for AMOs is rising as set forth by the state. In fact, several studies suggest at least 80 percent of schools in most states will have failed to meet their AYP targets by the 2014 deadline (Wiley, Mathis, & Garcia, 2005). However, this stark reality has not swayed schools from doing everything in their power to meet each year’s AMO. Each year more and more schools are continuing to increase the amount of time they spend in teaching math and language arts in stand-alone formats.

It appears, in some respects, as if the rigid accountability measures are succeeding in increasing academic achievement. According to U.S. Department of Education (2011), there has been modest improvement in achievement scores for math and language arts among 4th graders and 8th graders on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). However, as long as there are students or subgroups who are not meeting AYP, the intensive instruction and intervention will continue. While this increase in instructional time may lead to a slight increase in achievement scores on an annual test, it is simultaneously diminishing the breadth of education, particularly in high poverty schools. Beveridge (2010) contended that if educators marginalize all non-tested subjects, a system would be created in which only the most affluent members of our society have access to the most comprehensive and well-rounded education, which widens the achievement gap, rather than closing it. There are very few people that would disagree with the assertion that students need to have an education that is rich in science,
social studies, art, music, and physical education as in addition to math and language arts. Even Rod Paige, the Secretary of Education under President George W. Bush who helped sculpt NCLB, stated, “The arts are essential to every child's education. Cutting the arts is disturbing and just plain wrong” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a, paragraph 1). Why then, has the American education system moved towards a system that merely values performance on a single test and measures proficiency in only two areas? In making this vast shift in the paradigm, there have been two classes of education created in America: one that is offered at predominately high-poverty schools, and one that is offered at predominately low-poverty schools.

A Difference in Quality of Education

Historically, students in high poverty areas do not score as well on state mandated tests as their counterparts in more affluent communities. Generally speaking, NCLB sanctions are much more likely in schools serving communities with poverty and diverse populations (Jaiani & Whitford, 2011). Consequently, in an attempt to increase test scores and avoid state sanctions, schools, at a much higher rate in high poverty communities, are increasing the amount of instructional time in tested subjects. Students in more affluent communities, who historically score higher on high-stakes tests, are not receiving an increased number of instructional minutes in ELA, math, and test taking strategies. Therefore, more instructional time is available to be dedicated to an education that is rich with science, social studies, the arts, and physical education. A 2005 study by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) found that 97 percent of high-poverty districts had new minimum-time requirements for reading, while only 55 percent of low poverty
districts had them. The CEP further found that, where districts adopted such minimum
time policies, about half had reduced the curriculum in social studies, 43% had reduced
time in arts and music, and 27% had reduced physical education (Rothstein& Jacobsen,
2006). Moreover, even though language arts is a tested subject, it too is being narrowed.
A study by McCartney (2008) revealed that the skill of writing, a major component of the
language arts curriculum, was largely being eliminated from high-poverty elementary
schools in order to make more time for the aspects of language arts that will be tested.
Conversely, teachers in low-poverty schools, by in large, reported that they did not notice
a reduction in writing instruction. Consequently, students in high-poverty school were
leaving elementary school with poor writing abilities. In the six years since the CEP
conducted the study states have gained more incentive to increase time in language arts
and math as the number of students who must be proficient has also increased.

The disparity in the way students from different socioeconomic groups are being
educated will also inevitably create a drastic difference in the students that are entering
the world after high school. Some would contend that this heightened focus on math and
language arts is a necessity. One Texas superintendent defended the increase in amount
of time being spent on language arts and math instruction when he said, “It’s like
basketball. If you can’t make lay-ups, then you’ve got to work on lay-ups” (Beveridge
2010, p. 6). His comparison of reading and math instruction to the single basketball skill
seems ironic, as a basketball team would never win a game by exclusively using lay-ups
to score all the points. In the same way, if the only focus in school is language arts and
math- no matter how important these subjects may be- schools will never meet the goals
of educating its children in anything but the most menial tasks and jobs (Beveridge 2010). Not only is this increase in instruction on tested subjects not showing significant increases in achievement, it is also taking away from time from other “core” subjects; subjects that have shown to increase cognitive and critical thinking abilities. There have been considerable studies on the importance of the arts to students’ academic achievement. There is a growing body of research that indicates students who regularly participate in a comprehensive and rigorous arts curriculum are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, three times more likely to be elected to a class office at their school, and four times more likely to participate in a school math or science fair (Buchanan, 2008). Clearly, an education that includes the arts, social studies, and science has been proven to make a substantial impact on the developmental and academic growth of every child, especially those students who come from disadvantaged environments. A 2007 report from the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) on the future of education in the USA concludes that in order to stay economically competitive, we must educate workers who can be creative and bring new concepts and products into the world (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007). Limiting the curriculum so students will perform well on a test will squelch the creativity of many students. Additionally, narrowing the curriculum not only reduces the ability of elementary schools to help students develop critical thinking, research, and writing abilities; it also substantially decreases the opportunities that students who learn in different modalities and possess different talents have to demonstrate what they have learned. Researchers have continuously raised concerns that NCLB’s requirements are
leading to a narrower curriculum and to an overreliance on test-based instruction which blatantly ignores critical, real-world skills. This is particularly evident for lower income and lower-performing students (Neill, 2003).

Dating back to the Founding Fathers, the American education was supposed to prepare students to be actively and intellectually engaged in their communities. George Washington, in his farewell address, warned that, because public opinion influences policy in a democracy, “it is essential that public opinion be enlightened by schools that teach virtue and morality” (Ellis, 2000). Centuries later, one significant concern outlined in A Nation at Risk was that students were not graduating high school able to actively participate in a changing society, and, therefore, would be unable to maintain America’s competitiveness on a global scale. However, even with this long standing concern, one area that continues to be marginalized in order to make instructional time for more language arts and math is civic education. While this is happening nationwide, it is happening at a much more alarming rate in high poverty schools. A two-year study by the Civic Engagement Research Group (CERG) found that wealthy, white, and academically successful students had more access to a civics education that provided opportunities which would prepare students to be effective, engaged citizens. Conversely, the CERG study found that low-income students and students of color did not receive these same opportunities. The general conclusion is that schools appear to be exacerbating inequality by not providing equal civic preparation to students in most need of civic skills and resources (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). In not providing students with these opportunities for civic engagement, they will be much less likely to actively
participate in their communities when they leave school. However, a person’s ability and
desire to engage in civics is just the beginning of the problem illustrated by Kahne and
Middaugh (2008). Not only do low-income students not receive an adequate civics
education, they are also largely ignored when they become adults. According to Bartels
(2005), the policy preferences of “constituents in the upper third of the income
distribution received about 50% more weight than those in the middle third…while the
views of constituents in the bottom third of the income distribution received no weight at
all in the voting decisions of their senators” Citizens in the bottom third of the income
distribution had no identifiable political influence, when it came to the votes of their
senators. Ignoring an education that includes the importance of civics will ultimately
take away their voice as a citizen. Not providing all students with the opportunity to
engage in the political process promotes the exact threat to America’s competiveness that
was feared in A Nation at Risk.

Determining the academic success of a student based on their performance on one
test will inevitably lead to a narrowed curriculum. Schools will do anything in their
power to avoid state sanctions and ensure that the number of students who score
proficient continues to increase to meet the AMOs. However, in doing so, two classes of
educations have arisen in the United States. One group of students, who attend more
affluent schools, will have an education that is well-rounded and enriching in all the core
areas. These students will be able to think critically about the world around them and
adapt to a technically and socially changing world. The second group of students, who
attend high poverty schools, will have had an education that focuses primarily on
language arts and math. They may have learned the basic skills, but they will have difficulty finding a practical application for them in their world, where creative application of knowledge is the key to innovation and upward mobility. Furthermore, they will not have been taught to be critical thinkers with the ability to solve problems and actively engage in the evolving global economy. One of the overwhelming focuses of education is to develop students into citizens that are able to fully and deeply participate in a democratic society. However, under the current system of education, not all students are given that opportunity by their school-based education. Unless all students are given the opportunity to participate in a well rounded education, America will continue to lag behind other developed nations. It will, furthermore, become increasingly difficult to complete in the global economy as more and more students are being educated to meet the short term goal of passing a test. In focusing on meeting this short-term goal, many students will be leaving school without having developed their creative ability to generate new products and ideas that have made America globally competitive in the past. It was this fear of not being able to compete with other national powers that sparked the accountability movement in the first place.

Teacher Attrition

While well intentioned, the No Child Left Behind Act has had negative and unforeseen consequences on education. Along with encouraging teachers to narrow the curriculum to only the tested subjects, it has also has created a negative impact on teacher attrition rates. Mindful of this fact, Darling-Hammond (2007) contends that NCLB, as it
is currently implemented, is more likely to harm most of the students who are the targets of its aspirations. One way it is affecting students is by encouraging teachers to either transfer to more affluent schools or leaves the profession all together. Teacher attrition has historically been a challenge to education. The high turnover rate was dismissed for years because many assumed it was due to the predominately female work force leaving to raise a family. However, in reaction to the widely acknowledged and long-standing concern of the effect this turnover is having on students, many researchers are starting to examine other factors that contribute to this problem. According to Jalongo and Heider (2006), over 90 percent of the teachers who are currently being hired in the United States are replacing teachers who are leaving the professions for reasons other than retirement. Though, there are, of course, many reasons why teachers leave the profession, a growing amount of research is pointing towards the No Child Left Behind Act as a major motivation. Mounting research suggests that many teachers are either transferring to more affluent areas to teach, or leaving the profession altogether as a result of the increased pressures under NCLB. As the number of students who must score proficient each year on the mandated state test increase, so does the pressure on teachers. This increased pressure is affecting new teachers at a much more alarming rate. A study by The Nation Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) found that nearly one-third of teachers leave after three years, and almost 50 percent leave after only five years (Hill & Barth, 2004). These high attrition rates are leaving students, particularly in high poverty areas, with novice teachers. Once these new teachers are gaining some valuable experience, the research suggests that they are leaving the field of education. This
growing attrition rate raises two concerns. First, it is predicted by 2013, there will be a massive shortage of teachers (Jalongo & Heider, 2006). Historically, when there has been a shortage of teachers, school districts have turned to hiring methods, such as accepting emergency credentials that result in employing teachers that are not highly qualified to teach the subject for which they are employed. The second concern is the trend of new teachers being employed in high-poverty schools. Many teachers are beginning their career in high-poverty schools, and when the opportunity presents itself, they transfer to more affluent schools. Consequently, student in the neediest schools are constantly being taught by first and second year teachers.

According to Vandervoot, Amrein-Beardsley, and Berliner (2004), the quality of a teacher in the classroom is the single most important factor determining how well a child learns. However, many high quality teachers are leaving the profession. While teacher attrition is a problem that affects students of all ages and in all areas of the country, it is happening in high poverty areas at a much more alarming rate. In a study by the Alliance for Excellence in Education (2005), it was determined that the rate of attrition was roughly 50 percent higher in poor schools than wealthier ones. It was further concluded that new teachers were “far more likely” to leave the profession. The Alliance determined that new teachers were more likely to be assigned to low income schools, which is an underlying reason for their leaving. One of the major tenets of NCLB is that all teachers be “highly qualified”, and most districts are able to meet the requirements of the tenet. However, it is also widely agreed upon that experience in the professions builds increased teacher quality. In essence, the students who are the most in
need are the ones who are being subjected to a revolving door of first and second year teachers. Omenn Strunk and Robinson (2006) summarized this phenomenon when they stated the correlation between high-poverty schools and teacher attrition imply:

That the lowest achieving and most disadvantaged students are more likely to have teachers new to school and to the profession. If less experienced teachers are, on average, less proficient and/or effective, then the association among student achievement, income, and proportion minority indicates that these disadvantaged students are more likely to have lower quality teachers. Moreover, because the turnover rate in these schools is high, the higher quality teachers that do stay in teaching are more likely to leave these lower performing, lower income, and higher minority schools causing a cycle that matches lower quality teachers with the neediest children. (p.74)

Students in high-poverty, high-minority schools are in desperate need of high quality teachers, expert teachers if their achievement levels are going to improve, yet they are almost twice as likely as other students to have novice teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). In addition to having novice teachers, this high turnover also affects the efficacy of the curriculum and educational programs in high-poverty schools. When teachers are continuously transferring to new schools, it is extremely difficult to establish and maintain coherent educational programs.

Though it is very clear where students are being affected the most by teacher attrition, it remains unclear as to why so many high quality teachers are leaving high-
poverty areas. Many researchers believe that stringent accountability systems are encouraging high quality teachers to either transfer away from high poverty schools or leave the profession all together. High-poverty schools traditionally score substantially lower than low-poverty schools on state mandated tests. When schools continually do not meet their AYP targets, they are subjected to state sanctions. These sanctions, among other things, limit the curriculum and forces teachers to deliver a prescribed curriculum that is not appealing to many experienced educators. The frustration has also been well documented at a large school district in California, where, it was reported, “teachers in schools with the highest proportions of students from low-income backgrounds- a situation that historically presented daunting instructional challenges- were more constrained than their colleagues at more affluent schools” (Crocco & Costigan, 2007, p. 526). In addition, under NCLB, teachers face rigid sanctions if certain populations of students at their school do not meet AYP targets. Even if a quality teacher’s students achieve at a very high level, they face the same sanctions as a teacher whose students show no academic achievement. In essence, any measure of school effectiveness that relies heavily on the average level of test scores (or related measures, such as the percentage of students scoring above some threshold) would, in effect, reward or punish teachers for student outcomes that were largely out of their control and would dramatically favor schools serving students from more advantaged backgrounds (Ladd & Walsh, 2002). Under these accountability measures, teachers are given an incentive to teach at low-poverty schools, where students traditionally score much higher on state mandated tests. Clotfelter, Ladd et al. (2004) argue that low-poverty students are easier
to teach because they are much more likely to come to school socialized to the school’s expectations and ready to learn, they have access to more educational resources such as books and computers at home, and possess a desire and expectation to achieve at higher levels than their counterparts in higher-poverty schools. In addition to the increased difficulty in teaching students in high-poverty schools, there is also no financial incentive for the increase in difficulty. Most school districts utilize a single salary schedule that considers years of experience and educational qualifications as the indicators for salary. Therefore a teacher in a high-poverty, more difficult school, will earn the same salary as a teacher in a low-poverty, less difficult school. Thus, Clotfelter, Ladd et al. claim that it can be assumed that the majority of teachers, with the choice between two otherwise identical teaching assignments within a district would prefer the assignment with lower proportion of high-poverty students. There is very little incentive for high quality teachers to work in low performing schools when the personnel in high performing schools are recognized as effective and rewarded while the staff in lower performing schools are labeled as failing and publicly scrutinized.

Teacher attrition has always been a problematic issue for education. However, because of implications within NCLB, incentives have inadvertently been put into place that in encourage teachers to transfer to low poverty schools or leave the profession altogether. In moving to more affluent schools, schools that score higher on state mandated tests, teachers are allotted more flexibility in their pedagogy. In addition, they are much more likely to be rewarded for their work than if they worked at a high-poverty school which will likely be scrutinized and subjected to more rigid curricula for lower
test scores. Consequently, there is a drastic disproportion of high quality, experienced teachers who do not want to work with the neediest students under the conditions which accompany such a choice. As a result the students who need the best teachers are continuously being taught by inexperienced first and second year teachers. Working in the most challenging schools is often times too much for new teachers, and they ultimately leave the profession. Though NCLB’s main purpose was to raise the achievement of low-income students, it is unintentionally encouraging a movement of teachers that is ultimately increasing the achievement gap of America’s neediest students.

Ethical Considerations

No Child Left Behind was shaped after the Texas model of accountability that was in established when President George W. Bush was governor. Similar to NCLB, it was suppose to raise the achievement of minority students by holding teachers accountable for the academic achievement of their students. It was boastfully described by many as *equity through accountability*. When the test results of the students were first published, it appeared the achievement gap between white students and nonwhite students had diminished greatly. Thirty-one percent more African American students passed the exam, and twenty-nine percent more Hispanic students passed the exam (The Policy and Politics of Rewriting the Nation's Main Education Law, 2010). It was hailed by many as the *Texas Miracle*. However, when the results were examined later, some inconsistencies were discovered. For example, several studies have found the scores were raised, in part, by keeping many of the students out of the testing, and making tens
of thousands of students disappear from school all together (Dobbs, 2003). In much the same way, similar issues have arisen since the inception of NCLB. Under NCLB, if a school does not meet their AYP target for two consecutive years they are subject to sanctions from the state. These sanctions get increasingly harsher if a school continues to miss the AYP targets for each subgroup. Schools are continuously working to increase the number of students who score proficient of the state test. As a way to avoid state sanctions, many schools have turned to unethical measures.

*Special Education under NCLB*

One group that has benefitted from the implementation of NCLB is special education students. Under NCLB, states are intentionally prohibited from excluding students with disabilities from accountability systems. NCLB works in conjunction with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which requires alternate assessments be made available to students who cannot take the regular assessments, even with accommodations. When measuring AYP, states and school districts have the flexibility to count the “proficient” scores of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standard. However, the number of those proficient scores cannot exceed 1 percent of all students in the grades assessed. This flexibility allows schools and districts to receive credit for student progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Prior to this provision schools could fairly easily move students into special education right before testing and their scores would not count against the school. While there is no cap on the amount of students who can take the CMA, only two percent of the scores can count as proficient or
above. The rest of the scores are designated as “not proficient” towards the AYP. However, in spite of the advances that have been made to ensure equal access to a quality education, schools have still resorting to unethical measures in an attempt to improve test scores. A number of studies have found that systems that reward or sanction schools based on average student scores create incentives for pushing low-scorers into special education so that their scores won’t count in school reports (Darling-Hammond, 2007). If a struggling student takes the CMA they are much more likely to score better than if they take the same assessment as the other students. In many states, unlike California, students on an IEP are exempt from the test all together, only increasing the incentive. Unlike the “Texas Miracle”, there has now been a minimum student participation rate set by the state. Schools currently must have 97% of students participate in the test, which will further limit the amount of students who can wrongfully be placed on an IEP.

*Increased Dropout Rates*

Nationally, more than six million middle and high school students are at a significant risk of dropping out of school. The reality is that a third of entering ninth graders will drop out of high school before attaining a diploma, and another third will graduate unprepared for college of a good job. In cities, the situation is worse: about half of the high schools in the nation’s thirty-five largest cities have severe dropout rate- often as high as 50 percent (Alliance for Excellence in Education August, 2005). Moreover, students, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, appear to be dropping out of school earlier and in much greater numbers than previously believed. In a growing number of states, high school completion rates for African American and Latino students
have returned to pre-1954 levels (Shriberg & Shriberg, 2006). Students dropping out of high school have always been a problem. However, an increasing number of researchers are pointing to NCLB as a contributing reason for the persistence of this phenomenon. The Harvard Civil Rights Project, for instance, has warned that the law threatens to increase the growing dropout rates for students of color, ultimately reducing access to education for these students (Sunderman & Kim, 2004). In a time when schools’ test scores are being scrutinized by parents and politicians, schools are finding ways to ensure they do everything possible to increase the number of students who are proficient. Studies in New York have suggested that many of the city’s schools increased test scores by “pushing out weaker students who are unlikely to pass the test” (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Similar studies were conducted in Texas and Massachusetts, and found that they increased test scores by “losing” a substantial number of low-scoring students. For example, soon after Massachusetts phased in their accountability system during the late 1990s, a 300% increase in middle school dropouts was recorded between 1997–98 and 1999–2000. In essence, states have given schools an incentive to encourage students who are in danger of not passing the test to transfer to another school, enroll in an alternative program, or drop out all together. The end result is that many children, particularly from minority and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are either shuffled around or encouraged to drop out.

The No Child Left Behind Act has inadvertently created a system that encourages and rewards schools for unethical behavior. When schools are faced with the option of either not meeting their AYP target or acting unethically, they are too often choosing the
latter. This behavior is exacerbating the dropout rate, especially in schools with high poverty and minority. Instead of fostering the growth of low students schools are pushing them out or putting them in programs that are not best suited for them. When these students drop out of school they are left to fend for themselves in a world that not only requires a high school diploma, but often times a college diploma to survive.

Worldview of Education

In spite all of the educational improvement measures, American students, for decades, have been outscored on international assessments by their counterparts in foreign countries. On the most result assessment of the Program for International Student Achievement (PISA) the United States ranked 17th among developed nations in reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Further, on the Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) American 4th graders ranked 11th in math and 8th in science among developed countries. Similarly, American eighth graders ranked 9th in math and 11th in science (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). This long-standing tradition of being outscored has prompted Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, to state, “The hard truth is that other high-performing nations have passed us during the last two decades. High-performing countries not only dramatically boost student achievement, they do so while closing achievement gaps at the same time” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a, paragraph 10). Historically, the answer to improve American student achievement has been to increase a teacher’s accountability for test results. In spite of increased standards and a rigid system of accountability for a student’s
achievement of those standards, the United States continues to lag behind many other countries. However, the same nations who are consistently outperforming the United States have a drastically different approach to educating their students. One such country, Finland, has become the beacon of academic improvement.

In the 1970s the Finnish education system was in need of an overhaul. They were consistently outscored on international assessments, and there was a wide achievement gap that was heavily correlated to socio-economic status. In response to the growing concern over the education shortfalls, Finland decided to take drastic measures. In the forty years since the decision was made to reform the education system, Finland has become a country that is consistently ranked first among all Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries (OECD, 2007). Moreover, Finland was able to make and sustain these substantial academic gains in spite of a sharp increase in immigration of people from lower performing nations (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Finland’s gains were made by establishing a system that is in stark contrast to the way the United States has attempted to improve education achievement. Leaders in Finland attribute the gains to a couple changes in the educational paradigm. The first change was their intensive investment in teacher education. All teachers receive three years of high-quality graduate level preparation, all of which is paid for by the government. Policy makers decided that if they invested in very skilled teachers, they could allow local schools more autonomy in deciding what and how to teach their students. This philosophy was a drastic departure from the past which favored a very centralized system of setting policy and curriculum. Many education researchers fear that
decentralization will lead to differences in the quality of teaching and, ultimately, to an inequality in terms of access to education services. However, the results of the PISA survey demonstrate that the Finnish learning outcomes have been the greatest (Kyro & Nyyssola, 2006). In addition to increased teacher preparation, there is also extensive and ongoing professional development built into the work day. Also built into the work day is time for teachers to collaborate. One study by OECD (2007) asserts that less of a teacher’s working time is spent instructing students. Typically teachers spend approximately 15 to 20 hours per week on tasks such as working with colleagues on preparing and analyzing lessons, developing and evaluating assessments, observing other classrooms, and meeting with students and parents. Though Finland is the leader of the reform movement, it is not the only nation who is investing in their teachers. Many other nations also provide intensive professional development and substantial time for collaboration. The professional development opportunities are ongoing and are focused on the content to be taught. Furthermore, this collaboration is most often built into the teacher’s work day. In Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Belgium, Norway, Italy, Switzerland schools provide “substantial” time for regular collaboration among teachers for issues related to teaching (OECD, 2007). One example of this is a highly developed practice in Japan and China known as lesson sharing. This practice requires groups of four to six teachers to observe each other’s classroom and work together to improve lessons. As a result, pedagogical best practices will quickly spread and improve throughout the school (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). By teachers taking this time to observe and reflect, they are able to share ideas and improve their own practice.
The second change that was attributed to the academic gains in Finland was a major overhaul in the curriculum and assessment system. The current curriculum is designed to ensure access to a “thinking curriculum” for all students. The focus of the curriculum, beginning in the early 1990s, became an emphasis of how to teach students to think creatively and manage their own learning through all curricular subjects including science, technology, and innovation. There is also no external examination that is used to rank students. The feedback students receive from teachers is in narrative form and emphasizes descriptions of their learning progress and areas for improvement. In addition, teachers rarely stand in front of a classroom and deliver instruction through a 50 minute lecture. Rather, students work with the teacher to determine their own weekly learning goals. Students are more likely to be seen walking around the classroom, rotating between workshops, working in small groups, or asking questions of their teacher. According to the Finnish National Board of Education, the main purpose of assessing the students is to guide and encourage students in their own reflection and self assessment (Kupiainen, Hautamaki, & Karjalainen, 2006).

Another policy shift that many of the high-achieving nations have established is a greater amount education decisions being made at the school level. For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s Finland, Sweden and Switzerland were among the countries that replaced high detailed national curriculum documents and external assessments. These nations replaced the national curriculum with much broader goal statements that were designed to guide teachers’ development of local curriculum and instruction (Wei, Andree, & Darling-Hammond, 2009). The teachers in these countries, as well as many
others, have become responsible for designing the curriculum and school-based assessments which evaluate the students’ learning. The result in Finland was a curriculum guide that was consolidated down to fewer than ten pages of guidance for all of mathematics. Furthermore, teachers and other staff members are routinely involved in the decision making. Teachers and administrators collaborate to develop syllabi, select textbooks, and design curriculum and assessments, decide on course offerings and budgets, and plan and schedule professional development.

This process of change has been the opposite in the United States. Over the past 40 years, Finland and many other high-achieving countries have shifted from a highly centralized system that focus on external testing to a more localized system in which the highly trained teachers design the curriculum around fewer standards. Meanwhile, the United States has established a set of reforms, that have not been adopted by Finland including standardization of curriculum that is enforced by frequent external tests, narrowing of the curriculum to basic skills in reading and math, reduced use of innovative teaching strategies, adoption of education ideas from external sources rather than development of local internal capacity for innovation and problem-solving, and adoption of high-stakes accountability policies, featuring rewards and sanctions for students, teachers and schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Secretary Duncan, concluded his thoughts on how American students compare internationally to their counterparts by declaring, that despite drastic educational improvement efforts, American students are still lagging far behind. By contrast, he stated, “high-performing countries not only dramatically boost student achievement, they do so while closing achievement gaps at the
same time” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a, paragraph 24). In Finland, Shanghai, Korea, and Canada, for example, there are consistent, strong, and predictable educational outcomes for children regardless of where they go to school.

**Rationale for the Study**

The last time the ESEA was reauthorized was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Though it was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, NCLB has come to be widely acknowledged as a failure. Many researchers, most notably Darling-Hammond (2007), Jaiani and Whitford (2011), Jennings (2010), and Sunderman and Kim (2004) have examined the NCLB policies and how they have had an adverse effect on students. It is now time again to reauthorize the legislation, and the Obama Administration has released the Blueprint for Reform. While the Blueprint is a departure from NCLB in many respects, it still contains many aspects that have the potential to harm high poverty students. With the new authorization also comes a chance for a shift in the educational paradigm. However, it appears that using a single test will continue be the measure of a school’s achievement. The purpose of the study will be to add to the existing body of literature and to further examine the effects of utilizing annual assessments as a means of determining a school’s achievement, particularly high poverty schools. Additionally, the study will examine if students in high-poverty schools are receiving an education that is not as well-rounded as the education students in low-poverty schools are receiving. Finally, the purpose of the study is to examine teachers’ perceptions regarding their
practice and if they feel it is preparing students to be actively involved citizens in a
democratic society.

Summary

The United States has a long history of attempting to improve the education of its students, particularly students in high poverty areas. While originally believed to be a valid way to improve achievement among American students, there have been many consequences of the legislation that have ultimately harmed the plight of high poverty students. For example, the increased accountability to improve student test scores has caused many high poverty schools to limit the curriculum to only the subjects that are tested. As a result of this practice, a growing majority of students, particularly those in high poverty areas are receiving a very limited education. Meanwhile, students in low poverty areas are receiving an education that is rich in social studies, science, the arts, and physical education. The research suggests that this difference in the breadth of education will ultimately have long term effects on the student’s ability to actively and critically participate in a global economy. In addition to narrowing the curriculum, NCLB policies have also been attributed to many high-quality, experienced teachers transferring to low-poverty schools or leaving the profession all together. Many of the vacant spots are being filled by teachers who have limited experience. Many times the pressure of teaching the neediest students proves to too much for a novice teacher, and they ultimately leave the profession. Consequently, the students who need the most qualified teacher, are being subjected to a revolving door of novice teachers. Many ethical considerations have arisen in the 10 years since the implementation of NCLB.
For instance, as AMOs continue to rise, schools are under mounting pressure to increase the number of students who must score proficient of the annual test. As a way to meet the increasing AMOs some schools have turned to measures such as placing students on IEPs when it is not necessarily needed. Students on an IEP can take a modified assessment, and are more inclined to score better. Furthermore, there have also been accounts of high school students who are at a high risk to not pass the test being encouraged to transfer to another school or drop out of school all together.

In spite of the United State’s continued struggle to improve education, American students continue to lag behind the students in many developed countries on all of the international assessments. Finland, in the 1970s, was in a similar educational predicament as the United States is currently. However, instead of increasing accountability measures and sanctions for not meeting predetermined measures, Finland opted for a different path. They began by investing in teacher quality, and eventually increased the power of schools to develop an education that was meaningful for the particular schools. The drastic reform has resulted in Finland consistently scoring among the top of all developed nations.

It is time again to reauthorize the ESEA. While it has not been passed into law, President Obama has released his Blueprint for Reform. This legislation is a considerable departure from NCLB in many respects. However, it is not the sweeping reform that was proposed by Finland in the 1970s. The blueprint introduced will undoubtedly be debated, and compromises will have to be made. What is increasingly clear is that the notion of accountability will remain the cornerstone of the legislation.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study examined the extent in which the state mandated tests, specifically the California Standards Test (CST), have affected the breadth of curriculum in California elementary schools. Moreover, the study examined how high-poverty schools have been more adversely affected than schools in low-poverty areas. The researcher compiled data on the amount of instructional time dedicated to tested subjects and the amount of instructional time dedicated to non-tested subjects. The researcher also compiled data on how teachers perceived changes to their teaching practice since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. Chapter 3 presents the methodology that was used to conduct the research. The setting, population, and sample are also described in this chapter. Finally, the instrument developed for the selected group and the procedures used for the collection and analysis of the data is described in this chapter.

Setting of the Study

Located in northern central California, Gracie Mae Unified School District is one of California’s newest school districts. In 2008, four local school districts merged and formed the new district. While the district boasts the merger was an act of democracy at its finest, there have also been a considerable number of obstacles that have accompanied the merger. Issues regarding curriculum, bell schedules, and past financial status of the
different districts have made for a less than smooth transition. Regardless of the difficult transition, the Gracie Mae Unified currently serves 31,213 students in its 58 K-12 schools. In addition to traditional school settings, Gracie Mae Unified also has: ten charter schools, one alternative school, one special education school, two continuation schools, and two community day schools. Thirty-five of the schools in the district are elementary schools, which serve 15,830 students. Historically, the Gracie Mae district has been ethnically diverse. In addition to the diversity in ethnicity, nearly 30% of the students have been designated as English language learners, and nearly 80% of the students are classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Gracie Mae Unified employs 1,484 teachers. There are 746 elementary teachers in the district. Over 97% of the teachers have been deemed “Highly Qualified” under the No Child Left Behind Act for the subject or grade level they teach.

Though Gracie Mae Unified has consistently made growth towards meeting their annual API growth targets, it is currently in the second year of Program Improvement. Furthermore, many of the significant subgroups are meeting their AMOs. However, because there are still some subgroups in the district that are not meeting the AMOs, the entire district is not meeting the federal AYP.

The district’s demographic information, including student enrollment (Tables 1 and 2), percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Table 3), number of English language learners (Table 3), AYP and API results (Tables 4, 5, 6) and staffing information (Table 7) is shown.
Table 1

Number of Schools and Student Enrollment for the District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K -12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonpublic Nonsectarian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,213</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
Ethnicity of Students in the Gracie Mae School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2,835</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>10,935</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>4,779</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>10,108</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None Reported</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31,231</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Special Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>9,303</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/ Reduced Price Meals</td>
<td>24,780</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Percentage of Schools At or Above Target of 800 on Growth API Scores, 2002 through 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Schools</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Percentage of Students, by Subgroup, Who Scored Proficient or Above

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Subgroup</th>
<th>English/Language Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

API Growth by Subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Subgroup</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>2010 API Growth</th>
<th>2009 API Base</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2,677</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1,961</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>6,799</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>5,196</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomically disadvantaged</td>
<td>15,064</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>6,682</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>2,514</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students Included in Growth</td>
<td>18,131</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Population and Sample

This study examined a population of elementary school teachers from a single school district in the Sacramento area, the Gracie Mae Unified School District (GMUSD). While GMUSD served students from kindergarten through adult education, the population in this study is focused on kindergarten through sixth elementary school teachers. GMUSD employs 1,484 teachers. There are 35 elementary schools and 746
full-time elementary teachers. Over 97% of the teachers have been deemed “Highly Qualified” under the No Child Left Behind Act.

The sample used in the study was a group of teachers that belong to the teacher’s union that represents teachers in the Gracie Mae Unified School District. While the questionnaire was disseminated electronically to all kindergarten through high school teachers in GMUSD, if a respondent indicated they taught a grade other than elementary, they were disqualified from completing the questionnaire.

The subjects of the study were 55 elementary school teachers. Every grade level, kindergarten to sixth grade, was represented. The range of teaching experience amongst the subjects was from 7 years to more than 25 years. There were 52 respondents who taught in Title I schools, and three respondents who taught in schools that did not receive Title I funds.

Table 7

Number of Full-Time Teachers by Type of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Full-Time Teachers</th>
<th>Student-Teacher Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>746.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>156.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>374.6</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Design of the Study

Data collection

Data was collected through a survey that was developed using the Survey Monkey website. The survey was only sent to teachers in the Gracie Mae Unified School District. The invitation to participate was sent by the teachers' union to their regular membership and included a link to the website where the survey could be accessed. The researcher had no access to the membership list. Additionally, the researcher did not have any access to personally identifiable information about the subjects who completed the survey. The collected data focused on elementary teachers. The first question on the survey asked what grade level the subject was currently teaching. If they chose any grade between 7th and 12th, they were disqualified from taking the rest of the survey.

Instrumentation

To gain an understanding of teacher’s perceptions of how state-mandated tests affected the breadth of curriculum in the Gracie Mae Unified School District, a survey was developed. The survey was then sent through union email to all of the teachers in the district. Though this represents only a small sample of teachers in the California, it also provides an accurate examination of curricular trends that have developed as a result of NCLB and PSAA. Questions on the survey asked teachers, in various stages of their teaching careers, to give their perceptions on how state-mandated tests has affected the curriculum they deliver to students. Questions further asked teachers whether or not the curriculum they were delivering was creating students that could actively and thoughtfully engage in a global society once they left school. Finally, there was a
question about whether or not the respondent’s school received federal Title I funds. In asking this question, the researcher could delineate between high-poverty schools and low-poverty schools.

*Data analysis procedures*

The researcher compiled the data and examined the percentage of responses for each question and answer choice. Then, the researcher further disaggregated the data based on whether or not the subject is currently teaching at a school that receives Title I funds. In separating the data in this manner, the researcher will be able to more accurately examine curricular trends in high poverty and low poverty schools.

*Summary*

This chapter considered the method in which the research for this study was conducted. The population and setting in which the study occurred was described and several tables were used to illustrate the many demographic factors that comprise the Gracie Mae Unified School District. The instrument that was used to collect data was a survey that the researcher developed. Data was collected by use of a survey over a 2 week period. The subjects of the data were elementary school teachers in the Sacramento area. The steps and rationale that were used to develop the survey were described along with how the data was collected, assembled, and analyzed.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

While the accountability paradigm was in place before No Child Left Behind was enacted, the NCLB legislation had a greater impact on curriculum than most other pieces of legislation in this decade. In the 10 years since its implementation, NCLB policies have had many unintended consequences on districts, schools, teachers and students. However, these unintended consequences have affected students in high-poverty areas much more severely than schools in more affluent areas.

The researcher has taught in a Title I elementary school for seven years, where it was observed that the pressure to increase test scores has resulted in more instructional time dedicated to tested subjects and substantially less time dedicated to curriculum that would not be tested. Additionally, during this time period, the researcher observed the manner in which the curriculum was being presented to students shifted from one that promoted cross curricular integration and creativity to one that mirrors the test format. The data presented in this chapter was collected over a two-week period. The research attempted to uncover how high-poverty students in Sacramento County are being affected as a result of current legislation. To that end, research was conducted to find answers to the questions:
1. Is there a difference in the breadth of education being delivered to students in high-poverty schools and students in low-poverty schools in Sacramento County?

2. Do teachers in Sacramento County perceive their students are being adversely affected as a result of California and NCLB accountability policies?

3. Do teachers in Sacramento County believe their students are leaving their classroom/ school with the tools necessary to develop into critical thinkers who are capable of actively engaging in their environment?

Survey Data

Responses to the first survey question indicate that the majority (32.8%) of the respondents have been teaching between 12 and 15 years. The next largest population (21.8%) of respondents has been teaching between 4 and 7 years. A total of 14.5% of the respondents have been teaching between 8 and 11 years. Nearly thirteen percent of the respondents have 20 – 25 years of teaching experience. Just over seven percent of the respondents had 16 – 20 years of experience. Finally, there were zero teachers with 3 or fewer years of teaching experience. This may be due to a large number of these teachers being laid off in the Gracie Mae District as a result of the recent economic downturn; or possibly because probationary teachers are more cautious about their involvement in the union. Despite the lack of representation among new teachers, this data presents a wide sample of teaching experience. It important to note that 78.2% of the
respondents have at least 8 years of teaching experience. This group of teachers represents a large group who have experience the positive and negative effects of NCLB on education.

Figure 1  Number of Years Teaching

The second survey questions inquired as to which grade levels the respondents have taught. Of the 55 respondents that answered the question, 29.1% had taught kindergarten, 47.3% had taught first grade, 56.4% had taught second grade, 61.8% had taught third grade, 45.5% had taught fourth grade, 60% had taught fifth and sixth grade respectfully, 16.4% had taught either seventh or eighth grade, 5.5% had taught high schools, and 7.3% had taught special education.
Table 8

Grade Levels Taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th - 8th</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th - 12th</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2  Grade Level Respondent is Currently Teaching
Figure 3 indicates that 77.1% of the respondents currently teach in a school that receives federal Title I funds. Three respondents (6.3%) currently teach in schools that do not receive federal Title I funds. As a result of the small number respondents who teach in a non Title I school, it is not reasonable to draw comparisons between the Title I and non Title I schools. However, the responses of non Title I teachers will give a glimpse into possible curricular trends that are happening within non Title I schools. Eight respondents (16.7%) of the respondents were not sure if their current school receives Title I funds. Figure 3 is particularly important as many of the other questions will be disaggregated by respondents who teach at a Title I school and teachers who work at a more affluent school.
Figures 4 and 5 examine how much time each grade level spends each day teaching the district adopted math and language arts curriculum. The data indicates that at least 80% of teachers in grades one, two, three and four are dedicating at least 2 hours of instructional time towards language arts. However, 40% of first grade teachers, nearly
29% of second grade teachers, 33% of third grade teachers, and 40% of fourth grade teachers are dedicating more than 2.5 hours of instructional time to language arts instruction.

Conversely, most grade levels are dedicating less time to math instruction. In fact, 43% of kindergarten teachers and 20% of first grade teachers spent less than one hour teaching math each day. The vast majority of teachers spend between 1 and 1.5 hours teaching math; the Gracie Mae School District requires that elementary school teachers spend a minimum of 1.5 hours teaching math each day. Unlike language arts, no grade levels spent more than 2.5 hours teaching math. However, on average, respondents are spending between three and four hours each day teaching math and language arts. This time does not include instructional time that is dedicated to reteaching math and language arts.

Figure 6 Instructional Time Dedicated to Language Arts and Math Instruction in Title I Schools as Compared to More Affluent Schools
The data in Figure 6 illustrates the amount of instructional time that is dedicated to teaching language arts and math in Title I schools as compared to non Title I schools. The data indicates that both school settings are spending substantial time teaching language arts and math. However, on average, Title I schools are spending more time. For example, 59.4% of Title I schools are spending more than 2 hours every day teaching language arts. Comparatively, just over 33% of non Title I schools are spending more than 2 hours every day teaching language arts. Similarly, 51.3% of respondents who teach in a Title I school reported spending more than 1.5 hours per day teaching math; only 33% of non Title I schools spent the same amount of time each day. These findings are consistent with the findings of a 2005 study by the Center for Educational Policy which concluded that 97% of Title I schools had minimum time requirements for math and language arts set by the district. Conversely, only 55% of non Title I schools had similar district mandates.

Figure 7  Time Spent Reteaching Language Arts Each Week by Grade Level
Figures 7 and 8 illustrate how much time teachers spend each week reteaching language arts and math. The data indicates that every grade level dedicates considerable time each week reteaching language arts and math. In kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grades 14.3%, 20%, 16.7%, and 25% of the teachers are spending more than 2.5 hours per week reteaching language arts respectively. Only 14% of teachers in 2nd grade, 20% of teachers in 4th grade, and 8% of teachers in 5th grade are not spending any time reteaching. The greatest percentages of teachers in all grade levels are spending between one and one and a half hours reteaching language arts. Similar to language arts, all of the surveyed grade levels reported dedicating instructional time to reteaching math concepts. One departure is nearly 29% of kindergarten and 2nd grade teachers reported not spending any time reteaching math. However, as the students move up grade levels,
more time is dedicated to reteaching. For example, 60% of fourth grade teachers reported spending more than a hour per week; 83.4% of 5th grade teachers report spending more than a hour per week; and almost 67% of 6th grade respondents reported spending more than a hour each week reteaching math. These percentages would indicate that as students move up in grade levels the amount of time that is dedicated to reteaching math also increases. The amount of time that is dedicated to reteaching language arts is constant and considerable in all grade levels.

Figure 9  Time Spent Reteaching Language Arts and Math in Title I Schools as Compared to Schools That Do Not Receive Title I Funds

Figure 9 illustrates that both school settings are dediacting considerable time to reteaching math and language arts each week. However, non Title I schools are dedicating more time to reteaching math and language arts each week. In fact, 5% of
Title I teachers are not dedicating any time to reteaching language arts and 8% of Title I teachers are not dedicating any time to reteaching math. Conversely, all respondents who teach in non Title I schools reported spending some time each week to reteaching. However, as noted in Figure 3, only three respondents teach in non Title I schools. Therefore, one respondent’s answer to this question will equal 33%, which may be misleading.

Figure 10 and Figure 11 Instructional Time Dedicated to the Teaching Test Taking Skills and Strategies

**Title 1 Schools**

- Yes: 84%
- No: 16%

**Non Title 1 Schools**

- Yes: 33%
- No: 67%

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the difference in time allotted to test taking strategies and skills in Title I schools as compared to schools that do not receive Title I funds. The data indicates that 84% of Title I school teachers are spending instructional time teaching
test-taking skills rather than delivering more content or allocating that time for other nontested subjects. While it was not clear precisely how much time teachers spend each week teaching test prep skills, it is clear that 51% more teachers in Title I schools are dedicating instructional time to teaching test taking strategies rather than teaching subjects that are not tested.

Figure 12 Teachers’ Perceptions on the Richness of the Curriculum They are Delivering

Figure 12 presents data on whether teachers feel they are providing a curriculum that is well rounded. The vast majority of kindergarten (85.7%) and the majority of first grade (60%) teachers feel they are providing a curriculum that is rich in social studies, science, and the arts as well as math and language arts. However, once students begin to be administered the state mandated test in second grade, the percentage of teachers who feel they are providing a well-rounded curriculum decreases dramatically. Only 16.3%
of second grade teachers, 33.3% of third grade teachers, and 40% of fourth grade teachers feel they are providing an education that is rich in curricular areas other than math and language arts. Half of fifth and sixth grade teachers feel they are providing a well rounded education to their students. However, it must be noted that students are tested in science and physical education in fifth grade. Having two additional tests provides teachers with incentive to incorporate those subjects into the curriculum.

Figure 13  Percentage of Teachers who Increased the Amount of Time They Teach Math and Language Arts as a Result of Increasing Annual Measureable Objectives AMOs.
Figure 14  Percentage of Title I school teachers who increased the amount of time they teach math and language arts as a result of increasing AMOs as compared to non Title I teachers.

Figures 13 and 14 illustrate the percentage of teachers who have increased instructional time as the state-mandated AMOs have increased. The major of teachers in all grade levels have increased time dedicated to language arts and math and instruction. The only grade level that reported not having a majority of teachers increasing time is sixth grade; only 50% of teachers reported increasing instructional time in language arts. However, 83% of the same group of sixth grade teachers reported that they increased instructional time for math.

When the same data is disaggregated by teachers in Title I and non Title I schools, a different picture is painted. Teachers in Title I schools have increased the instructional
time in language arts and math at a much greater rate; 78% of Title I teachers increased time for language arts and 84% increased time for math. Conversely, only 33% of teachers in non Title schools increased instruction time in math and language arts.

As will be further discussed in the findings, this data alone is not a large case for concern. When there was little accountability in education, teachers were able to dedicate as little time as they pleased to math and language arts. Perhaps an increase in language arts and math was an intended and positive effect that will build students’ foundational academic skills.

Figure 15 Percentage of Teachers Who Have Decreased the Amount of Instruction in Subjects That Are Not Tested

Figure 15 illustrates the percentage of teachers who have decreased the amount of instruction dedicated to academic subjects that are not tested on the California Standards
Test. Unlike Figure 13 and 14, Figure 15 is concerning. Only kindergarten and sixth grade had fewer than 80% of teachers who decreased instruction. The most glaring difference came when the percentage of teachers in Title I schools and non Title I schools was disaggregated. The percentage of teachers (95%) who decreased instructional time in Title one schools is in stark contrast to the percentage of teachers (33%) who did the same in non Title I schools. Though only three non Title I teachers responded, only 1 of the non Title I school teachers stated they decreased time in other, non tested subjects. While this is a small sample of non Title I teachers, it provides a trend. This trend illustrates that non tested subjects are remaining in the curriculum at a higher rate in more affluent schools.

Figure 16 Teachers’ Perceptions regarding the District Adopted Curriculum Meeting All the Academic Needs of the Students
Figure 16 illustrates that teachers, both at Title I and non Title I schools do not believe the curriculum that has been adopted by the district is meeting all of the academic needs of the students. However, while the teachers feel the curriculum is not adequate, the Gracie Mae District has adopted the policy that all of the core curriculum will be taught to fidelity. Only 6.3% feel the district curriculum is meeting all of their students’ academic needs.

Figure 17  Teachers’ Perceptions Regarding the Role Parental Support Plays in Students Succeeding in School
Figure 18  Teacher’s Perceptions Regarding the Notion that Students Who Have Parental Support can Achieve at the Same Levels as a Student who has Highly Involved Parents

Figures 17 and 18 present data on how teachers perceive parental involvement in the success of their students. Figure 18 indicates that 100% of respondents, both at Title I and non Title I schools, believe that parents play an integral part of a student’s academic success. Zero of the respondents indicated that parents play “Some role”, “Little role”, or “No role”. Additionally, 72 % of the respondents believe that students who have involved parents will achieve higher academically than their peers who do not have parents who are involved in their schooling.
Figure 19  Percentage of Teachers Who Have Considered Leaving the School Where They Currently Teach to Work at a Different School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title 1 Schools</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Title 1 Schools</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Respondents

Figure 20  Reasons for the Desired Attrition

- More Affluent Community: 43.8%
- Higher Performing Students: 38.8%
- More Instructional Resources: 58.6%
- Alternative Educational Strategies: 46.2%
- Students with Greater Needs and Fewer Resources: 0.0%
- Other: 31.9%

Figures 19 and 20 present data on reasons why teachers consider attrition. Figure 19 determined whether teachers in Title I and non Title I schools have considered leaving
the school where they currently work in order to work at a different school. An overwhelming number (72.2%) of teachers in Title I schools have considered leaving their school. Comparatively, only 33% of teachers in non Title I schools have considered leaving their current site. The respondents who stated they have had a desire to transfer schools, stated the possible reasons why they had that desire in Figure 20. This data set was not disaggregated by the socioeconomic status of the school; respondents were permitted to choose more than one option. Therefore, the total number of responses will total more than 100%. The principal reason chosen by respondents is preference of a school setting that offered more instructional resources and the second leading reason for the desire attrition is to be at a school site that offered alternative educational strategies.

Under NCLB, schools that fall into Program Improvement lose the flexibility that leads to a greater array of resources and creativity of how to deliver the curriculum. Instead schools in Program Improvement are turning to scripted curriculums and a rigid structure that primarily focuses on math and language arts. As a result, teachers are leaving schools that need quality, experienced teachers in return for having the ability to be more creative in the curriculum. To solidify this assertion, zero respondents stated they wanted to leave their current site to work at a site with students who had greater needs and fewer resources, even though 31% of teachers in Figure 23 stated working at a schools with students greater academic and social needs in more satisfying than at a more affluent school. As will be further discussed in the findings, there was a time when a noticeable number of teachers would choose to work in a school which had greater needs and fewer resources. In addition, nearly 39% of respondents said they would like to transfer to a
school that have higher performing students, where the chances of being subjected to NCLB sanctions would be much smaller than at a more high-poverty school. Another 43.8% of respondents stated they would like to transfer to a school that is more affluent.

Figure 21 Working at a High-Poverty School is More Demanding Than Working at a More Affluent School

Figure 22 Working at a School with a High Proportion of English Language Learners is More Demanding Than Working at a School Where More Students Come From College-Educated, English Speaking Families
Figure 21 and 22 present data on the perceived difficulty in working in a school that has a high number of high-poverty (Figure 21) and English Language Learning students (Figure 22). Over 76% of the respondents reported they agreed or strongly agreed that working in a school with a high proportion of high-poverty students was more demanding than working at a school with more affluent families. Similarly, 87% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that it was more demanding to teach in a school that had a high rate of English Language Learners. Historically, schools that have a high number of socioeconomically disadvantaged and English Language Learning students score substantially lower on state-mandated tests. Therefore, they are the first to be subjected to sanctions from the state.

Figure 23 It is More/Less Satisfying to Work in a School Where the Students Have Greater Social and Academic Needs Than Working at a School That has Mostly Affluent Families

The data in figure 23 indicates that 31% of respondents consider working in a school with more students who have greater academic and social needs more satisfying than working in a more affluent school. Conversely, 49% of the respondents stated it was
less satisfying or about the same satisfaction level. Therefore, if respondents do not feel more personal satisfaction from working in high-poverty schools, they have little incentive to work in one state sanctions imposed as a result of poor test scores.

Figure 24 Percentage of Respondents, by Grade Level and School’s socioeconomic Status, who Believe Pressure on Teachers has Increased to Improve Test Scores in Language Arts and Math

Figure 25 Percentage of Respondents, by Grade level and School’s Socioeconomic Status, who Believe Pressure on Students has Increased to Perform well in Language Arts and Math
The data in figures 24 and 25 indicates that the respondents feel that there has been an increase in pressure on both teachers and students to perform well in tested subjects. Even respondents who teach in grades that are not annually tested reported (85.7% in kindergarten and 80% in first grade) there has been an increase on pressure on students to perform. Respondents stated that both Title I and non Title I schools reported (100% of all respondents) there has been an increase in pressure on teachers to increase test scores in language and math. However, 67% of respondents who teach in a non Title I school stated there has been an increase in pressure on students to increase test scores. Conversely, 97.2% of respondents who teach in a Title I school report there has been an increase in student pressure.

Similar to the increase in instructional time in math and language arts, the increase in pressure on teachers and students in itself is not necessarily a negative. It is argued by many that pressure on teachers and students to increase academic achievement is necessary after the decades of unchecked accountability prior to NCLB. However, where the concern lays is with the result of the increasing pressure and resulting sanctions if the AMOs are not met. These concerns will be discussed in Figures 26, 27, and 28.

Figure 26 Percentage of Respondents who Believe There has Been a Reduction in Support for Academic Subjects That Are Not Tested
Figure 27  Academic Areas That Have Seen a Reduction in Support and Instructional Time Because They are Not Tested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>93.5%</th>
<th>87.0%</th>
<th>58.7%</th>
<th>82.6%</th>
<th>71.7%</th>
<th>76.1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Performing Arts</td>
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<td>Vocational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Skills</td>
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<td>Physical Edu</td>
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Figure 28  Respondents’ perceptions Regarding the Notion That There is More Pressure to Meet AMOs Than to Educate Students in Other Life-Relevant Areas

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
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<td>Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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The data in Figures 26, 27, and 28 illustrates data pertaining to how the curriculum has been affected by state-mandated tests. While the increase in pressure on
teachers and students to achieve is of no great concern, the unintended result of this pressure is what is troubling. The data indicates that 98% of respondents feel there has been a reduction in the amount of support and instructional time dedicated to academic subjects that are not tested. Of that 98%, respondents felt that the arts, both performing and fine, were being the least supported. Vocational, civic/social studies, life skills and physical education are also lacking support. The data further indicates that most of core subjects are being eliminated from lesson plans in order to make more time and give more support to language arts and math. The implications related to this reduction in support will be discussed in the findings section of this chapter.

Figure 29 Various Knowledge and Skills Students are Leaving School With

Figure 29 presents data on respondents’ perceptions on what knowledge their students are leaving school with. The data indicates that, overwhelmingly, respondents do not their students are leaving schools with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to think critically, be an active and informed citizen in a democracy, transmit their own cultural
heritage to future generations, or engage knowledgably and respectfully in the global society. Clearly, teachers have serious concerns for their students’ ability to carry on in a representative democracy. Furthermore, teachers do not believe that public education, regardless of a school’s socioeconomic status, is preparing students once they graduate.

Figure 30  Respondents’ Perceptions Regarding the CST as an Accurate Means to Judge how Much a Student has Learned in a Year

![Figure 30](image)

Figure 31  Respondents’ use of the CST to Drive the Respondents’ Instruction

![Figure 31](image)
The data in Figures 30 and 31 indicates that while teachers do not believe the CST is an accurate means in determining how much a student has learned 70% of teachers use it to drive their instruction. In Figure 30, 92% percent of the teachers reported that the CST is not an accurate means to measure a student’s academic growth. This contradiction in values suggests that while teachers do not believe that the CST is an accurate indicator of student achievement, they feel they are forced to use it to determine and drive their curriculum.

Findings

The following section will discuss the findings of the study in regards to the three research questions presented in the introduction of this chapter.

*Is there a difference in the breadth of education being delivered to students in high-poverty schools and students in low poverty areas in Sacramento County?*

This study has revealed that the breadth education has been adversely effected in both high-poverty and low-poverty schools as a result of California and NCLB accountability policies. However, the impact of these negative effects has been felt much more deeply in high-poverty schools. For example, Figure 13 indicates that every grade level, regardless of socioeconomic status, has increased instructional time in language arts and math- the only subjects that are currently tested- with exception of science and physical education in fifth grade. Furthermore, when this same data is disaggregated by socioeconomic status (Figure 14), it can be concluded that an increase in language arts and math instruction is happening much more frequently in high-poverty schools. In
itself, increasing the amount of instructional time in math and language arts is not alarming. In fact, many would argue, that students need extra support building foundational skills before moving on to more complex concepts, particularly students in high-poverty schools where test scores are traditionally low. Where the concern begins is that in addition to increasing instructional time in math and language arts, schools are spending instructional time teaching test taking strategies. This pedagogy has very little lasting academic impact on a student. While teaching test taking strategies may improve achievement scores on a multiple choice test, it does nothing to promote critical thinking or problem solving skills. Moreover, it provides a set of isolated skills that a most students have difficulty relating to real-life situations. Again, teaching test taking strategies is happening in both high-poverty and low-poverty schools. However, it is happening much more frequently in high-poverty schools. Figures 10 and 11 show that 84% of respondents in Title I schools spend time teaching test taking strategies; only 33% of teachers in non Title I schools spend time teaching test taking strategies. While increasing instructional time to math, language arts and test taking strategies, may be necessary to improve achievement on a state-mandated test, it also has a direct impact on a decrease in other, non-tested subjects. This decrease in non tested curriculum is where the grave concern is found. In all schools, most notably high-poverty schools, subjects that are not tested are disappearing from the curriculum. Figure 27 indicates that teachers have seen a reduction in support for fine arts, performing arts, vocational studies, social/civic studies, life skills, and physical education. What is even more concerning is that 95% of teachers in high-poverty schools and only 33% of teachers in low-poverty
schools have noticed a decrease in instruction to subjects that are not tested (Figure 15). Again, this is a very small sample of teachers in non Title I schools, but gives a small glimpse of a possible trend. Figure 27 illustrates a vast difference in the quality of education students are receiving. As evidenced by Kahne in Chapter 2, when students are not exposed to a civics education, they are substantially less likely to be an engaged citizen when they enter adulthood. Schools appear to be exacerbating inequality by not providing equal civic preparation to students in most need of civic skills and resources. This inequality in education is particularly noticeable in elementary schools. In high schools and middle schools students are required to complete a specific number of units in other non tested subjects. The same requirements are not present in elementary schools so teachers are able to eliminate curricular areas in order to make more time for tested subjects and teaching the teaching the test format. This study shows that this elimination of curriculum is happening is most schools. Yet, it is happening much more regularly in high-poverty schools.

**Do teachers in Sacramento County perceive their students are being adversely affected as a result of California and NCLB accountability policies?**

This study reveals that teachers in Sacramento County believe their students are being adversely affected as a result of state and federal accountability policies. Figure 24 and 25 indicate that there has been an increase in pressure on both teachers and students, regardless of socioeconomic status, to increase academic achievement in math and language arts. This result alone is not concerning. Perhaps there should be more
pressure on teachers and students to perform at a higher level given that American students are continually lagging behind students in foreign countries. However, what is concerning is that every teacher responded that there is more pressure for students to perform well on annual tests than for students to be educated in other areas that are not tested. As a result teachers are narrowing their curriculum to only the subjects that are on the test. Furthermore, the curriculum that is being taught is often times being done so in the same format that will appear on the test. This fact is solidified in Figure 12. It reveals that in the grades that are not annually tested, the vast majority of teachers feel there are providing an education that is rich in all curricular areas. However, in second grade, the first year of state-mandated testing, only 16.3% of teachers believe they are teaching a rich and well rounded curriculum. Each subsequent grade level has a higher percentage of teachers who feel they provide a well rounded curriculum. The greatest percentage is in fifth and sixth grade with 50% of the teachers who claim to teach a well rounded curriculum. However, it must be noted that in fifth grade students must also take a state mandated science and physical education test, so teachers are more likely to teach more subjects. Teachers are opting not to teach a well rounded curriculum in an attempt to increase test scores and to limit the risk of potential state-imposed sanctions. This point is solidified in Figure 15 where every grade level reported decreasing instruction in subject areas that are not tested. It is impossible to teach a well rounded curriculum if many of the subjects are being eliminated because they will not appear on a state test. Moreover, 91% teachers reported that the curriculum they are using does not meet all of the academic needs of their students (Figure 16). This fact cannot be assumed for all
districts as some districts may allow teachers to supplement the curriculum with other academic sources. However, the Gracie Mae Unified School District has mandated that all curriculum be taught to fidelity. This rigidity does not allow teachers to meet the unique needs of their students.

Another way in which state and federal accountability policy is affecting students is through teacher attrition. It is well documented in Chapter 2 of this study as well as many other sources that the most important factor in a child’s education is the quality of their teacher. However, many experienced and quality teachers are transferring from their high-poverty schools or leaving the profession all together. Figure 19 illustrates that 72% of teachers in Title I schools have considered leaving their school in order to work somewhere else. Among the top reasons for their desired attrition was a preference for more instructional resources (58.6%), alternative educational strategies (46.2%), more affluent community (43.8%), and higher performing students (38.8%). Among non-Title I teachers, only 33% (1 respondent) had considered transferring schools. Not a single teacher wanted to transfer to a school where the students had greater needs and fewer resources. It is particularly noteworthy because prior to the risk of state sanctions, there were many teachers who wanted to work in high poverty areas in order to start programs they believed would be beneficial to students. However, now these same high-poverty schools are substantially more likely to be subjected to sanctions that ultimately limit a teacher’s ability to make change. Teachers in high poverty schools are much more likely to be required to deliver a scripted curriculum and severely limited flexibility. Consequently, teachers are opting to work in higher performing schools where they will
have more flexibility in their teaching. In essence, the schools that need the most experienced and best teachers are losing them to schools that are already achieving academically. The students in the neediest and challenging schools (Figure 21, 22) are, therefore, being taught by teachers with little experience and even fewer resources.

*Do Teachers in Sacramento County believe their students are leaving their classroom/school with the tools necessary to develop into critical thinkers who are capable of actively engaging in their environment?*

Teachers in Sacramento County do not believe they are adequately preparing their students to actively engage in the community. This is not surprising given that 97% of respondents believe there has been a reduction in support for all subjects that are not tested (Figure 26) and 100% of teachers either strongly agree or agree that there is more pressure to meet Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) than to educate students in other life-relevant areas (Figure 28). What is distressing is that while such a high percentage of teachers hold these beliefs, the trend of narrowing the curriculum is continuing. Adding to this concern is the idea that even though 91% of teachers believe that the CST is not an accurate measure of how much a student has learned in a year, 70% of them use it to guide their curriculum (Figure 30 and 31). Teachers in Sacramento, and most likely around the state, know that the pedagogy and curriculum is not meeting the needs of the students, yet feel the immense pressure to continue to only teach the tested subjects and the format of the test. As a result of this, teachers do not feel students are leaving school prepared to be engaged citizens. Figure 29 indicates that
the vast majority of teachers believe students are not leaving schools with the ability to share their own culture with future generations, be critical thinkers, be informed citizens, and engage in an increasingly global society. Clearly, teachers have grave concerns about the skills and abilities their students are leaving school with, yet nothing is done to alleviate them, because the pressure to meet AMOs seems to be much greater than the pressure to develop well rounded and informed citizens.

Limitations of the Study

This research was conducted in a single school district in Sacramento County. The vast majority of the schools in this county receive Title I funds, and represents a relatively small sample of schools in California. Therefore, it may not be representative of all districts in the state. Care must be taken not to generalize the results of this study to other districts in California and nationally.

The author and researcher of this study has been an employee in a Title I school for many years. Having worked in a school that has felt the impact of NCLB, the author was cautious to not allow biased opinions about the legislation to interfere with the interpretation of the data. The author’s ability to remain objective throughout the process was crucial for maintaining the integrity of the study.

Other constraints which might limit the research are the lack respondents who teach at a school that does not receive Title I funds. There were far more respondents who work at schools that receive Title I funds.
Summary

Chapter four presented data that was collected for this study. This data included results from a questionnaire that was administered to teachers in the Gracie Mae Unified School District. The data examined teacher’s perceptions on how the breadth of curriculum is being limited as a result of the CST, and if there was a difference in breadth between high-poverty and more affluent schools. The data further examined how the limited curriculum affected students within the district. Finally, the data examined the perceptions of teachers regarding the skills and abilities their students are leaving school possessing.
Chapter 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This was a study about how state and federal education accountability policies have unintentionally limited the breadth of education in elementary schools, and created a difference in the scope of education in Title I schools as compared to more affluent schools. The study was conducted over a two week period. An extensive review of literature examined the unintended consequences that the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have had on students, particularly students who attend schools in high-poverty areas. In an effort to explore how the federal and state accountability policies have affected students in high-poverty schools, three questions were addressed.

1. Is there a difference in the breadth of education being delivered to students in high-poverty schools and students in low-poverty schools in Sacramento County?

2. Do teachers in Sacramento County perceive their students are being adversely affected as a result of NCLB policies?

3. Do teachers in Sacramento County believe their students are leaving their classroom/school with the tools necessary to develop into critical thinkers who are capable of actively engaging in their environment?
To better understand how state and federal accountability policies are affecting high poverty schools, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to schools teachers in the Gracie Mae Unified School District through union email. The questionnaire was separated into three overarching themes: teacher experience and teaching background, the effect state and federal policies were having on the curriculum in elementary schools, and teachers’ perceptions on the knowledge and skills students were leaving school with. The researcher then gathered the data and disaggregated the results by the grade level of each respondent. The data was then further disaggregated by the socioeconomic status of respondents’ school sites.

Conclusions

Amid concerns that American students were increasingly lagging behind their foreign counterparts, and therefore were endangering the future of America’s economic competitiveness, politicians sought to implement accountability policies in education. These policies would ensure that all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, would receive a high quality education. The aim of the No Child Left Behind Act was well intentioned. Politicians theorized that if annual achievement goals were set for schools, teachers would have an incentive to focus their instruction and better their classroom practice. When examined on paper, it appears that in many respects NCLB was successful. However, when examined more closely, it becomes quite clear that many unintended consequences have arisen as a direct result of PSAA and NCLB policies. For instance, 91% of teachers in Sacramento County have reported the
curriculum they are delivering is not meeting needs of their students. Additionally, only kindergarten and first grade teachers – the only grades that are not tested- have more than half of the teachers who believe they are teaching a well rounded curriculum. Moreover, these unintended consequences are negatively impacting the same students NCLB was originally trying to protect, disadvantaged students, much more deeply than students in low-poverty areas. For example, students in high-poverty areas traditionally score much lower than their counterparts in more affluent schools. Consequently, students in high-poverty schools are spending a considerable amount of instructional time learning and relearning only the tested subjects in test-relevant format. In fact, 84% of teachers in Title I schools reported spending time each week teaching test taking strategies, a practice that research has indicated has no significant educational value other increasing standardized test scores. In non Title I schools, on the other hand, only 33% of teachers reported teaching test taking strategies. With the increase in time for a decontextualized focus on the tested subjects comes a decrease in instructional time for non tested subjects such as the arts, social studies, science and physical education. Nearly 98% of teachers in Sacramento County stated there has been a reduction in support for non tested subjects. One reason for this decrease could be attributed to teachers believing there is much more pressure to meet Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) than to educate their students in other life-relevant areas. While teachers overwhelming believe that the CST is not an accurate means to determine how much a student has learned, 70% use the results to drive their instruction.
Additionally, experienced, quality teachers are transferring away from high-poverty schools or leaving the profession all together. This trend is most notably occurring in high-poverty schools. The data indicated that 72% of Sacramento County teachers who are currently teaching in Title I schools have considered leaving their school site. The top reasons for the desired attrition are more instructional resources, alternative educational strategies, and a desire to work in a more affluent community. Not a single teacher indicated they wanted to work in a school that had students with greater needs and fewer resources. What incentive do teachers have to work in high-poverty schools? These are the schools that are considerably more likely to face harsh penalties from the state, and have very limited creativity in their teaching practice. Teachers are finding there is increasingly more flexibility and creativity when they teach in more affluent schools, where they are considerably less likely to face the sanctions of NCLB. This attrition is creating an education system where the best, most experienced teachers are working in more affluent areas, and the neediest students are being taught by a revolving door of novice teachers. The high attrition rates among teachers and the phenomenon of curriculum narrowing is leading to a difference in the quality and breadth of education that American students are receiving. Students in more affluent areas are receiving an education that is more well-rounded and helps to promote and foster critical thinking skills. Students in high-poverty schools are receiving an education that is rich in language arts, math, and test taking skills. As both groups of students leave elementary school and head into junior high and high school, the gap in their achievement continues to grow. Teachers overwhelmingly reported that their students are not leaving school
with the skills and abilities necessary to critically and actively engage in their communities and, ready to become informed citizens in a democratic society. Students from high-poverty schools are less likely to graduate high school and more likely to be shuffled around to different schools so their low test scores do not affect a school’s overall performance.

These national trends hold true for the Gracie Mae Unified School District as well. Teachers feel they are not giving students a well rounded education. However, they feel forced to increase instructional time in the subjects that are going to be tested. Perhaps the most telling information about teachers’ perceptions regarding their practice came in the last two questions of the survey. The data in these questions indicated that while an overwhelming number of teachers do not believe the CST is a valid means to determine the academic growth of a student, the vast majority use it to guide their instruction.

When NCLB was passed into law, it was greeted with overwhelming bipartisan support. However, since its implementation, the majority of people, including the United States Department of Education, have come to believe there is a better way to educate America’s students; a way that would ensure all students were receiving a quality education, not just the students who attended schools in affluent areas.

Recommendations

The belief behind the accountability movement is well intentioned. Teachers, like all other professions, need to be held accountable for their performance in the classroom.
However, placing the measurement of a teacher’s effectiveness and the indicator of student achievement on a single standardized, multiple choice test that only examines two content areas is misguided, and serves as incentive to severely narrow the curriculum. This notion is increasing in popularity and many in the field of education have acknowledged the current philosophy of educating America’s students is not effective. National associations of educational leaders, in developing the Common Core Standards, has taken great strides to move America’s educational values more towards those of Finland, which has the highest ranked education system in the world. These standards have the potential to drastically reduce the amount of schools that feel the need to narrow the curriculum to only the tested subjects by incorporating math and language arts standards into subjects that are not tested. However, the Common Core Standards alone cannot accomplish this change in curriculum narrowing. As long as student achievement is being judged primarily on the results of a single test, teachers will have incentive to limit the curriculum to the tested subjects and test-driven strategies. Either the test that is used to determine academic achievement needs to also change to reflect the more well rounded national standards, or less of an emphasis needs to be placed on the outcomes. Only in doing so will teachers regain the flexibility to teach all the core subjects in a meaningful way without fear of state sanctions because of ever-increasing AMOs.

In examining the Finnish model of education, one of its greatest strengths is that the curriculum is generated by teachers at the local level. This huge step away from the canned curriculum that is frequently seen in the United States allows teachers to meet the
unique needs of the students. Furthermore, teachers can ensure they are providing an enriching education that promotes and fosters well rounded individuals. Another strength of this system is that it allows teachers to develop genuine tests that can more accurately assess the growth of the students in various modalities. Students rarely take multiple choice tests. Rather they demonstrate their learning through other activities.

The popular rhetoric claims the arts should not be eliminated from the curriculum; that students should be exposed to a well rounded curriculum. However, the system that has come to fruition in America is one that only values the subjects that are annually tested- and tested inexpensively. Under this system, the notion of teaching students an appreciation for the arts or their civic responsibility is lost. One flaw in this system of education is that students are leaving school not prepared and highly unlikely to actively engage in the democratic community in which they live. They will be entering the “real world” having been taught a litany of isolated skills that will have prepared them for a standardized test. Yet, they will have no idea how to connect the skills they have learned in the classroom to what is happening around them. In this type of educational system students will have little chance of improving their lot in life. However, the greatest tragedy is that this system is unintentionally harming the very students that it was meant to protect from an inequitable education.

Currently, a growing majority of students, particularly high-poverty students, are leaving school without the knowledge to actively and critically engage in a democratic society. Instead, they are leaving school with an assortment of disjointed knowledge that they are unable to piece together and translate into their daily lives. Teachers are
knowingly doing this in order to prepare students for a single standardized test. If the paradigm is to shift to a more constructive pedagogy, a curriculum that promotes critical thinking and problem solving must be implemented. Additionally, teachers must have more input into the development of the curriculum. Currently, schools that enter Program Improvement are prescribed one of several options to improve academic achievement. Many times this involves a scripted curriculum, and increased instructional time in language arts and math and is taught in the tested format. However, for most students this “intervention” does not work, and only further disenchants them from an education that they are already struggling to comprehend. American students deserve better than this. Students need to be deeply involved and engaged in their learning. This can only happen through meaningful learning activities, not through prescribed and extended curriculum. When this type of learning happens, increased student achievement will be right behind. Clearly, it is time for a change in the way in which children are educated in America. However, before the entire educational system is overhauled, educational leaders must take a step back and ask the question: what type of adults do we want our education system to produce? In order to move American society forward what skills and abilities should adults possess? The researcher would contend that, in addition to math and literacy skills, adults need to possess many other skills as well. They need to possess civic values and the desire to participate in making change in their community. They must have ethical foundations that will guide their critical and independent thought. They must have an appreciation for the arts as well as an awareness of the economic climate. They must possess empathy for others and the many cultures that inhabit
America. Only in asking what we want America’s adults to do, can educational leaders formulate how public education can help students become the adult members of our society that are able to thrive in all areas.

However, in the interim, school administrators cannot, in good conscious, sit idly by and wait for federal and state education policy to reflect the growing social and academic needs of America’s disadvantaged students. If schools are truly going to meet the needs of all the students, the supposed “instructional leaders” need to develop inventive ways to integrate nontested subjects into the daily curriculum. Whether it is a greater emphasis on project-based learning or a more innovative way to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers, there needs to be a shift in the curricular paradigm that will ultimately promote and foster critical thinking skills, and give students a sense of the greater community to which they belong. This bold shift may lead to state sanctions in the short term. However, the long term effects could lead to a more equitable education system that would cultivate students into well rounded, critical and compassionate adults.
APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

1. How many years have you been a teacher?

2. What grade levels have you taught? Mark all that apply
   K  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

3. What grade are you currently teaching? If you are currently teaching more than one grade level, please mark both.
   K  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

4. At what school do you currently teach?

5. Does your school currently receive Title I funds?
   Yes  Don’t know  No

6. How many hours do you spend teaching English Language Arts each day?
   Less than 1 hour.  1- 1 ½ hours.  1 ½ - 2 hours.  2- 2 ½ hours.  More than 2 ½

7. How many hours do you spend teaching Math each day?
   Less than 1 hour  1- 1 ½ hours  1 ½ - 2 hours  2- 2 ½ hours  More than 2 ½

8. How much time do you spend reteaching English Language Arts each week?
   Less than 1 hour  1- 1 ½ hours  1 ½ - 2 hours  2- 2 ½ hours  More than 2 ½

9. How much time do you spend reteaching Math each week?
   Less than 1 hour  1- 1 ½ hours  1 ½ - 2 hours  2- 2 ½ hours  More than 2 ½

10. In your weekly teaching practice, do you provide instruction to your students on test taking strategies?
    Yes  Not Sure  No

11. In your daily teaching practice, do you regularly provide a curriculum that is rich in math, English language arts, social studies, science, and the arts?
    Yes  Not Sure  No
12. As state expectations for all students to be proficient in ELA has increased, has the amount of time you spend teaching ELA also increased?
   Yes  Not Sure  No.

13. As state expectations for all students to be proficient in math has increased, has the amount of time you spend teaching math also increased?
   Yes  Not Sure  No

14. As state expectations for all students to be proficient in math and ELA has increased, has the amount of time you spend each week teaching other subjects decreased?
   Yes  Not Sure  No

15. Do you believe that your district’s adopted curriculum is meeting all of your students’ academic needs?
   Yes.  Not Sure  No

16. What role does parental support play in students succeeding in school?
    greatest role  important role  some role  little role  no role

17. A child with low parental support can achieve at the same levels as a student who has parents who are highly involved in their school work.
    Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

18. Have you considered leaving the school where you currently teach to work at a different school?
    Yes  Not Sure  No

19. If you answered, yes to the above question choose among the following characteristics for the school you would prefer:
    More affluent community  Higher performing students  More instructional resources  Alternative educational strategies  Students with greater needs and fewer resources.
20. Working at a school serving predominantly low income students is more demanding than working at a school with more students from affluent and middle class families.
Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

21. Working at a school with a high proportion of English language learners is more demanding than working at a school where more students come from college-educated, English speaking families.
Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

22. Working at a school where students have greater academic and social needs is more satisfying/less satisfying than working at a school where students come from more advantaged homes.
More satisfying  About the same  Less satisfying

23. Do you feel the overall pressure on teachers has increased for students to perform well in math and language arts? Yes  Not Sure  No

24. Do you feel the overall pressure on students has increased to perform well in math and language arts? Yes  Not Sure No

25. Do you feel there has been a reduction in support for subjects other than math and language arts? Yes Not Sure No

26. If you answered yes to the above question, indicate any or all of the following subject areas which have lost support:
   Fine Arts  Performing Arts  Vocational  Civic/Social/Cultural Studies
   Life Skills  Physical Education

27. There is more pressure to meet proficiency levels that will be measured on the state test than to educate students in other life-relevant areas?
   Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

28. Students are leaving school with the skills necessary to be critically thinking adults?
   Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree
29. Students are leaving school with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be informed and active citizens?
   Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

30. Students are leaving school prepared to transmit their nation’s cultural heritage to the next generations?
   Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

31. Students are leaving school prepared to engage knowledgeably and respectfully in the global society?
   Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

32. The CST is an accurate means to determine how much a student has learned over the course of a school year?
   Strongly agree  Agree  Not sure  Disagree  Strongly disagree

33. Do you use CST scores to drive your instruction?
   Yes  Not Sure  No
APPENDIX B

Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in research, which will be conducted by a 5th grade teacher and graduate student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Sacramento. The Department of Education supports the practice of informed consent and protection for subjects participating in research. Your responses to the survey will be completely anonymous and be held with the utmost confidentiality. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you would like to participate in the present study.

The purpose of the study is to determine if there is a difference in the breadth of the education provided to students in high poverty areas and those in more affluent areas, and whether any such differences can be attributed to the amount of instructional time dedicated exclusively to language arts and math instruction at such schools.

You will be asked to fill out the attached survey about your experiences and practices in teaching and how you perceive those practices to affect elementary students.

The information gathered from this survey is important since as will represent a sampling of teacher opinions on current educational practices and how those practices may affect the region’s students.

Your participation is solicited, but strictly voluntary. The researcher assures you that all surveys will remain completely anonymous.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me via email at joeschmidtresearch@yahoo.com

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Joe Schmidt
Teacher/Graduate Student
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