

A CASE STUDY: THE PERSPECTIVES OF ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL WHOSE SCHOOL DID NOT MAKE ADEQUATE YEARLY
PROGRESS IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of an elementary school principal whose school did not make adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years. The researcher sought to understand what *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) meant to the participant, and if this reform had changed the work of this principal. Data for this qualitative study were collected during three interviews with the principal. The data from the interviews were analyzed using descriptive analysis. A major finding was that the principal believed his school could attain AYP even after failing to achieve it for three consecutive years. Data revealed that the subgroup of students with disabilities was the major obstacle to making AYP. The data further revealed that the principal perceived that his actions affected the education process within his school and that in fulfilling his role, he had a positive affect on student achievement. As it pertains to the changes in the work of the principal since the implementation of *NCLB* and AYP, the data revealed that the principal perceived that the major change in his work was the movement from the role of manager to that of instructional leader. The principal did not perceive the ways he was being held accountable had changed since not making AYP for three consecutive years as he faced no formal sanctions.

INDEX WORDS: Elementary School Principals, Accountability, Adequate Yearly Progress,
Failing Schools

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first of all to God who strengthened me to endure to the end and for allowing me “to do all things through Christ which strengthens me” Philippians 4:13.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my family:

To my mother and father, Elton and Lula Pearl Davis, for their love, support, and understanding throughout the years.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is important to understand the perspectives of an elementary school (K-5) principal whose school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) because 455 of Georgia's 2,172 schools failed to make AYP for the 2008-2009 school year (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). In the state of Georgia where the present study was conducted, 414 of Georgia schools failed to meet the academic performance criteria, and 334 of Georgia schools were classified in the "needs improvement" category. Of these 2,172 schools, 1,318 were elementary schools in which 134 failed to make AYP.

As early as the 1990s, the progress of schools was being examined, and Heck and Marcoulides (1990) explained, "Educational reforms in the United States have focused on improving the quality of instructional programs provided by the public school systems" (p. 55). The focus on improving school programs has continued not only through federal and state initiatives, but also through accountability mandates. These policy mandates from the state and federal government, including former Governor Barnes' *A Plus Education Reform Act* of 2000 and President Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* are placing more emphasis on research guided leadership practices to ensure the success of all students (NCLB, 2002).

These reforms bring to focus many practices such as parental school choice and expanded local control of schools to be considered for school improvement. In the quest to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), Heck (2000) stated, "School personnel are being compelled to change the status quo of professional practices in various ways with the expectation that they will be accountable for improving student performance" (p. 512). The change in former practices and roles has been essential in school improvement and accountability.

Principals are now accountable for ensuring that their schools make AYP. As early as 1992, Heck and Marcoulides stated, “Recent demands of accountability have focused attention on the principal’s role in facilitating change to produce academic achievement” (p.125). Now, policy decisions are holding principals directly accountable for schools. Once it is understood about the relationship between the principal, schools, and outcomes, it will be easier to establish the effectiveness of the principal’s role in school improvement (Heck & Marcoulides, 1992). According to Heck and Marcoulides, the connection between the school, processes, and student outcomes is not very clear, and academic success may be the result of a “trickle down effect” rather than a direct impact on student success (p. 128).

The 21st century school principal has the responsibility of creating the kind of learning organization that emphasizes success for all students (Harris & Lowery, 2003). The role of the principal is not just one of a manager, but also one that focuses on instruction, diverse students, initiation of change, a constantly growing knowledge base, changing technology, making decisions pertaining to personnel, and problem-solving (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2001). Likewise, Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) asserted, “The principal’s role has evolved from manager to street-level bureaucrat, to change agent, to instructional manager, to instructional leader, and to transformational leader” (p. 137). Hoachlander, Martha, and Beltranena (2001) described a strong principal as one who combines practices to balance a well-managed plan of school improvement.

A principal is an instructional leader and change agent (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). In the role of an instructional leader, a principal is responsible for supporting teachers, establishing and enforcing high academic standards for all students, and coordinating and monitoring instructional programs. The principal has a role in implementing the changes needed

for student achievement. That role is one of a change agent. As a change agent, the principal's responsibility is to ensure that the needs of all students are being met as well as those of the teachers (Dipaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Harris & Lowery, 2003; Hochlander et al., 2001). The principal must lead in making the changes needed to achieve student success.

Adequate Yearly Progress is a series of performance standards that every school, local education agency, and the state as a whole must achieve within time frames specified by law to meet the 100% proficiency goal of the mandates of the federal legislation established in the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002). This 100% proficiency goal is to be met by 2014. Schools and school systems must meet the following criteria to be designated as making AYP as defined by the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) for *NCLB*:

- Students must be tested annually in grades 3-8;
- There must be at least a 95% participation rate on state assessments in the areas of reading/language arts and mathematics;
- Each school must meet or exceed the state's annual measurable objective (AMO) for proficiency. Georgia allows flexibility in achieving the AMO by four methods:
 - 1) direct comparison of student performance to AMO,
 - 2) confidence interval,
 - 3) multiyear averaging, and
 - 4) safe harbor.
- Each school must show progress on a second indicator:
 - 1) attendance,
 - 2) a second academic subject other than math, reading, or language,
 - 3) test participation, and
 - 4) writing test scores. (Georgia Department of Education, 2008)

Each subgroup of 40 or more students must meet the above objectives of Georgia's definition of AYP for *NCLB*. These subgroups are ethnicity, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged (free and reduced lunch), Limited-English-Proficiency (LEP), and gender. Prince (2004) suggested that the primary goals of *NCLB* are to encourage schools to improve and to close the achievement gap between subgroups of the general school population.

At the center of *NCLB* are sanctions established by the Georgia Department of Education for not attaining AYP. Schools that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years are labeled as "Needs Improvement" (Finn & Hess, 2004). The sanctions for failing to make AYP in the state of Georgia are as follows:

- After the second consecutive year, schools that receive Title I funds must give school choice and write a plan for improvement.
- Third consecutive year schools must also provide supplementary educational instruction such as after school tutoring.
- Fourth consecutive year schools must write a school improvement plan with corrective actions that must contain changes in curriculum or staff.
- Fifth consecutive year schools will enter into reconstruction where they could possibly reopen as a charter school, replace staff, and/or turn over school operations to a separate entity. (O.C.G.A. § 160-7-1-.04)

The state of Georgia also allows temporary flexibility to proficiency rates established by the federal government. There is an adjustment of these rates to schools who failed to meet AYP based solely on the students with disabilities subgroup.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to examine the perspectives of one elementary school principal whose school failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years. The statistics for the 2008-2009 school year revealed that 1,184 of Georgia's elementary schools

made AYP while 134 of these elementary schools did not make AYP (Georgia Department of Education, 2009).

Although a substantial amount of literature exists regarding the principalship, a review of the literature related to the principalship yielded few reflections of the views of principals regarding AYP. Research has reported that principals do not feel adequately prepared to handle all the facets of their position (Prince, 2004). To become better prepared, principals must look for ways to develop leadership competencies through training, observing other principals, and reading research and theory (Weller & Weller, 2002). Research conducted by Heck (2000) showed a pattern of achievement favoring schools with strong educational environments and found that schools with higher quality educational environments created higher than expected outcomes in student achievement. Heck further stated, “These schools have principal leadership that is rated as more supportive and directed toward instructional excellence and school improvement” (p. 538).

Given the broad writing and research about AYP and the press for principal accountability, this study hopes to reveal the perspectives of one principal whose school did not make AYP during the 2005 through 2008 school years. Although this school made AYP during the 2008-2009 school year, it remains on the “needs improvement” list and therefore must continue to offer both Public School Choice and Supplemental Education Services (Tutoring). The limited research yields limited insight on the perspectives of principals and leadership relative to making Adequate Yearly Progress in a school that is deemed a failure by the provisions of AYP.

Background of the Study

Although the *NCLB* reform brings to focus many practices to be considered for school improvement, very little research exists about what principals perceive as effective practices to transform elementary schools that failed to make AYP. The research that shows how to turn around failing schools is limited, as are the state and local policies and programs designed to address this problem (Elmore, 2003). Educators, politicians, and the general public continue to search for answers to a seemingly failing educational system. Curricula are implemented, laws are passed, and suggestions are made; however, Heck, Brandon, and Wang (2001) asserted that all of these processes are seemingly futile because “policies may set directions and provide a framework for change, but they do not determine the outcomes” (p. 303).

Our society is preoccupied with standards (Fullan, 1999). In an effort to achieve these standards, principals are expected to make the strategies they use work (Cotton, 2003). Cotton reported that decades of research have constantly found positive relationships between the principal’s behavior and student achievement. Conversely, seminal research by Heck and Marcoulides (1992) revealed that there was no clear linkage between principal leadership and student outcomes. The research by Heck and Marcoulides disclosed that instructional expertise, organizational skills, flexibility, and a clear vision are thought to be the cornerstone of school improvement and thus should be the primary focus of principals. These skills and factors often set the stage for needed flexibility and change. No matter what the strategy for school improvement, schools rely on the leadership of the school principal. Principals should be held accountable, but for what and at what cost? A successful school must have a strong principal (Goldberg, 2004). Heck (2000) conducted a study in which students, teachers, and parents

agreed that five of the characteristics of a strong principal were that principals:

- 1) make student achievement their top priority,
- 2) state missions, visions, and goals that are clear and concrete,
- 3) lead in resolving instructional issues,
- 4) work well with teachers, students, and parents to develop school improvement plans and other improvement initiatives, and
- 5) communicate well with students, teachers, parents, and the community. (Heck, 2000, p. 522)

Heck also stated that schools that improved academically had effective principal leadership that focused resources on the instructional programs of the school.

Schools are complex institutions, and no principal can stay abreast of all the developments and areas that affect the learning environment (Goldberg, 2004). The language of *NCLB* dictates that continuous development of the learning environment includes more emphasis on research guided leadership practices (NCLB, 2002). Too many principals find themselves overwhelmed with meetings, paper work, discipline, and urgent daily demands that leave them with little time to focus on curriculum and instructional improvement (Goldberg, 2004).

Many areas and aspects must be investigated to ensure that a school's leader is highly effective in enhancing student achievement (Prince, 2004). Additional research is needed to understand the perspectives of principals regarding leadership and AYP. By asking a principal whose school did not meet AYP to share his perspectives, perhaps a better understanding of the knowledge and skills needed for principals to lead schools toward improvement can be better understood.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide a case study analysis of the perspectives of one elementary school principal from the state of Georgia related to the principalship and AYP. The researcher sought to understand the principal's perspectives of the relationship between school leadership and school success related to duties and responsibilities performed while the school remained a school that failed to make AYP. Hopefully, the findings of this study will help to provide insight about the obstacles, trials, actions, concerns, and successes that this principal experienced during the years his school failed to make AYP. Moreover, the researcher wanted to explore the perspectives of the principal related to the personal and professional toll that not making AYP took on him as principal.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following overall questions while exploring the perspectives of one elementary school principal whose school failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years:

1. What are the perspectives of one elementary principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP for three consecutive years?
2. What is this principal doing to address the failure to make AYP and the obstacles involved?
3. What are the perceptions of this principal related to his actions and how they affect student achievement?
4. What have been the most significant changes in the work of this principal since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

5. What are the ways in which this principal has been held accountable?

The knowledge gained through such a study might assist principals in understanding what job duties are inherent for principals in the quest for AYP. The results of this study may also help to further the limited research in student achievement and the principalship related to school improvement and AYP.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1969) positioned that symbolic interactionism was the study of human group life and human conduct. Blumer promoted that symbolic interactionism focused on three major fundamental ideas that affected data collection, the analysis of data, and its interpretation. These ideas include the following:

1. Humans respond to things based on the meaning they have for them as individuals.
2. Meanings arise from relationships with others.
3. Meanings develop and are modified as one encounters different things (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

Symbolic interactionism allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of the perspectives of the principal regarding his duties and responsibilities and the importance of the meaning and the interpretation of his encounters as he struggled after his school did not make AYP for three consecutive years.

Data collection techniques focused on gathering the descriptions from one principal of an elementary school in Georgia. Data were gathered through open-ended interviews regarding the perspectives on the principalship as it related to not making Adequate Yearly Progress. The analysis and interpretation of the data were based on the participant's responses to his

experiences within his environment. The environment for this participant was a school that carried the stigma of not making AYP for three consecutive years.

Significance of the Study

The question that Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) asked was simply “Do principals make a difference?” (p. 527). According to Heck (2000), the answer to this question lies in the perception of supervisors, faculty, and staff. Hallinger and Heck (1998) stated, “One of the fundamental tenets of research and practice in the school improvement community concerns the apparently powerful impact of principals on processes related to school effectiveness and improvement” (p. 158). Hallinger and Heck found that research findings from diverse countries and schools also drew similar conclusions.

Jackson (2004) conducted a descriptive, non-experimental study involving 150 Georgia elementary school principals. Eighty-two of these principals were from schools that made Adequate Yearly Progress and 68 of these principals were from schools that did not make AYP during the 2002-2003 school year. Jackson’s study focused on principals’ perspectives of accountability reform and how accountability measures changed the work of principals. Although findings from Jackson’s study indicated there were no statistical differences in the ways the two groups dealt with the mandates of accountability, she did recommend that additional study was needed in the area of principals and efforts leading to Adequate Yearly Progress to include identifying the attributes, qualities, and skills of principals. Because of the number of responses to open-ended questions given by the principals, Jackson further recommended a follow-up study, using qualitative methodology and asking open-ended questions. Jackson (2004) suggested that more open-ended questions were needed to understand the perspectives of principals whose schools did not make AYP. She further suggested the

following open-ended questions:

- a) Who has specifically caused the nature of work to change?
- b) What have been the most significant changes in the work of the principal?
- c) Why and how has this work changed?
- d) Would the work have changed without legislation?
- e) What kind of effect has the nature of the work had on student achievement and the education process. (p. 65)

It is hoped that the present study will fill the void created by these open-ended questions not being further addressed in Jackson's study. This study will specifically address the responses from the open-ended questions.

Although Jackson (2004) focused on numerous schools that did and did not make AYP, this study focused only on one elementary school principal whose school did not make AYP for three consecutive years. This study was conducted using open-ended questions to obtain the principal's perspectives of job duties in attaining AYP. Leaders play a major role in education by constituting powerful factors that influence needed changes (Glickman, 2002). Casavant and Cherkowski (2001) revealed in a review of the literature on school leadership that the role of the principal has undergone drastic changes in an effort for reform. DuFour (2002) stressed that as our society becomes more results oriented, principals must change the way they perceive and enact their roles. Cistone and Stevenson (2000) revealed that "new conditions and expectations in education and society are combining to create newly emerging challenges and perspectives for the contemporary role of the principal" (p. 435).

Assumptions of the Study

There were three assumptions held throughout the duration of this study. The primary assumption made by the researcher was that the principal was truthful in his responses and experiences. The second assumption was that learning about the challenges, issues, and successes incurred by this principal might be helpful to other principals of low-performing schools that are failing to make AYP. Another assumption was that this principal's responses reflected the reality of a negative experience in his professional life and work.

Definition of Terms

1. Elementary schools are schools that house grades K-5.
2. Low performing schools are schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by *NCLB* that states:
 - There must be at least a 95% participation on State assessments,
 - Each school must meet or exceed the State's annual measurable objective for proficiency,
 - Each school must show progress on an additional indicator (NCLB, 2002).
3. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a series of performance standards that every school, local education agency, and the state as a whole must achieve within time frames specified by law in order to meet the 100% proficiency goal of the Federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002).

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to one elementary school principal in a district within the state of Georgia. The primary limitation was that there was only one participant in this study; therefore, generalizations of the results may not be made.

Overview of Research Procedures

The qualitative case study approach was chosen to describe and provide descriptions of the perspectives of one principal of an elementary school that failed to make AYP for three consecutive years. The principal was interviewed with open-ended questions to determine successes, challenges, and issues in his school after failing to make AYP for three consecutive years. Essentially, this study examined the work of a principal in a school that did not make AYP for three consecutive years.

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed through comparative analysis procedures. The data were collected from an elementary school principal employed in a Georgia school system. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Fieldnotes were taken during the interviews to clarify answers given during the interviews and to note the researcher's insights. Field notes were also used to determine follow-up questions to ask in subsequent interviews.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, overview of the research method, research questions, definition of the terms, importance of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 presents the review of literature that pertains to national and state policies related to *NCLB* and AYP, accountability, and the principalship. Chapter 3 provides the research method used in the study. This chapter includes a profile of the participant, research questions, and the procedures used to collect and to analyze data from the interview and artifacts collected at the school site. Chapter 4 reports the data and its analysis. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings of the study, implications for principals of low performing schools, and implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to provide an analysis of the perspectives of one elementary school principal from a school system in the State of Georgia. The researcher sought to understand the principal's perspectives of the relationship between school leadership and school success related to the duties and responsibilities he performed, and yet, his school remained a school that failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years. The findings of this study will help to provide examples of obstacles, trials, actions, concerns, and successes that this principal faced during his principalship when his school failed to make AYP for three consecutive years. More directly, the results of this study may help to provide strategies that are beneficial to elementary school principals and aspiring elementary school principals as they prepare to change their school from failing to non-failing. According to Heck and Hallinger (2005), "Reviews of research are useful tools for identifying trends in knowledge development, understanding emerging issues in the field of practice, and critiquing methods used by scholars" (p. 229). Moreover, this study sought to unveil the extent that schools are striving to meet accountability measures, like AYP, but still have not attained the classification.

The study sought to answer the following questions related to the perspectives of the principalship in relation to AYP:

1. What are the perspectives of one elementary principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP for three consecutive years?
2. What is this principal doing to address the failure to make AYP and the obstacles

involved?

3. What are the perceptions of this principal related to his actions and how they affect student achievement?
4. What have been the most significant changes in the work of this principal since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?
5. What are the ways in which this principal has been held accountable?

This review of literature will focus on common leadership practices of effective principals. The review of literature will also seek to show if student achievement is affected by the distinct practices these leaders exhibit.

National and State Policies Related to Educational Reform

In 1983, the National Commission on Education released the report, *A Nation at Risk*, that revealed schools in America were falling behind other nations and that the level of academic achievement had decreased. Based on the beliefs that everyone can learn and that everyone is born with a desire to learn, the National Commission for Excellence in Education made the following recommendations related to school improvement. The commission recommended that local high school graduation requirements be strengthened with higher expectations and measurable standards. In order to improve achievement, the commission also advised that more time be devoted to learning and that the standards for teacher preparation programs or the profession itself be improved. In the areas of leadership and fiscal support, the commission advised that educators be held responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve the recommendations and that citizens provide the funds to implement the recommendations.

A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000, presently known as House Bill 1187, was passed on March 16, 2000, by the Georgia General Assembly. The *A Plus Education Reform Act* was

enacted to provide comprehensive education reform in the state of Georgia for the pre-kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. The major focus of this statute was to increase student achievement and to hold school districts accountable for student achievement. To help hold school districts accountable for student achievement, the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) currently known as the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) was created. GOSA was established on July 1, 2000, to improve student achievement and school completion in Georgia. The GOSA has several major roles and responsibilities but the significant ones are as follows:

- At the school level, establish satisfactory levels of performance on each assessment instrument administered by the Department of Education;
- Establish individual school ratings for each school in the state for annual academic performance on the assessment instruments after a review of each schools performance;
- Develop a report card that compares national results and benchmarks for the subject areas and grade levels where required assessment instruments are being administered for each school within a school district and the school district as well;
- Collaborate work with the Alliance of Education Agency Heads (AEAH) to improve education statewide; and
- Develop a financial awards system to recognize those schools and school systems that demonstrate progress in achieving the educational goals of the state and GOSA's school rating system. (Georgia Department of Education, 2009)

The GOSA makes education information available to all interested in the education of students in the state of Georgia. The agency also works closely with other Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) agencies.

On January 8, 2002, the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, was signed into law by President Bush. *NCLB* placed more emphasis on research guided leadership practices (NCLB, 2002). The variables associated with improved student achievement have been a focus of researchers for

many years. The goal of *NCLB* is a quality education for all students by the 2013-2014 school year and has significantly increased the pressure to improve student achievement. *NCLB* operates on the basic assumptions that every child, regardless of income, gender, race/ethnicity, ESOL, or disability, can learn and deserves to learn. *No Child Left Behind* supports the belief that all efforts toward reforming our schools must be focused on ensuring that student achievement and learning improve.

President George Bush reminded the nation about the need for a quality education system as he stated that the quality of our public schools directly affects us all as parents, as students, and as citizens, yet, too many children in America are segregated by low expectations, illiteracy, and self-doubt (Bush, 2004). In a constantly changing world that is demanding increasingly complex skills from its workplace, children are literally being left behind. According to Torres (2004), the federal government has not undertaken such bold efforts to alter education services on the local level since the civil rights legislation during the 1960s. *No Child Left Behind* requires states to set high academic standards and implement student testing programs that are aligned with standards and to measure student achievement based on those standards. This legislation attempts to address educational issues such as gaps in test performance between whites and those of color; curriculum that is incoherent or repetitive; and systematic complacency (Torres, 2004). By requiring accountability systems to be implemented in each state, any discrepancies and shortcomings in performance in schools and school districts will be exposed and addressed (Torres, 2004).

The reforms such as the *A Plus Education Reform Act* and *No Child Left Behind* bring forth practices to be considered for school improvement such as accountability and the quest to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a series of performance standards that every

school, local education agency, and the State as a whole must achieve within time frames specified by law to meet the 100% proficiency goal by 2014 (NCLB, 2002). Adequate Yearly Progress annually measures student participation and achievement on state assessments for subgroups of 40 or more students. These subgroups must also meet standards on a second indicator: test participation, academic performance in a subject area other than reading, language, or mathematics, attendance, and/or standardized writing test scores. These subgroups of 40 are categorized by ethnicity, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged (free and reduced lunch), students with limited English proficiency, and gender.

The heart of *NCLB* lies with the consequences for not attaining AYP. Table 2.1 describes the consequences a public school faces if it does not meet AYP. Schools that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years are labeled as “Needs Improvement” schools (Finn & Hess, 2004).

Table 2.1

Consequences for Not Meeting AYP

Year	Consequences
1	No Consequences
2	Needs Improvement Year 1 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public notice. 2. Public School Choice. 3. School Improvement Plan.
3	Needs Improvement Year 2 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public notice. 2. Public School Choice. 3. School Improvement Plan. 4. Supplemental Educational Services.
4	Needs Improvement Year 3 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public notice. 2. Public School Choice. 3. Supplemental Educational Services. 4. School Improvement Plan. 5. Identified for Corrective Action.

Table 2.1 (continued)

Consequences for Not Meeting AYP

Year	Consequences
5	Needs Improvement Year 4 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public notice. 2. Public School Choice. 3. Supplemental Educational Services. 4. School Improvement Plan. 5. Continue to implement Corrective Action Plan. 6. Identified for Restructuring Plan.
6	Needs Improvement Year 5 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public notice. 2. Public School Choice. 3. Supplemental Educational Services. 4. School Improvement Plan. 5. Continue to implement Corrective Action Plan. 6. Implementation of Restructuring Plan (NCLB, 2002).

In accordance with *NCLB*, Georgia received approval from the federal government on June 7, 2004, for the following state accountability plan as a guideline for schools to make AYP:

- There must be at least 95% test participation on state assessments;
- students must be tested annually in grades 3-8;
- each school must meet or exceed the state’s Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) in Reading/English, Language Arts and Mathematics;
- progress must be shown on a second indicator for each subgroup and school. (United States Department of Education, 2004)

The main purpose of AYP is to hold each school and district accountable for student achievement, (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). AYP is one of three components of Georgia’s Single Statewide Accountability System (GSSAS). Other components of the GSSAS are the following: the performance index determination that is based on progress of the

performance from the previous year to the current year, and performance highlights that provide information such as recognition of schools and districts.

Accountability and High-Stakes Testing

Assessment is not a new concept for educators, but the involvement of accountability agencies, legislatures, and the national government in mandating standards, curriculum, and assessment instruments is new (Sewall, 1997). Testing is described as a “natural part of education;” teachers have traditionally administered classroom tests, quizzes or essays, and states have used high-stakes testing to determine if students will graduate from high school or be promoted to the next grade level (Goldberg, 2004, p. 361). Nevertheless, it has been over the last 15 years that certain states and the federal government have pushed for accountability policies based on testing. Nichols, Glass and Berliner (2005) stated that standardized test scores are the indicator used to hold school districts and the schools within them accountable for student achievement under the federal mandate *No Child Left Behind*. As a result of this federal mandate, every state is required to establish an accountability system with consequences attached to student performance. Nichols, Glass, and Berliner (2005) further stated that one main belief behind this accountability system is that the pressure for results using high-stakes testing will increase student achievement.

High-stakes testing is a publicly reported measure used in all school districts (Fielder, 2003). High-stakes testing “provides a way to measure whether or not schools are reaching a distinguishable goal” (Fielder, 2003, p. 100). Popham (2004) defined high-stakes testing as tests that have “serious consequences for either the students who take the test or for those who prepared students for that test” (p. 63). What makes a test high stakes? According to Popham (2004), high-stakes tests can prevent a student from being promoted to the next grade level as a

result of the score and prevent a student from receiving a diploma because of a low score. High-stakes tests establish parameters used to rank schools or school districts based on the score.

High-stakes testing is believed to be a method that allows schools and states to track student achievement (Samuelsen, 2001). Tracking would provide opportunities to evaluate how well students, teachers, and schools are performing. Abrams and Madaus (2003) believed student gains toward curriculum goals can be a useful piece of information obtained from test results.

The Principalship

As the roles and practices of school leaders are brought to focus by *No Child Left Behind* and other reform acts, it is found that very little research exists regarding what principals perceive as effective practices to transform elementary schools that fail to make AYP. Many questions often arise regarding the job duties of school administrators:

What do educational administrators do? How would one characterize their role? Obviously, there is no one answer to these questions? Administrators are decision makers. They are leaders. They are organizers. They facilitate the work of faculty. They make up budgets, hire and evaluate teachers, and allocate resources. They deal with students, parents, and school boards. (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1998, p. 14)

Definitions of the principal's roles and responsibilities have changed over time, and there is evidence that the roles will continue to change with the development of new school improvement strategies (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 24). However, schools must continue to rely on the leadership of the school principal no matter the strategy being considered. An effective principal remains one of the most important factors in the success of a school. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) conducted an analysis of 70 studies to find that 21 leadership duties were significantly related to increases in students' achievement. Kelley, Thornton, and Daugherty (2005) pointed out that "education leadership is possibly the most important single determinant of an effective

learning environment” (p. 17). Hallinger and Heck (1996) targeted principal leadership as having a great impact on student learning and improvement. Concurrently, a study conducted by Burton, Brundrett, and Yeung (2005) found a broad consensus about the relationship between principal and school effectiveness.

Principals must possess a wide variety of leadership capabilities (Halawah, 2005). Cooley and Shen (2003) described the work of a principal as complex and overwhelming. Principals often find themselves involved in situations such as violence in school, social problems of students, and teacher demands. Regardless, they must handle those situations, the traditional roles, and the demands of policy mandates that are beyond their control. As a result of those mandates, Wiseman (2005) stated that principals are “being held accountable for activities, behaviors, and performance over which they have no individual control” (p. 2). O’Hanlon and Clifton (2003) suggested that principals must be capable of performing many tasks. Only those principals who are able to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can master the reforms that lead to student success (Fullan, 2002). Principals must be able to switch from one topic or situation to the next rapidly, but still give each their full attention. Wiseman (2005) described principals as the lifeblood of their schools. They do their job and make things run smoothly. As the lifeblood, principals are “good managers who adopt a managerial style of administration where they find and utilize the tools necessary to run an effective organization” (p. 37).

A study conducted by Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop, and Zeitoun (2003) assessed male and female educators and their reactions to the role and responsibilities of a principal. From their review of the literature, the role of the principal could be described as one of an instructional leader and school manager. As an instructional leader, the responsibilities of the

principal involve “monitoring instruction, guiding teachers, and planning professional development” (p. 508). In the role of school manager, the principal’s responsibilities can involve “planning, coordination, control, and operation of the school” (p. 507).

Over a three year period, Holland (2004) conducted a study of five practicing school administrators in their roles as instructional supervisors with managerial and professional responsibilities. From analysis of the data obtained from this study, Holland suggested:

Supervision means being held accountable as managers of standards-based learning mandated at state and district levels in addition to working with teachers as fellow professionals, coordinating and facilitating a decision-making process about how teaching and learning occur best in the school setting. (pp. 12-13)

The administrators in this study noted that they practiced supervision in a way that coincided managerial and professional responsibilities to attain the most effective learning and teaching. These administrators defined their new role of supervision as “being held accountable as managers.”

Harris and Lowery (2003) suggested that a principal is responsible for creating a school climate that supports the best instructional practices. Fink and Resnick (2001) believed that “the principal’s main responsibility is to establish and maintain a culture of learning and mutual dependency” (p. 4). Goodwin, Cunningham, and Childress (2003) conducted a study in which 375 principals completed a Likert Scale survey indicating their confidence level on 45 role descriptors associated with the role of a principal. From the analysis of those survey results, four themes emerged: role conflict, accountability conflict, autonomy conflict, and responsibility conflict. Participants indicated that conflicts exist between the roles of a principal as a “strategic leader, instructional leader, organizational leader, and political and community leader” (p. 28). Participants considered their primary role to be that of the instructional leader. The role of

strategic leader and organizational leader were synonymous. Depending on the participant, the roles of a principal as political and community leaders were a priority.

A principal has at least six different roles with certain responsibilities that come with each (Robbins & Alvy 2003). Three of these roles describe the principal as the learner, as the manager, and as the shaper of school culture. As learner, the principal “models for all within the workplace what lifelong learning means” (p. 3). When a principal fulfills these roles, certain responsibilities are associated with role fulfillment. The principal collaborates with teachers in the development and demonstration of effective teaching practices and demonstrates lessons to teachers and students. The principal participates in staff development sessions with teachers, as well as organizes and participates in study groups of different topics with teachers and parents. The principal also holds pre-conferences and post-conferences with teachers that involve observations, reflections, analysis of lessons, and the analysis of the principal’s observation techniques.

In fulfilling the role of manager, the principal is responsible for paying attention to the school’s physical environment. Robbins and Alvy (2003) divide the responsibilities of this role into four categories: the classroom, the school site, the community, and the support services. Principals are responsible for managing the instructional resources and classroom supplies required for teachers to teach the curriculum. At the school site, principals are responsible for ensuring that the school is a safe environment in which students can learn and that the school’s physical appearance is acceptable. In the community, principals are responsible for maintaining open communication between the school and community. In the support services arena, principals need to be knowledgeable of the available resources offered by the social service agencies within the community.

Principals are responsible for creating, shaping, and managing the culture of the school, and the school's success is often established by the values and beliefs of these principals. Brown and Anfara (2003) suggested that the role of a principal is one of a "visionary leader" (p. 16). As a visionary leader, the principal's responsibility is to "create and communicate a view of a desired state of affairs that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to an even better future" (Brown & Anfara, 2003, p. 16). A principal is expected "to cultivate and communicate a vision to teachers, students and the community, not just function as an instructional leader, problem solver, and resource provider" (Brown & Anfara, 2003, p. 17).

The roles of a principal are constantly changing (Rallis & Goldring, 2000). Rallis and Goldring proposed that principals as leaders have the following roles: facilitator, balancer, flag bearer and bridger, inquirer, learner, and leader. Table 2.2 lists the roles and the descriptions of each role.

Table 2.2

Six Principal Roles

Role	Description
Facilitator	The enabler of internal leadership. As a facilitator, the principal is responsible for enabling teachers to act and legitimizing the decisions teachers make in response to the demands for improving the school.
Balancer	The translator within the system. The principal is responsible for building relationships with the hierarchy, the central office, which makes the decisions to support or not to support the ideas brought forth by the principal.
Flag Bearer and Bridger	The principal is responsible for communicating to the community as well as building a bridge for communication between the community and the school.
Inquirer	The principal is responsible for asking questions about their school's activities as well as examining the decisions she/he makes.

Table 2.2 (continued)

Six Principal Roles

Role	Description
Learner	The principal is responsible for modeling reflective behavior.
Leader	The principal must have the ability to lead others.

Note: From *Principals of Dynamic Schools* by Rallis, S., & Goldring, E., 2003, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) described a principal that is perceived as a strong instructional leader as a “promoter of student achievement who influences a school-wide learning climate” (p. 52). Browne-Ferrigno (2003) conducted an exploratory study that described and analyzed 18 educators’ professional growth while participating in a principal preparation program. According to the results of this study, the participants described the roles and responsibilities of a principal as a facilitator between school and community, a listener, and a communicator.

In response to the increasing pressure to improve student achievement, Thornton and Perreault (2002) described the role of a principal as one of a data-based leader in response to the increasing pressure to improve student achievement. The principal must have basic data analysis skills, knowledge of statistics, and technology skills. A shared vision based on data is also a major requirement for the principal to function as a data-based leader according to Thornton and Perreault.

Effective school principals are described by Batchelder and Christian (2000) as instructional leaders who act as a “leader, coach, partner, supporter, and cheerleader” (p. 33). Blase and Kirby (1992) proposed that effective principals use strategies that include praise and high expectations for both students and teachers. These principals also encourage teacher

participation. Blase and Kirby further stated that effective principals support teachers professionally, allow teachers to teach, and stand behind decisions teachers make. Effective principals make suggestions, not demands, on teachers to find solutions to instructional or discipline problems. These principals also exercise a democratic style of leadership and model attitudes, behaviors, and expectations that are expected from subordinates.

Johnson, Livingston, Schwartz, and Slate (2000) examined research to identify the characteristics of effective schools. From that review, strong principals were characterized as leaders who were ready for change, able to restructure the way the school operates, and able to rethink their goals and priorities for the school. They were also willing to create a risk-taking climate for both teachers and students. Strong principals established and maintained meaningful community and parent involvement and plan for the future of the school. These principals developed and implemented policies that addressed student achievement. Strong leaders fostered effective instruction.

The role of principal as stated by Lee (1993) is that of a central person in the development of school culture and collaboration. According to Palestini (2000), effective principals have vision, structure the school as a workplace, share responsibility and decision-making, and provide guidance and support.

A study was conducted by O'Hanlon and Clifton (2003) to determine the characteristics of effective principals. Data were gathered from telephone interviews of principals and surveys of their teachers. Data analysis from O'Hanlon and Clifton's study (2003) described effective principals as optimistic, competitive, and reflective. These principals approached work positively and viewed competition as an opportunity for people to become their best. Effective principals reflect on past and present instructional and managerial methods. As cheerleaders for

their school, effective principals set a positive tone by encouraging positive actions and behaviors.

Although there are many characteristics of successful principals, Chrisman (2005) found that most successful schools have the following characteristics:

1. They create time for teachers to collaborate.
2. They provide teachers with structured support.
3. Principals at successful schools attend department meetings with the expectation that teachers will provide feedback during the meetings and let the principal know what he or she could do to help them.
4. They use school improvement programs and interventions as well as provide professional development opportunities for teachers.
5. They use data to adjust when student achievement has not risen. (p. 15)

Principals assume and carry out many duties and responsibilities to perform their role as leader of a school. In order to strive to be successful, principals must have high expectations for others as well as themselves.

Effective school leaders are principals who are able to create and sustain changes that continually enhance student achievement by working collaboratively with everyone involved (Blankstein, 2004). The characteristics of this type of effective leader included creating a culture in which failure is not an option for students and sustaining a culture that enhances student outcomes. Effective leaders work collaboratively with staff to make sure the resources and support needed is there for all students to be successful.

Principals should take the role of leaders of teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). As leaders of teachers, principals work to create opportunities for meaningful learning for teachers

about curriculum and other instructional issues. In this role, teachers must also be taught how to be leaders. Blegan and Kennedy (2000) proposed that principals and teachers work together since, ultimately, “it is teachers who decide what happens for students” (p. 2). A principal that works to support teachers provides opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles, expects teachers to become leaders, consistently supports decisions of teacher leaders, and creates a risk-taking school climate.

The role of a principal is one of a learning officer that develops teacher leaders (Ash & Persall, 2000). Principals have to possess certain skills including facilitation, team inquiry, and collaborative problem solving to become “leaders of leaders” (p. 17). Similarly, Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000) proposed that principals should take the role of “leaders of leaders,” and that as leaders of leaders, they have the responsibility of creating opportunities for teachers to lead, building professional learning communities, and providing quality, results-driven professional development (p. 30). These leaders of leaders also strive to enhance innovation and teacher expertise (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000).

Pajak and McAfee (1992) proposed that through democratic leadership that involves all stakeholders, principals can fulfill the role of curriculum leader. As a curriculum leader, the principal does not have to be an expert on every subject; the principal must have the ability to motivate those involved to develop and implement a curriculum that would impact student achievement in all areas.

One role of a principal is to empower others (Crow, Hausman & Scribner, 2002). As an empowering leader, principals “practice interactive, collaborative, and democratic leadership” (p. 189). As an interactive leader, the principal deals with the social relations within the school. A

collaborative principal deals with the political aspects of the school community, and the democratic principal is concerned with the moral aspects of being a leader.

Characteristics of successful school leaders include creating a mission and vision for school, collaborating with parents, and making data-driven decisions about school improvement, student achievement, and establishing effective classroom practices (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). Fullan (2002) suggested that a principal should be a cultural change agent. For principals to fulfill both roles, the principal must possess the ability to understand change, to develop the social environment, to learn in context, and to cultivate leaders at many levels. Principals must be able to improve relationships and have a moral purpose. The skill to create and to share knowledge and information must exist.

Two key roles of effective school principals are the ability to lead by example and the ability to enable others to lead (Sammons et. al., 1998). Additionally, Sammons et. al. (1998) stated that these principals must be able to serve as a source for ideas and show responsibility for important decisions. Effective principals must be dynamic communicators. Murphy and Pimentel (1996) defined a competent principal as one who manages time, facilities, and resources responsibly. A competent principal must also be able to work effectively with individuals and to develop an academic program that serves all children.

Hallinger and Heck (1998) explored research studies that examined the beliefs of principals and the effects of those beliefs on student achievement. Suggested from their review was that “if a principal desired to produce changes in people he/she must model desired behavior, provide individual support, provide intellectual stimulation, and foster group goals” (p. 36). Hallinger and Heck disclosed that principals must also conduct classroom observations and provide support and feedback.

In a series of five case studies, Mulford (2005) found that “effective principalship makes important, yet, indirect contributions to school outcomes” (p. 326). These contributions are influenced by the principal’s core values.

Leadership Capacity Building

Lambert and Harris (2003) proclaim that leaders needed to delegate work to build the worker’s capacity. Leaders often take on the work themselves or move too slowly; consequently, tasks are not accomplished in a timely manner. The main role of leadership is to act as a catalyst in creating a learning environment for teachers and students. Leadership can be carried out by empowering teachers who have the ability to lead. These teachers must have the ability to incorporate their ideas and the ideas of their peers into an environment that is conducive to change and to school improvement. Therefore, the most important job of effective school leaders becomes to build the capacity for this change and school improvement. According to Ponticell and Zepeda (2004), “without a leader committed to learning, an organization will never approach its potential for success” (p. 148). Successful leaders must be dedicated to school improvement.

Often leadership building is determined by focusing on the emotions of others. This focus takes place by observing perceptions of the positive relationships that exist between administrators and teachers. Success of leadership capacity building often results from the mutual understanding that every entity has the right, responsibility, and capability to work as a leader (Lambert & Harris, 2003). Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) disclosed that success in leadership is determined by how one does it and not necessarily what he/she does.

Leaders must focus on the process of setting goals for student learning, capacity, knowledge, moral purpose, and student achievement. This process is referred to as the “ripening

process where people's passion, commitment and know-how reach a breakthrough point" (Fullan, 2003, p. 102). Concurrently, this process is referred to as capacity building. Badaracco (2002) described capacity building as the competence to face everyday challenges, provide time for accomplishment, dig into the problem, and allow flexibility in the rules without breaking the rules. Extending his ideas, Badaracco further described capacity building as the ability to move forward gradually, evaluating, and then continuing to move forward.

Once the concept of capacity building is understood, one can begin to focus on building leadership capacity. Lambert and Harris (2003) stated that there are several basic assumptions needed to build leadership capacity. The first assumption is that everyone has a right to be a leader and can be a leader. Next, leadership must be viewed as different from the leader. One last assumption is that leadership is also about learning, sharing, and empowering others. Various tools that can be used for leadership capacity building include self-assessment, colleague-assessment, school-assessment, and training surveys (Lambert, 2003). Self-assessment surveys are those that provide information based on the opinions of leaders or individuals. Colleague assessments provide information relating to the ideas of the faculty and staff. School assessments provide information from the students, parents, or community. Training surveys provide insight into training or staff development that may need to be offered.

Knowledge creation is defined as a function of thinking, intelligence, and motivation. As one area increases, so should the other areas (Richards, 2002). Richards elaborates that the success of knowledge creation depends on the conditions that are maintained and monitored by the organization using various management strategies. These management strategies must be geared toward generating new knowledge by rethinking and reshaping what is known and looking into the unknown. Knowledge management is not just about moving knowledge around;

it allows competitive advantages, leads to dynamic occurrences, and enables a smarter workforce (Hatten & Rosenthal, 2000).

Successful schools work together with a common purpose with beliefs that they can do better. As these schools begin to focus on changes in student outcomes, the knowledge base of the school begins to grow, and the school begins to synergize or engage in imagination, creativity, and learning to create change (Lambert, 2003). According to Lambert, “All constituencies must be willing to talk, analyze, admit mistakes, tackle risky strategies, reflect on the experiences, and use results to drive instruction for improved student achievement” (p. 81). Successful schools demonstrate an overall commitment to strive for excellence.

Lambert (2003) asserted that schools and districts can create environments to build leadership capacity by hiring personnel with proven leadership capacity and assessing staff and school for leadership capacity. Schools must create opportunities for staff to get to know one another and develop a culture of inquiry. Both plans to implement building leadership capacity and the organization of leadership work must be present. Schools and districts must begin to model these approaches if they want their current process of capacity building to have sustainability. When schools and districts begin to model this approach, capacity building will become the basis for school and district improvement. Lambert (2003) stated that principals, teacher, parents, and students are key participants in the leadership capacity building process. When this team is lead by a skillful principal, it leads to the work of leadership and other features of capacity.

Another factor in capacity building is the empowerment of teachers. With empowerment, teachers are given the opportunity to explore their practices and control decisions regarding their improvement and change (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). Capacity building modeling must occur at

the school and school district so that teachers will desire to be empowered. To provide a clear picture of capacity building, one must draw upon actual experience in the use of site-based decision making and teacher empowerment (Harris & Muijs, 2003). Levin (1991) delineated the features of focus for a capacity building effort. There should be a unified goal and the ability to make school level decisions relating to the goals. There needs to be a measure of accountability and incentives or rewards for achieving goals. Data or other initiatives must be available. The capacity to address and resolve challenges must be present as well as the support of the school district and time to accomplish tasks.

For schools to build capacity, they must promote collaboration, empowerment, and inclusion (Campbell, Lindsay, & Phillips, 2002). When individuals feel confident in their own capacity, they began to promote capacity building in others. According to McLaughlin (1997), creating capacity in schools promotes academic, social, and emotional competence for all students. McLaughlin found that the success of capacity building depends on a school-wide emphasis on teaching and learning, use of performance data, teamwork, adequate time and resources, and a commitment to professional development.

Lambert and Harris (2003) stated that to build and to sustain leadership capacity, the following beliefs must be shared. Teachers, parents, and students can lead if given the opportunity. Success must be experienced by leaders. Support must be given for leadership capacity to grow, and individual leadership capacity grows organizational capacity. The ability of leadership capacity building lies within the organization. Fullan (2003) identified the following forces needed for sustainability: a continuous opportunity to learn; development associated with standards with practice in various environments; successful succession initiatives; and work conditions that are conducive to producing future leaders.

Sustainability exists in schools where there are relationships of trust, respect, and open communication with opportunities for collaboration and feedback provided. Leadership must be allowed to shift, as needed, depending on the problem or issue (Harris, 2002). Harris asserted that with these perspectives in mind, leadership must be about intervention and change, not position or authority.

Potter, Reynolds, and Chapman (2002) developed a research-based model for schools to use as an example as they approach capacity building and the quest for school improvement.

This model includes the following components:

- multi-level approaches that focus on the classroom and improving student achievement,
- securing strong leadership,
- adopting characteristics of high-reliability organizations,
- strong support networks,
- strong rules and processes, and
- a sense of early achievement (p. 250).

This model highlighted improving professional learning communities as an important aspect of building capacity. With these changes and increases in capacity building and school improvement, there should be noticeable increases in student achievement.

Chapter Summary

The review of literature began with a discussion of the policies in regards to educational reform. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* and Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* bring us to the most current policies regarding education reform. The main focus of this reform is to improve student achievement. *NCLB* holds each state accountable for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to the point that every child must meet all standards by the

2014 school year (NCLB, 2002). Adequate Yearly Progress is defined by the state of Georgia as the required annual measure that students must achieve on standardized or high stakes tests in the areas of math, language/reading, test participation, and a second indicator. The second indicator includes other academic areas and attendance.

As a result of *NCLB*, schools receive various consequences for not attaining AYP. These consequences increase each year of non-attainment. The consequences range from developing an improvement plan and public notice to a restructuring plan where the school is managed by a state agency.

The literature review reported that the roles, responsibilities, and duties of the principal are possibly the most important determinants of an effective learning environment (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). Principals must be capable of performing many tasks and their role should be that of instructional leader and school manager. The literature also revealed that the duties of effective principals include managing the facility, ensuring safety, serving as the visionary leader, and being the problem solver.

The review of literature ends with a discussion on leadership capacity building. The literature showed that effective leaders build capacity for change and school improvement (Lambert, 2003). Change and school improvement become the basis for improvement not only at the school level, but district improvement, as well. Leadership of the principal guides this improvement. From this spectacle of how student achievement and accountability are impacted by the roles and responsibilities of the principal, a study involving the perspectives of a principal is apparent.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a descriptive analysis of the perspectives of one elementary school principal whose school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the state of Georgia for three consecutive years. The researcher sought to understand the principal's perspectives of the relationship between school leadership and school success related to the duties and the responsibilities he performed. Although this principal's school failed to make AYP, his perspectives about leading a "failing" school are important. The findings of this study might help to provide examples of obstacles, trials, actions, concerns, and successes that this principal faced during the three years as principal when his school failed to make AYP. As an elementary school principal, the researcher hopes to have a deeper understanding of the implications of not making AYP and how that affects the work of the principal.

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because of the lack of research available within the education field on the perspectives of principals not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). A qualitative case study approach allowed the researcher to gather data regarding the perspectives of a principal whose school did not make AYP.

Chapter 3 details the methods that lead to the collection of the data used for this study. Chapter 3 includes (a) an introduction, a discussion of the (b) theoretical framework, (c) research questions, (d) rationale for qualitative methods, (e) design of the study, (f) data sources, (g) selection criteria, (h) data collection procedures, (i) data analysis, (j) profiles, and (k) chapter summary.

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism allows the researcher to study “the original meaning and influence of symbols and shared meanings that shed light on what is most important to people, what will be most resistant to change, and what will be most necessary to change if the program or organization is to move in new directions” (Patton, 2002, p.113). According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism is a “label for a relatively distinctive approach to the study of human group life and human conduct” (p. 1). Symbolic interactionism is comprised of three fundamental premises:

1. The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them.
2. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of the social interaction that one has with others.
3. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

(Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

Qualitative research is designed to tell a story that provides insight to the experiences of the participant (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research seeks to discover how all the components of the story work together. Qualitative data are analyzed through a descriptive process. The discovering of the effects of the principalship of this principal as it relates to the school’s success, student achievement, and AYP was best determined from a qualitative approach.

Through the data collection process of this study, the participant shared his experiences relating to *NCLB* and AYP. Specifically, the principal in the study constructed meanings regarding his principalship and his experiences with school improvement. This allowed the principal to develop meanings based on his individual perceptions of the principalship and AYP. The symbolic

interactionism framework was applicable to the study of this principal because the perspectives of this principal have a direct relation to the meanings that are derived from the experiences he encountered. Symbolic interactionism guided the data collection, interpretation, and analysis. “Symbolic interactionism details social conduct in real settings and captures the nature of social life” (Blumer, 1969, p. 5). This detail is noted through dialogue and makes one aware of the perceptions, feelings, and attitudes of others and helps to interpret their meanings and intent.

The interview process in this study allowed the researcher to engage in dialogue with the participant on an individual basis about the perceptions of his principalship and school success related to the duties and responsibilities he performed while his school failed to make AYP. Interviews were conducted in the conference room at the school of the participant. The first interview was important for beginning a discussion on AYP and building rapport with the participant. The second and third interview allowed the researcher to draw more data from the perspectives of the participant and to begin to look for codes and themes.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions while exploring the perspectives of an elementary school principal whose school failed to meet AYP:

1. What are the perspectives of one elementary principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP for three consecutive years?
2. What is this principal doing to address the failure to make AYP and the obstacles involved?
3. What are the perceptions of this principal related to his actions and how they affect student achievement?

4. What have been the most significant changes in the work of this principal since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?
5. What are the ways in which this principal has been held accountable?

Rationale for Qualitative Methods

Creswell (2002) described qualitative research as a research method that “examines a research problem in which the inquirer explores and seeks to understand a central phenomenon” (p. 52). Qualitative methods were used for this research study because the researcher, as the “inquirer,” sought to explore the principal’s perspectives of the relationship between school leadership and school success related to the duties and responsibilities he performed while his school failed to make AYP, “the central phenomenon” (p. 51). Exploration in qualitative research occurs when “little research is known in the literature about the phenomenon of the study and the researcher needs to learn more from its participants” (Creswell, 2002, p. 51). Through the use of qualitative methods, the researcher was able to explore the principal’s perspective and personal account of his principalship and his school’s failure to make AYP.

The objective in using qualitative methods in research “is to understand the meaning of an experience” and “how all the parts work together to form a whole” (Merriam, 1998, p. 16). As “the primary instrument for data collection and analysis,” the researcher obtains data by “physically going to the people, setting, site, and institution” (Merriam, 1998, p. 16). The principal’s words were the primary source of the data that were collected. Qualitative research method assumes “that meaning is embedded in people’s experiences” (Merriam, 1998, p.19). Through one-on-one interviews at the school, the researcher discovered the principal’s

perspectives on his principalship and its relationship to his lack of success with AYP. This study was descriptive in design.

The design of the study begins broad and narrows as it becomes more focused with the depth of the study. This case study contains a set of data about a specific case. This data is then compared and analyzed for patterns, themes, and categories. As the data are continued to be analyzed; patterns, themes, and categories continued to emerge. While case studies generally do not predict future behavior, findings have proven to be effective for informing policy (Merriam (1998). Real life situations that emerge from the experiences of participants in a case study help others to gain insight about particular occurrences.

This study sought to ascertain the perspectives of one elementary school principal. The data collected from this case were coded and analyzed for themes. From “information-rich” cases, one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research by illuminating the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 46).

Because this study was descriptive in design, there was only one participant interviewed, and the demographics of the system were “small rural,” the reader is cautioned not to make generalizations about the findings. This study should be considered descriptive in nature; hence, generalizations should not be made based on the findings.

Design of the Study

Patton (2000) explained that a case could be “individuals, groups, neighborhoods, programs, organizations, cultures, regions, or nation-states” (p. 447). Patton further stated that the actual term case study could refer to “the process of analysis or the product of analysis or both” (p. 447). Yin (2003) described a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 13). A case study approach was

chosen as the design for this research study on the perspectives of an elementary principal related to the principalship and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). According to Merriam (1998), case studies are “useful in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted” (p. 27). Furthermore, Merriam (1998) described case studies as being “particularistic because they focus on a specific situation or phenomenon and can offer insights to that specific situation or phenomenon” (p. 21). In many situations, the case study is used to “contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena” (Yin, 2003, p. 1).

Yin (2003) asserted that “interviews are essential sources of case study information” (p. 89). Furthermore, Yin described case study interviews as being “open-ended in nature because the participants are asked about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions” (p. 90). Open-ended questions provide the participant with the opportunity to “voice their experiences unconstrained” (Creswell, 2002, p. 204). Data were collected through three audio-taped, unstructured interviews at the principal’s school site. Interview questions were compiled prior to the collection of data. For the first interview, the participant was asked to respond to five open-ended questions that were derived from a previous study (Jackson, 2004). The second interview included questions that encouraged the principal to provide insights about the obstacles, trials, actions, concerns, and successes he experienced during the three years his school failed to make AYP. The third interview included questions that sought to address the change in the work of the principal since AYP and *NCLB*. The third interview also was a follow up to address any questions that arose from the analysis of the data from the first two interviews and to address any significant changes in the participant’s role as principal since the interview process began.

Data Sources

Creswell (2002) explained that the intent of qualitative research “is not to generalize to a population but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” and that to “best understand this phenomenon, the qualitative researcher purposefully or intentionally selects individuals and sites,” which is purposeful sampling (p. 193). Furthermore, Patton (2002) described the focus of qualitative research as “small samples or single cases that have been selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in-depth” (p. 46). Purposeful sampling “leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Qualitative studies are strengthened by pulling from a smaller sample. This non-probability sampling is used to solve qualitative problems by discovering occurrences, the implications, and relationships that links these occurrences.

Selection Criteria

Purposeful sampling is described as selecting participants based on the assumption that the researcher wants to gain insight from the sample with the most to be learned. The selection of the participant begins with the development of a set of criteria. The selected participant in this study was chosen using five criteria. From the target population of principals whose schools did not meet AYP for the 2007-2008 school year, the researcher:

1. Looked at the school districts in which 136 elementary schools did not make AYP were located.
2. Of these elementary schools, there were 25 that had not made AYP for 2 or more consecutive years.
3. Letters were sent to the 17 districts where the 25 schools that had failed to make AYP were located to determine their level of interest in participation in this study.

4. Of these 17 districts, two districts agreed to participate in this study, however, one of these schools made AYP after re-tests for the 2007-2008 school year, therefore that school and system was excluded from the study.
5. The principal of this school agreed to become the participant for this study.

The researcher was able to gain access to the Davenport County School District (pseudonym) and Scott Elementary (pseudonym). Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the school, district, and principal used in this study. Davenport County is a rural school district in Georgia with 1,659 students. Scott Elementary is a K-5 elementary school with 832 students. The participant for this study was Jackson Smith (pseudonym), an elementary school principal from Scott Elementary, a Title I School. The school is located in the Davenport County School District in the State of Georgia.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission for research and data collection was sought and approved from the Davenport County School District. The researcher assured the confidentiality of the principal, school, and district. Data were collected from two primary sources and one secondary source. The two primary sources of data collection included three interviews and field notes from these interviews. The secondary source of data collection was the collection of demographic data from various school reports and the school report card found on the Georgia Department of Education web-site.

The participant for this study, an elementary school principal whose school did not make AYP, was formally interviewed three times. The interviews were conducted with open-ended questions. These open-ended interview questions supported the organization of the overall research questions that guided this study. It is important that the data gathered during the

interviews in this study are clearly understood. The data had to be verified for meanings, understandings, and interpretations. Open-ended questions that probed the participant for in-depth answers were a natural means of data verification. By probing the participant with pre-determined questions, the researcher was allowed to verify comments for interpretation and meaning.

Effective interviews require good listening skills and well written probing questions. This type of interview yields detailed descriptions of the participant's experiences. In qualitative studies, the interview process is unstructured, semi-structured, or highly-structured with open-ended questions. The researcher sought the knowledge and expertise of the participant by asking open-ended questions, therefore allowing the participant to become a connected part of the study. Table 3.1 illustrates both the research and sample interview questions and the corresponding number of the interview where they were used.

Table 3.1

Research and Sample Interview Questions Divided by Interviews

Interview 1

I. Research Question 1

What are the perspectives of one elementary principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP for three consecutive years?

Interview Questions

1. Describe any changes in testing requirements for your school since *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and AYP.
2. What impact does the Highly Qualified Teachers requirement have on your school?
3. What are your thoughts relating to the requirements of students with disabilities and not making AYP?
4. How does your vision guide your total school program?
5. What role has the central office played in your quest for AYP?

Table 3.1 (continued)

Research and Sample Interview Questions Divided by Interviews

Interview 2

II. Research Question 2

What is this principal doing to address the failure to make AYP and the obstacles involved?

Interview Questions

1. Please share any reflections, thoughts, or changes since we last met regarding your principalship?
2. What obstacles have you faced as principal while striving to achieve accountability mandates such as AYP and how are you dealing with these obstacles to include:
 - 1) Time Issues/Lack of Time
 - 2) Attendance Issues
 - 3) Students with Disabilities
 - 4) Low Parental Involvement
 - 5) Low Morale
 - 6) Funding
 - 7) Management Duties Conflicting with Instructional Duties
 - 8) Stress
 - 9) Bureaucracy
 - 10) Highly Qualified Teachers
 - 11) Conflicting Programs
 - 12) Paperwork
 - 13) Pressure/Stress
 - 14) Other Obstacles
3. How are you coping with increased mandates for accountability?
4. How are you coping with the changing nature of your work as instructional leader?
5. What are your thoughts on remaining in the principalship due to accountability mandates?

III. Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of this principal related to his actions and how they affect student achievement?

Interview Questions

1. How do you perceive your role and how does this role affect student achievement?
2. How has accountability mandates changed your role as leader?
3. What changes have taken place in your relationship with stakeholders since not making AYP?
4. What leadership roles do you assume?

Table 3.1 (continued)

Research and Sample Interview Questions Divided by Interviews

5. Describe any sense of desperation you may have experienced since not making AYP?

Interview 3

IV. Research Question 4

What have been the most significant changes in the work of this principal since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

Interview Questions

1. Please share any reflections, thoughts, or changes since we last met regarding your principalship?
2. How have the implementation of *NCLB* and *AYP* affected your role as instructional leader to include the following areas?
 - 1) Testing
 - 2) Data Analysis
 - 3) Instructional Support
 - 4) Other
3. Describe any increases in stressors or pressures since the onset of *NCLB* and *AYP*.
4. How have the pressures of accountability affected your stress level?
5. How has your time spent in the classroom changed since *NCLB* and *AYP*?

V. Research Question 5

In what ways has this principal been held accountable?

Interview Questions

1. What does accountability mean for you and your school?
2. Describe how your role affects student achievement?
3. How has accountability affected your staff morale?
4. How has accountability affected your time management?
5. In what ways do you believe your evaluation as an effective principal has changed since AYP?

The collection of data occurred from December 2008 through June 2009. Interviews were conducted in seven-week intervals during the months of December, February, and May. The researcher allowed the participant to select the time, date, and place for the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the principal's

office at a time that was convenient to the principal. Interviews were audio-taped. The first interview began with a description of the study along with the responsibilities of the researcher and the participant. The participant stated that he understood his role in the study and agreed to participate. Each set of interview questions allowed the researcher and the participant to develop rapport and to continue to pursue the perspectives of the principalship of the participant. Data were transcribed from the audio-tapes of each interview. After each interview, the principal was given the opportunity to review the transcripts. This review was done prior to the next interview taking place. The principal was asked at each additional interview to extend any ideas or concepts in which the researcher needed more information or clarification. Also following each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings and determined if any other questions needed to be added to the next interview protocol. This process was repeated for the third interview. Although each interview had a pre-determined set of questions to be asked of this principal, other questions based on the content of prior interviews were added. All data were kept locked and secured available only to the researcher.

The next primary data collection method included field notes taken by the researcher during the interviews. Fieldnotes were taken during the interviews to be used in comparison to the audio-taped data and transcripts. Furthermore, field notes allowed the researcher to note important aspects and insights prior to formally analyzing the data. Additionally, the researcher collected artifacts from the school site. These artifacts included school improvement plans, memos, newsletters, and letters written by the principal. Other artifacts that were secondary in nature included school pamphlets and flyers. Secondary sources of data also included demographic data such as the system's report card, school report card, and other reports generated by the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE), the school, and the school system.

Data Analysis

The descriptive method of data analyses was used to examine, categorize, compare, and summarize data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Qualitative data analysis allowed the data to be broken down to find characteristics, concepts, and structure that could be used to look for connections between the concepts (Merriam, 1998). These concepts could be compared conceptually and abstractly to create categories. Merriam (1998) further stated that data analysis was an ongoing process that began with the first interview. The researcher noted patterns, commonalities, differences, and similarities in comments and responses from the participant. A sample of collected data and how they were grouped into categories are noted in Table 3.2

Table 3.2

Sample of Transcription of Interviews

Key Words	Categories
Benchmark testing tells the teachers where they are	Accountability
Held accountable for getting certain things done	Accountability
Accountability has made us look more at each individual child	Accountability
We have inclusion and co-teaching processes	Students with Disabilities
Professional development is geared toward struggling subgroups	Subgroups
We are data driven	Change in Work

As emergent themes developed from these categories, they were discussed with the participant who clarified or expanded on the themes. As data continued to be gathered, analyzed, and compared, consistent themes continued to emerge. Data continued to be compared and

analyzed to develop categories and to note the emergence of new categories. As themes and categories developed, data continued to be labeled and sorted. The researcher also used data from transcribed interviews, artifacts, and field notes as part of the ongoing analyses to develop follow-up questions and to continue seeking themes, concepts, and ideas. The field notes, transcribed data, and artifacts assisted in understanding the perspectives of the principal. The procedures for data analysis were the following:

1. Field notes, artifacts, and transcribed data, were read, reviewed, and organized for purpose related to the principalship and AYP.
2. Data were analyzed for categories, common themes, and concepts.
3. Data were organized to clarify observations and words spoken during the interviews.

By noting similarities and differences, data could be categorized clearly. The process of coding data into categories followed after each interview. The data were used for the basis of interpretation of the perspectives of the participant. An interview guide was developed to be used for each interview (See Appendix A). The interview questions were open-ended. These questions were compiled prior to the interviews. Questions were developed to allow probing, in depth perspectives, and deeper explanations. Table 3.3 lists examples of open-ended questions.

Table 3.3

Examples of Open-Ended Questions

Questions

What impact does the Highly Qualified Teachers requirement have on your school?

How does your vision guide your total school program?

How are you coping with increased mandates for accountability?

How are you coping with the changing nature of your work as instructional leader?

What are your thoughts on remaining in the principalship due to accountability mandates?

Table 3.3 (continued)

Examples of Open-Ended Questions

Questions

In what ways do you believe your evaluation as an effective principal has changed since AYP?

How has accountability affected your time management?

What are your thoughts on remaining in the principalship due to not making AYP?

How has the label of “failing” affected you and your school?

What does accountability mean for you and your school?

Describe how your role affects student achievement?

How has accountability affected your staff morale?

Fieldnotes and artifacts were also collected during each interview. The field notes helped to provide a further explanation of the artifacts. Table 3.4 contains specific examples of artifacts collected during the interviews.

Table 3.4

Artifacts Collected During Interviews

Artifacts

Davenport County School Improvement Plan 2008-2009

Davenport County Title I Plan 2008-2009

Davenport County 2007-2008 Georgia Public Education Report Card

Scott Elementary Parental Involvement Plan 2008-2009

Scott Elementary Parent Meeting Memo

Profiles

This section reveals the profiles of the participant Mr. Jackson Smith, the school, Scott Elementary, and the district, Davenport County School District. Data regarding enrollment, ethnic make-up, and the background of the principal are stated in this section.

Profile of the Participant

Jackson Smith has been principal at Scott Elementary in Davenport County School District for six years. Mr. Smith has been an administrator for 23 years and in education for 35 years. He did not have any experience as an Assistant Principal. He had five years of elementary school teaching experience. Mr. Smith holds an Education Specialist Degree in Administration and Supervision. Mr. Smith was a high school principal prior to being an elementary school principal. He spent seven years as a central staff administrator with federal programs.

During the interview, the participant appeared relaxed. Mr. Smith spoke freely and clearly to all research questions. He was willing to offer clarification as needed. He was able to provide “real-life” examples throughout the data collection. Both the researcher and the participant made notes regarding thoughts they wanted to elaborate later in the interview. The participant was provided a list of questions at the beginning of the interview and often referred back to this list as the questions were read and explained. The participant took advantage of pauses by the researcher to elaborate and clarify thoughts.

Profile of the School

Scott Elementary served 832 students from kindergarten to fifth grade for the 2007-2008 school year. The average teaching experience of the 58 teachers within this school was 17 years. Scott Elementary has been a Title I school for five years. Table 3.5 lists the student demographics by subgroups.

Table 3.5

Student Demographics

<i>Subgroups</i>	<i>Percentage of Enrollment</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Economically Disadvantaged	71.00%	591
African-American	42.67%	358

Table 3.5 (continued)

<i>Student Demographics</i>		
<i>Subgroups</i>	<i>Percentage of Enrollment</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Caucasian	48.92%	408
Students with Disabilities	11.18%	92
Other	8.41%	67

Seventy-one percent of the students enrolled at Scott Elementary were eligible for free or reduced meals. The ethnic makeup of the students in this school was 42.67% African-American, 48.92% Caucasian, and 8.41% Other. The school’s population of students with disabilities was 11.18%. For three consecutive years (2005-2008), Scott Elementary had not made AYP due to the academic performance in reading and math of the students with disabilities.

Profile of Davenport County School District

Davenport County School District had a student enrollment of 1,659 for the 2007-2008 school year. This rural district in Georgia consists of three schools: one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school. Scott Elementary School is the only elementary school in this school district, but not the only school that did not meet AYP. The ethnic makeup of the students within this school district was 44% African-American, 49% Caucasian and 7% Other. Davenport County has a population of approximately 11,794 with the county land area covering over 440 square miles. The main industry for Davenport County is production of outdoor products. The median average income is \$26,097 while the per capita income is \$14, 197.

Trustworthiness

Merriam (1998) asserted that it is important that trustworthiness be established in qualitative study. Trustworthiness is accomplished when the researcher “persuades the reader that the findings are worth paying attention to and taking account” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.

290). The areas that assist the reader in establishing trustworthiness are validity, reliability, generalizability, and neutrality.

Validity refers to the production of reliable and valid data. In this study, the researcher gathered data from several sources that included, transcriptions of the three interviews, fieldnotes taken by the researcher, and artifacts such as the school improvement plans and state of Georgia report card data. This triangular comparison or triangulation of data increased the validity of the study (Stake, 1995). Triangulation allows the data from the study to be compared through more than one source. The findings were further validated by allowing the participant to address, review, clarify, and/or correct the data collected from the transcribed interviews. The participant was allowed to respond to the transcripts of the interviews at the beginning of the second and third interview. The participant was also allowed to respond to the transcript of the third interview three weeks after that interview was completed.

Reliability refers to the consistency of the findings of the study. Consistency is established through the use of multiple data sources. Since the interviews in this study were conducted with a veteran principal, credibility was established to the findings. Each time that the participant reviewed, clarified, and/or corrected the transcriptions, the level of reliability increased for this study. The participant was also allowed to read the researcher's interpretation of the data collected from the interviews. The participant reviewed, clarified, and corrected the interpretation of the interviews as needed, therefore adding more reliability to the study.

Generalizability is based on the possibility of whether or not the study can be generalized to other cases. Because this study was descriptive in design, there was only one participant interviewed, and because the demographics of the system were "small rural," the reader is

cautioned not to make generalizations about the findings. This study should be considered descriptive in nature; hence, generalizations should not be made based on the findings.

Neutrality ensured that the researcher remained neutral and did not attempt to prove a particular perspective. The researcher must be committed to balanced and fair reporting (Patton, 2002). To ensure neutrality the researcher kept fieldnotes, kept a clear focus, and remained aware of personal reactions during the interview process. The researcher sought to detect any preconceived prejudices or opinions of the participant. By remaining focused on the purpose of the study, the researcher did not cross any ethical boundaries to remain neutral.

Chapter Summary

The case study approach using the descriptive method of data analysis was used to explore the perspectives of a principal relating to the principalship and not making AYP for three consecutive years. A qualitative interview approach allowed the researcher to focus on the meanings of the experiences of this principal.

Chapter 3 included a description of the research design of the study and the methods and procedures used in data collection and data analysis. Interview processes are described along with procedures used for developing themes and categorizing data. A table of artifacts listed items obtained by the researcher from the participant in this study. A profile of the participant is also provided. Artifacts, fieldnotes, and transcripts were used as data collection sources. This study was limited to one elementary school principal.

The purpose of this study was to provide a case study analysis of the perspectives of one elementary school principal related to the principalship and AYP. Additionally, the present study sought to understand the perspectives of what AYP and *NCLB* meant to the participant in regard to student achievement.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the three interviews with the participant. The researcher narrates participant explanations and answers to illustrate individual responses to key interview questions and to present common themes emerging from the interviews.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to provide a descriptive analysis of the perspectives of one elementary school principal whose school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the state of Georgia for three consecutive years. The researcher sought to understand the principal's perspectives of the relationship between school leadership and school success related to the duties and the responsibilities performed. The duration of the study was one year. Although the school involved in this study failed to make AYP, it is important to note the leadership perspectives involved in leading a "failing" school. The findings of this study provide examples of obstacles, trials, actions, concerns, and successes that the principal faced when his school failed to make AYP for three consecutive years.

A qualitative case study approach facilitated the collection of data regarding the perspectives of a principal whose school did not make AYP. Data were collected using a qualitative case study approach, and the researcher used this approach to address the research questions. Multiple data sources included three-90 minute interviews, fieldnotes, and relevant artifacts.

While exploring the perspectives of an elementary school principal whose school failed to meet AYP, the researcher question sought to answer:

1. What are the perspectives of one elementary principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP for three consecutive years?
2. What is this principal doing to address the failure to make AYP and the obstacles involved?

3. What are the perceptions of this principal related to his actions and how they affect student achievement?
4. What have been the most significant changes in the work of this principal since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?
5. What are the ways in which this principal has been held accountable?

The study, conducted during the 2008-2009 school year, included three-90 minute interviews with one principal beginning in December 2008 and ending in June 2009. Through these interviews and artifacts collected, data reflected the perspectives of this elementary school principal about his principalship related to AYP and school improvement.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the three-90 minute interviews with principal, Jackson Smith. Responses to key interview questions and introduction of common themes are presented in this section. The results of all interviews conducted in this study were used to construct Chapters 4 and 5. Results of the data gathered from the interviews are presented in this chapter. This chapter is organized into six sections: (a) perspectives about the school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress, (b) obstacles faced while attempting to attain AYP, (c) coping with the failure to make AYP, (d) perceptions of the principal's role and its effects on student achievement and the education process, (e) perceptions of changes in the work of the principal, and (f) accountability of the principal.

Perspectives about the School and the Policies Governing Adequate Yearly Progress

The first research question sought to uncover the principal's perspectives about this school and the policies governing the failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress. To help uncover his perspectives during the first interview, the researcher asked the principal, Jackson Smith, specifically about testing requirements, highly qualified staff, students with disabilities, school vision, central office support, change in philosophy, accountability, funding, subgroups, and communication of AYP expectations to teachers.

Testing Requirements

When asked about changes in testing requirements for his school since *NCLB* and AYP, Mr. Smith's response was "there are more required benchmark testing and formative assessments." He commented on how his teachers were using the data obtained from those test results to drive classroom instruction. In his opinion, this was important in addressing the demands of *NCLB* and AYP. In response to testing requirements, Mr. Smith stated:

There is more emphasis placed on assessment, not just the summative, but more emphasis on formative assessment now than ever. This is used to guide the instruction. The first thing that we do every school year is that teachers take their new group of students, analyze the CRCT data from the Spring to help guide their instruction.

Jackson Smith goes on to say that they do not teach the test. They use, instead, the GPS as their curriculum. However, he further responded:

Administrators, teachers, and staff look at the CRCT, tested domains, areas that are tested, and we look at the weights of those domains as far as testing. The heavier the weight for that area, the more emphasis these areas are given. These are the ones that you hit hard and heavy, and the teachers pace out their year. We make sure we focus on these areas before test time. Areas with less weighted domains can wait until after test time. The test carries so much "weight." We also do benchmark testing throughout the year and we use the On-Line Assessment System (OAS). We use the level three test items from past CRCT released by the Department of Education to create benchmark tests and to show us our weaknesses and strengths.

Mr. Smith believes that teachers are being held more accountable with the assessments.

Jackson Smith also commented that they are doing more benchmark testing as well as more formative assessments. He asserted:

Benchmark testing tells the teachers where they are with the instructional process for the year. It tells them if they are where they need to be and which standards they need to cover. Benchmarks give a good indication of how the students are mastering standards before they get to the CRCT. We are trying to make them more accountable by the way we assess some of the things they do. Last week in talking to the teachers about the benchmark testing, I didn't see any real apathy. I think it was "eye opening" for a lot of them, to see where they were and where they need to be.

Mr. Smith perceives that his staff has become more focused on instruction and achievement since the testing requirements have become more stringent.

Highly Qualified Staff

The effort it takes to recruit highly qualified staff has changed for Principal Smith. He explained that more effort is required to recruit beginning teachers and "folks already in field." Within his school, he thinks that "critical areas" (i.e., a particular grade or subject matter) could use a teacher with a new perspective just out of college. These individuals would be excellent for the positions and may have been hired in the past. However, now Mr. Smith perceives that the afore mentioned person may fit the availability of the category, but hiring would not be an option. If these individuals were hired they would not be highly qualified, and if they remained on staff without becoming highly qualified, federal funding could be jeopardized. This tough decision has taught him to hire "folks already in field" with the characteristics that he desires to see within his school staff. It makes a little different effort on recruitment and we try to get folks in field already. Regretfully, Mr. Smith stated:

We have had a couple of applicants that we felt like would really be good, but they lacked just a little bit being finished with their qualifications and we were not able to go ahead and hire them. One thing we are doing now is only hiring highly qualified "folks." The staff that is not highly qualified, which is minimal in numbers; we are trying to get

them highly qualified. Anyone new coming on board will be highly qualified and will know what is expected of them early in the “ball game.”

Mr. Smith tries to hire beginning teachers just out of school. His goal is to move them into some critical areas where they can “sort of change” the tone of that particular grade or subject matter.

“Well, one thing we are doing now is hiring highly qualified folks” was a comment made by the Mr. Smith. His school does have a small number of teachers on his staff that are not highly qualified. There is an improvement plan in place for those teachers that are not currently considered highly qualified. He considers himself fortunate to have five student teachers working within his school this year. He thinks that those five student teachers could possibly meet their needs if they needed to hire anybody for the school year. Mr. Smith reflected, “It helps that those student teachers are local or have ties with this community.” He hopes that these student teachers will choose to pursue their teaching careers at his school so that he can “train and groom” them. “Highly qualified criteria makes a little different effort on recruitment and we try to get folks in field already,” according to Smith.

Students with Disabilities

Mr. Smith does not think that it is acceptable that the CRCT results of the students with disabilities subgroup are allowed to keep a school from making AYP. It is perceived that there should be an alternative way of assessing this subgroup when determining AYP status. He goes into more detail about this perception by making the following comments:

I just think it ought to be a different way that we deal with the students with disabilities. I just think if the AYP process was changed to truly reflect what *No Child Left Behind* means, I just think that would help us. I think the assessment process is unfair. It is unfair to declare a school non-AYP compliant when it is totally based on some things that this subgroup and *No Child Left Behind* program have caused.

Mr. Smith does believe that *NCLB* has helped to raise expectations for the students with disabilities; however, he reflected, “You still have students with low IQ’s like 54 that cannot

read yet they have to take the CRCT.” He questions the fairness to those students with disabilities. Smith sees how hard a lot of his special needs students apply themselves but they still fall. He expressed that this concern could negatively impact their self-esteem. “It just seems unrealistic to expect all of these students with disabilities to be on grade level, when maybe that child really may not be capable of reaching that goal,” commented Smith. He also expressed concern that the pressure on the teachers and the associated frustration from placing high expectations on a child that they know is not able to achieve those expectations. Further disturbed by this question, Mr. Smith replied:

I just don't think it is right for students with disabilities to keep you from making AYP. I think there should be another means of assessing them, in terms of how they make the school look as not making AYP. I just think it ought to be a different way that we deal with the students with disabilities. I think sometimes it is just not realistic to expect all of the students to be on grade level. I think a lot of them do try as hard as they can, muster the energy to try, but they still come up short.

“The problem is we just haven't been able to make it with students with disabilities, but we are trying,” stated Smith. He elaborated, “Our staff development is geared toward working with this and similar subgroups.” Smith concluded, “As a result of this staff development, I have seen a major improvement in the staff's expectations for the special education students and their achievement has increased.”

The students with disabilities subgroup continues not to make AYP which has caused some teachers “to have low morale and feel the blame for not making AYP.” Mr. Smith and his administration team have focused a significant amount of staff development geared to the students with disabilities, differentiation, co-teaching classrooms, standards-based classrooms, and higher expectations for the teachers. He perceives that special education teachers, in turn, have had “higher expectations for the students and it is making a difference.”

School Vision

The vision for his school has changed since the implementation of *NCLB*. Mr. Smith shared, “Our system is going through district accreditation and we sat down as a system leadership team and came up with a vision for the school system.” In fact, the school’s current vision is the same as the school system’s vision, for “students to be successful and to prepare them to be successful citizens in the future.” This vision was developed by the system leadership team during the district accreditation process. It (the vision) sets the goals for Smith. This vision is used as a guide for planning and selecting programs for students. Explaining the vision he stated, “We are looking at where we want to be down the road.” Smith also shared, “We want our children to all be successful and we look at our planning for the children and in selecting programs that we get and things like that.” Our vision sets the goal for the school and the overall school program.

Central Office Support

Central office staff and administrators have offered support in many ways for Smith’s school. The central office has become more involved in the daily operations of the school by using different staff assessments to identify areas of weakness to guide staff development courses. The central office helps to align the curriculum between all of the different schools in the county. The central office improves effectiveness in system schools by sharing best practices in the system and by enlisting such agencies as Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA). According to Mr. Jackson Smith, “RESA has helped us analyze our data and from that analysis develop our goals that drive our instruction.” He added that the central office did not just step away and let RESA do this. “After we developed the goals with RESA, the central office met

with each grade level and asked what could they do to help the teachers within those grade levels reach the goals,” Smith stated.

Change In Philosophy

The philosophy of Mr. Jackson Smith’s school has changed from that of a traditional school to a more performance based school. He is really pushing this change in philosophy. Despite his efforts, some teachers are finding it hard to change; however, this change is occurring. Teachers are “moving forward.” Reflecting on the change, Mr. Jackson Smith stated, “It is a big change in philosophy for most of the teachers, because many are veteran teachers that have been very traditional for years and it is just very difficult to transition.” Acknowledging the challenge, he affirmed, “We are not going to let the change run us off, let’s put it that way. That it is not going to cause anybody to quit, I am assuming we can handle it.” Mr. Smith is changing the idea that “comfort feels like success” within the school. He elaborated on what he perceives has changed with the following analysis:

I think one thing that has changed is the faculty as a whole. We all have come to realize that special education children are all of ours. It is not just a special education teacher’s child, or a homeroom teacher’s responsibility to teach that child. Sometimes I don’t think that we used to really expect as much out of the children but we realize now that we have to expect them to achieve. I think that has been a change for all of us, even though we wanted them all to succeed, I don’t think sometimes that we fully challenged them. We didn’t expect as much as maybe we should have and I see that changing.

Jackson Smith believes this change in philosophy has resulted in teachers challenging the students with disabilities. In the past, his faculty did not expect much out of these students academically, but now his staff has to expect students with disabilities to achieve. Where faculty may not have challenged these students in the past, Mr. Smith “can see those students being challenged more and being held to higher expectations by the whole faculty.”

Accountability

Mr. Smith thinks that accountability is going to drive the improvement of classroom instruction and teachers. The teachers are being held accountable for getting certain things done in the classroom. Elaborating on these expectations, he added, “There are instructional goals that have been set, and the teachers have to get to the point where the boys and girls have been exposed to certain material for benchmarks.” His school is using benchmark testing to help evaluate the teachers’ instructional process for the year. The benchmark testing tells teachers if they are where they need to be based on standards that must be covered. Mr. Smith talked with his teachers about benchmark testing and summarized, “I didn’t see any real apathy.” He perceives that it has been an “eye opening” experience for a lot of teachers to see where they were compared to where they needed to be with classroom instruction. “Accountability,” according to Mr. Smith, “has helped them to look more at the individual child and differentiating instruction.”

Accountability is perceived to be a “good thing,” according to Mr. Smith. He believes that his teachers perceive it as being positive but with it they have things being “crammed” or pushed on them. He perceives that the majority of the staff “see where we are trying to go.” Reflecting on the process Smith commented, “It has been hard getting everybody on staff on the same page, doing the same thing.” Accountability has made him and his staff more observant. Teachers realize that they have to look more at each individual child and not just a number. His staff further realizes that there is a name and a face that goes with that number, and they must take a look at their responsibility to help address the weaknesses of each individual child.

Jackson Smith believes that every subgroup in his school is pretty much affected by accountability. He knows that his school currently has three subgroups that are going to affect

the school making AYP, and they have tried to put more emphasis on instruction for these subgroups. Mr. Smith identified those three subgroups as “special education, economically disadvantaged students, and black males.” Smith and his staff have tried a detailed analysis of the data to see if weak strands or other problems can be identified. His school is doing everything it can to be successful. Smith emphasized, “I do not want to be reported as being a bad school when we know we are not.”

Smith reiterated that the accountability issue in the state of Georgia is a “good policy movement,” and he and his administrative team, consisting of the principal, assistant principal, literacy person, and guidance counselor are exerting all their efforts toward making all of the staff more accountable based on *No Child Left Behind* and AYP standards. He wraps up his perspectives on this topic by stating, “I mean we look as far as we can at individual children to try to assist them in achieving at a higher level.” Jackson Smith further interjected:

Accountability has definitely made the buck stop with me, the principal. I am held accountable for everything we do. I am held accountable for students that are not passing the CRCT and those that do. I now more than ever must find methods, procedures, and materials to enhance instruction and student achievement.

Mr. Smith believes that *NCLB* brings forth good ideas for student achievement. However, he feels the current law sets schools and schools systems up for disappointment. He elaborated:

I feel with the highest level of accountability that no school can make one hundred percent by 2014, even if you have got the best, somebody is going to have a bad day and it gets harder and harder as you go up the ladder. The higher and the closer you get to one hundred percent the harder it will get. We are still striving for that, but I just think it is strategically impossible. I think as administrators and teachers work hard to get all these children up, we know there are some that are not going to be able to achieve at that level. We are working hard with the time we have at school and we are trying to look beyond factors outside of school that we can't control. We have to do what we can do with the students while we have them at the school.

Mr. Smith perceives accountability is one of the things that is going to “drive the improvement of instruction as well as teachers.”

Funding

There was limited discussion on funding since there had been no negative effect on funding for Mr. Smith's school as a result of not making AYP. He stated, "The minimal change in funding has not negatively impacted his school." Some of the funding that he lost consisted of federal and entitlement money that in the past was used to pay for staff development and programs for the students. Funding lost because of failing to meet AYP has been replaced by funds from other areas within the school system. Additional funds were received when the school was placed in "Needs Improvement." This funding has allowed the school to target areas of real need including supplemental instructional materials such as grade level readers, which were not funded before AYP failure. However, Mr. Smith does realize that funding is becoming "dimmer" every day. He recognizes that many programs are going to be cut or going to be moved around. He believes that cutting programs is going to mean reduction in personnel, increasing the class size, and certainly that is going in the "wrong direction."

Subgroups

Smith thinks that "NCLB expectations for the students with disabilities subgroup are unreasonable and some of those students do not have the capability to successfully meet such expectations. The students with disabilities subgroup are insufficient academically as compared to groups such as the black male subgroup." Smith believes that his black male subgroup could succeed with sufficient motivation.

In the following quote, Mr. Smith expressed how he feels about his free and reduced lunch group:

We are trying everything that we can to help catch up our economically disadvantaged children. The biggest concern with these children is that they come to school unprepared. They lack many of those experiences that other children already have when they come to

school. It is not that they are not learning, they are just learning at a slower pace and over time that gap widens.

Mr. Smith and his staff are trying to help afford the economically disadvantaged subgroup success at their grade level. He and his staff also believe that “every child is capable of achieving at higher levels if exposed to the proper opportunities.”

Communication of AYP Expectation to Teachers

Jackson Smith uses staff development sessions at the beginning of the school year to communicate his AYP expectations to his faculty. He lets them know what is expected and the administrative team assists them in reaching these expectations. He reminds his staff that “it has got to be done, but we are behind you.” He meets with his staff at least once a month just to listen and to let them voice their concerns. Sometimes, he and his administrative team attend some of the staff development sessions with the faculty, particularly those sessions that involve the things that they expect them to do within the classroom. Mr. Smith supports staff development and shared, “It is good for my staff to hear the same things my administrative team and I are telling them from people outside of the school system.” Consequently, consultants are used to help communicate these concepts and assist the staff in meeting these AYP expectations.

System-wide, they adopted a little motto a couple of years ago, “whatever it takes,” so he and his administrative team have tried to just be as accommodating as possible and let the teachers know that they are fully behind them in every way. Mr. Smith realizes that it is not always moving as fast as he would like, but he knows that time and staff support are required, so “we just have to go with the flow sometimes.”

Section Summary

Jackson Smith appears to have a positive outlook about the testing requirements since the implementation of *NCLB* and AYP as it relates to accountability and using the data to drive

instruction. At the beginning of the first interview, he spoke proudly about his teachers using data yielded from *NCLB* and *AYP* testing results to help guide their individual classroom instruction. Smith further elaborated on this subject while discussing accountability. His teachers are using the testing data from *NCLB* and *AYP* in addition to benchmark assessments. To help with accountability, Smith's school system created benchmarks to help teachers assess where they are instructionally within their standards-based classrooms. This benchmark data as well as the data from *NCLB* and *AYP* test results have helped his teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, individualize their instruction of students, and drive their classroom instruction. This positive outlook changes as it relates to the *NCLB* and *AYP* testing requirements of students with disabilities. Jackson Smith perceives that the *NCLB* and *AYP* testing requirements for students with disabilities are unfair and unrealistic. During his first interview he elaborated on this perception when he described how hard his students with disabilities work in preparing for the CRCT even though they still fall short. He believes that this could be harmful to the morale of his students with disabilities and suggested that there should be an alternative way to assess them. He does not believe that *NCLB* and *AYP* testing requirements of students with disabilities should keep a school from making *AYP*, as evidenced throughout the interview.

In Smith's comments on subgroups, he reiterated his belief that *NCLB* and *AYP* testing requirements are unfair to students with disabilities. Smith did not voice any disagreement with the *NCLB* and *AYP* policies for economically disadvantaged and black male subgroups. Although he had no disagreement, he perceives that there is concern for the economically disadvantaged subgroup and their ability to attain *AYP*. According to Jackson Smith, those students do not have the same educational background as his other subgroups. The economically

disadvantaged subgroup starts off behind, and he and his staff have to spend time trying to catch them up. He perceives the other subgroup, black males, as “just being unmotivated.” He believes the black male subgroup has the ability to meet the *NCLB* and AYP policies but do not have the desire or initiative to do so.

There has been a change of philosophy and vision at Smith’s school. In the past the faculty viewed the educational needs of their students with disabilities as the responsibility of the special education teachers but not anymore. All teachers have adopted the school vision that has the ultimate goal of all their students being successful within the classroom and as citizens. With the school wide adoption or acceptance of this school vision, Smith has seen the faculty’s philosophy on the educational needs of students with disabilities change to focusing on the responsibility of the entire school, not just the special education teachers.

Although some funds were eliminated, Mr. Smith did not have a negative perception on funding. In fact, with the failure to make AYP, there was an increase in “needs improvement” funding. With this “needs improvement” funding, he was able to identify needed areas for improvement within his school. For example, staff development was provided to Smith’s staff using a variety of resources to improve identified weak instructional areas. According to Mr. Smith, those areas were determined from a deeper analysis of data from the CRCT, benchmark tests and staff assessments provided by the central office.” Also, it was during the staff development training that Mr. Smith communicated his AYP expectations to his teachers.

It was during the first interview that Mr. Smith positively discussed the many roles that the central office has accepted by trying to help his school attain AYP. Assistance from the central office expands “from using outside agencies like RESA to coming in and meeting individually with each group of grade level teachers.”

Obstacles Faced While Attempting to Attain AYP

The second research question sought to ascertain how the principal coped with the failure to make AYP and the obstacles he faced. To help uncover the answer to this question during the second interview, the researcher sought to ask questions about various obstacles and how Mr. Smith coped with them in light of his failure to make AYP. These obstacles included: time, attendance, students with disabilities, parental involvement, low morale, conflicting duties, stress, bureaucracy, conflict in programs, paperwork, and pressures.

Time

Jackson Smith cited time as always being an issue. Even though his teachers have a common planning time that allows each grade level of teacher to meet during school, as opposed to staying after school, he relented “it doesn’t seem to be enough.” He allows his teachers to meet during the day because “so many have young children and families that you know they want to get home to.” He feels that if he does not allow them to meet during the day, the staff’s family obligations would interfere with what they are trying to do, so it works in favor for all parties involved. The teachers have a common planning time and staff development occurs during the school day. Teachers are relieved of their classroom duties during the school day by substitutes who are hired so that the staff can work on school improvement goals.

Attendance

New policies and procedures have been developed at his school to address attendance. The school instituted a 15-day absence policy. A reminder of this policy is sent home by the school counselors after a student has been absent three days, five days, and ten days. Addressing school attendance, Mr. Smith shared, “The school is constantly trying to remind the students and their parents about the absence policy through newsletters and/or general correspondence.” Smith’s school tries to uphold the policy by using a school social worker and the legal system, if

needed. His staff has recognized a need to start early by stressing school attendance to the kindergarteners. They are trying to train them by getting them into the habit of coming to school regularly. Unfortunately, Smith had to address the staff about their attendance too. He had to remind them to make sure they are at the school on time and to be where they need to be.

According to Mr. Smith “no attendance policy has been created for the staff.”

Students with Disabilities

At Jackson Smith’s school they are using two methods of instructional delivery for the students with disabilities. In several of the classrooms, co-teaching occurs where the classroom teacher and the special education teacher are working together to develop the best instruction for all of those students within their classrooms. Using the resource delivery model, some special education teachers work with students outside of the general education classroom on time management and study skills.

Outside consultants such as Georgia Learning Resource Service (GLRS) have been used by the school to help train the teachers on the inclusion process. GLRS consultants come in and observe the regular and special education teachers involved in the co-teaching process and provide feedback to them about what they see occurring in the classroom. Evaluating this process, Mr. Smith remarked, “Providing the teachers with opportunities for growth has been very helpful.” Smith has seen a “big improvement” in the staff’s expectations for the special education students. Remorsefully, he commented, “It’s not like our general population or even our black males, or whatever, are keeping us from making it now, the problem is we just can’t make it with students with disabilities, but we are trying.”

Parental Involvement

The parental involvement at Mr. Smith's school is not remarkably low. The school is constantly having activities during the school day where they have good parental participation. For example, they have a program called "lunch and learn" where the parents come in and eat lunch with their children and then they go to a classroom for a learning-type activity. Usually over a hundred parents attend this program during the middle of the day. He and his staff consider themselves to be very fortunate in having that kind of support from their parents. He attributes this parental involvement participation "to the newsletter and direct invitations that are sent out to parents."

Another effective mode of parental involvement occurs through the school's discipline policy. The opportunity for a direct invitation exists if a child is sent home for any kind of disciplinary action. The school requires a parent or guardian to come to the school with the child, "so we get them one way or the other. We try to anyway," expressed Mr. Smith. The parent must come to the school for a conference in order for the child to be able to return to school.

Low Morale

Mr. Smith perceives that there has been a turnaround this year in teacher morale, even though there is "a lot of pressure on the teachers." He believes the "teachers know what has to be done to improve their AYP status so they just work at doing it." He and his administrative team try to be patient with the teachers and try to have a "give and take" relationship with them. They are flexible within the areas that they can be concerning the staff and firm with the other areas. Unlike such areas as scheduling which provides an opportunity to give, the Georgia Performance Standards and standards-based classrooms provide no opportunity to give. To help

with teacher morale, Smith and his administrative team have tried to create a “risk-taking environment” in which the teachers know that the administration will support them in everything if the teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Conflicting Duties

The new evaluation process and members of Mr. Smith’s administrative team have helped him with conflicting duties. The administrative team within his school uses “five by five” (five members from the team spend five minutes in multiple classrooms) evaluations that allow them to go quickly in and out of different classrooms over shorter periods of time. This evaluation process gives Smith and his administrative team some quick feedback on what is going on in the classroom. Jackson Smith shared the following, “My school is fortunate to have an academic coach to instruct and work with the staff.” He admits that there is “just so much that goes on in the office” that requires his attention. He has so much paperwork, and there are many times that he would much rather be in the classrooms, but there is always something that is “pulling him back to his office; something that is due, a parent, or a student to see.”

Stress

In response to stress, Mr. Smith stated, “I like to tell the staff that we will all laugh together, and we will cry together.” He and his administrative team try to be as understanding as they can with the teachers. Mr. Smith shared, “When we can modify things and give teachers extra time to complete a task, we try to do so.” He and his administrative team do “monthly celebrations with the staff” to let them know that they appreciate what the faculty have been doing. For instance, on a Monday they had a “working lunch where we brought in lunch for the teachers.” The teachers were able to work through lunch and accomplish a lot of things. Mr. Smith added that “this celebration created a non- threatening work environment where

everybody could talk and share with each other.” It also provided the staff with an opportunity to bond.

Bureaucracy

Mr. Jackson Smith believes that a “good of line of communication” is the key to dealing with bureaucracy. He realizes that they are able to do so much of what they need to help their staff because they are cooperative with the “folks above” them. Smith believes that he and his administrative team have a good relationship with “folks” in the central office and outside the school system with agencies such as Regional Education Services Agency (RESA) and Georgia Learning Resource Service (GLRS). “As a result of that good relationship with RESA and GLRS,” Mr. Smith acknowledged, “We get a lot of help with staff development.” Also, assistance with collecting and analyzing test data by RESA and GLRS has helped him and his staff tremendously.

Conflict in Programs

Instructional time is important so Mr. Smith and his administrative team had to look at moving around non-academic classes such as band. The students are able to participate in band without any loss of instructional time. They have incorporated Science Research Associates (SRA) corrective reading, so that all of their students have a period for reading. If students are in the Early Intervention Program (EIP) or have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), these students have a “double dose of reading.” They all have reading at the same time for one segment, so reading is going on in every classroom across the school and these EIP and IEP students have a second dose.

Mr. Smith reported that his administrative team has provided “a great deal of differentiation of instruction and small group instruction training with teachers.” To help

teachers with developmental reading and to help identify the reading or instructional level of a student, “a huge leveled library” has been funded for the school. With delight, Jackson Smith shared, “Teachers can use the materials within this library to work with the children in small groups, to meet them where they are and enrich them with grade level exposure.”

Paperwork

Jackson Smith described how they have eliminated as much paperwork as they possibly could. He explained, “Teachers now have access to creating and finding lesson plans online.” There have been measures that Mr. Smith and his administrative team have tried to streamline. Smith’s school already had the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, but this year they added their benchmark data to it. He thinks that since they have started the RTI process, “The teachers are developing a better understanding of the process and why data are so important.”

Pressures

Identifying pressures, Jackson Smith began by stating, “We have been under pressure trying to get certain things established and in place and changing in the instructional format.” Elaborating, he added, “It has been stressful for everybody. Well, naturally stress has impacted everybody, the teachers, the principals, and just about everybody in the school system, probably even down to the board members, and parents.” In response to pressures, Mr. Smith asserted, “Yes it has affected me because the buck stops here.” He started to name the different changes that his school has experienced from moving teachers from a traditional classroom to that of a standards performance based classroom, retraining teachers, yet trying to retain them. He does not consider the turnover rate for his school staff to “be very high.” In fact, he shared that he may bring in two or three new people a year. Jackson Smith summarized, “New people have already been trained in college but to bring three or four in and spread them out over a school the

size of his school does not do a lot to make a change in the philosophy or vision of teachers already within that grade level.”

Section Summary

Mr. Smith did not seem to have any problems with finding solutions or coping with any of the obstacles he faced while trying to make AYP. He began his second interview with a discussion on time since after school meetings were burdensome on teachers with personal responsibilities at home. Even though he considered time to be an issue, he tried to solve it by using the school day for the staff to hold needed grade level meetings and staff development. To help with student attendance, his school adopted a new 15-day attendance policy. As a student accrued absences, notices, calls and reminders of the policy were sent home to parents.

Handling students with disabilities was noted by Mr. Smith as a difficult obstacle to manage. Two instructional delivery methods were being utilized to address the needs of students with disabilities. These two methods were the co-teaching and the resource delivery method. An outside agency, Georgia Learning Resource Service (GLRS), was consulted to help teachers with learning and implementing co-teaching. Outside agencies such as GLRS and RESA have been consulted to provide professional development and instructional support to assist with this subgroup.

Mr. Smith maintains that a good relationship with the “folks above” or central office, RESA, and GLRS have been essential in analyzing data and securing effective professional development. RESA has provided training in analyzing and disaggregating data as well as providing data that were analyzed by their agency specifically for Mr. Smith’s school. GLRS has delivered training in differentiation and small group

instruction. This training has been geared specifically for students with disabilities. The central office has supplied funds that assisted with purchasing books for the development of a “huge leveled library” and other instructional manipulatives and initiatives.

Mr. Smith believes the morale of the staff has not suffered although the stress of achievement has increased. Smith cited creating a “risk-taking environment” with administrative support as a way to help maintain high staff morale. The reduction in daily paperwork and RTI paperwork have also been helpful. He noted having “monthly celebrations with the staff and working lunches where lunch is brought in for the teachers as morale builders and stress reducers.” Mr. Smith has assumed additional pressure and stress himself because he recognizes that the “buck stops” with him.

Coping With Failure to Make AYP

This section reported the adjustments and realities encountered by the principal in an effort to cope with the failure to make AYP. The contents of this section include changes in the nature of work, accountability mandates, effects of a failing school label, morale, parental involvement and support, dark thoughts, negative staff concerns or issues regarding AYP, AYP policies, staff training and development, and reprimands due to accountability.

Changes in the Nature of Work

Jackson Smith and his administrative team have to restructure how they do things and rethink how they do everything. “Time management” is an example he gives in which they have to rethink and restructure how they are going to create enough time within his and the administrative team’s schedule to go into the classrooms to evaluate teachers. Administrators are trying to make sure they meet the demands for accountability. He stated, “It has really got to the point where it really has changed our total thought and work process in trying to get things

done.” Smith and his administrative team’s agenda to run the school have changed since *NCLB* and AYP. Smith shared that they meet at least once a month to decide how they want to manage their school and handle situations. Their meetings are designed to determine the status of the school and how the school can meet the system’s vision, while cohesively functioning as one “whole nutshell.” Mr. Smith described these meetings as “strategy meetings that are broken down into small pieces so as not to overwhelm the team.”

Mr. Smith has established making AYP three consecutive years before he retires as his personal goal. He states that his reason for wanting to make it three years is “you have got to make it two to get off the bad list, then one year just to know you have done it.”

Accountability Mandates

Accountability mandates have become an integral part of the school improvement process. The principal is of the opinion “you do what you have to do; as long as you work and keep in mind that you are working for the boys and girls.” Smith accepts his role as the instructional leader of the school and is aware that with this role he has to do whatever he can to fulfill the role’s responsibility. Mr. Smith feels that both he and his staff realize that change has to happen, but they are not going to let the change discourage them. Jackson Smith asserted, “We can handle the changes from the accountability mandates, and they are not going to cause anybody to quit.”

Effects of a Failing School Label

Jackson Smith affirms that the label of being a “failing school” has created a negative effect on his school. However, instead of dwelling on this label, he and his staff go “back and look at the things they have done well.” Together, the administrative team “looks at the good things that have come out of this label,” according to Smith. He and his administrative team try

to emphasize to the teachers that they are on the right track. They are constantly trying to come up with ways to improve their knowledge and change what they know needs to be modified. Again he stressed that “pretty much our students with disabilities have been the challenge.” He explains that a majority of their staff development targets working with subgroups that can negatively impact the school’s AYP status.

Morale

When asked about morale, Jackson Smith reflected, “From what I see, it just looks like this year we have seen positive change in morale, and this is my sixth year with this staff.” Mr. Smith has seen people “change” this year and attributes that to the “folks that are here working.” He believes that morale has “increased” because his teachers “learned how to work together, which is a continuous improvement process.” He shared that in the past, “so many of his veteran teachers were confined to their classrooms and functioning independently behind closed classroom doors,” but now they are learning how to work together. He realized that successful teachers “do not share their best practices with other classroom teachers.” According to Mr. Smith, this philosophy has changed despite this part of the process being the slowest to change.” “They are learning to work together,” shared Mr. Smith.

He reiterated his belief that “working together” has become imperative. He has observed fewer conflicts within the grade level meetings between teachers. He quickly stated, “Not that we had total chaos, but there were times that we would hear things were not going well.” Mr. Smith thinks that teachers finally realized that they can go to their colleagues within their grade level to get help when needed. He mentioned that he has always stressed, as principal, that there is no point in one of his teachers talking “downtown and on the street” when all you have to do is “go to a person within your grade level or at the school that can help you.” He encourages the

teachers to seek help first from their grade level leader. If teachers do not get assistance within their grade level, Smith or his administration team assist. He advises his teachers,” These are the folks that can help them.” He thinks that they have taken his advice to heart and tried to seek help from within their grade level and to follow the chain of command he outlined.

Parental Involvement and Support

When Jackson Smith was asked in what ways has parental involvement changed since *NCLB* and AYP, he responded:

We are getting them here. We have had some programs that have been very successful, and the programs that did not yield success. We have sort of eliminated unsuccessful programs. I mean we have really been working with the ones that have been getting parents out. I would say our parental involvement has improved well over a hundred percent from what it was two or three years ago. We actually have the parents saying they want to come in the school now.

Mr. Smith stated that he is “pleased” with the results of the increased parental involvement.

Jackson Smith admits that several key people in positions within his school have added to the school's success with parental involvement. His school does have a Spanish-speaking parent involvement coordinator. He credited the parent involvement coordinator as “helpful with bringing in the parents of his Hispanic students.” The literacy coordinator at his school also works to involve parents and coordinates a lot of the “lunch and learn” parent programs. Additional parental involvement occurs because “teachers within his school are required to make contact with all parents.” Another parental involvement tactic is “distributing literature including school-home communications.”

Dark Thoughts

Mr. Smith is aware of the negative consequences if they do not make AYP. He does know that the state might come in and take over the school, but he chooses not to dwell on that. Instead, he chooses to focus on the positive; keeping in mind “that there are responsibilities to

make it. We know we owe it to the children of this county to get them to where they can be successful.” However, he is also aware of those schools that make it but not above the board.”

The response that follows reflects what Mr. Smith thinks about those schools:

It just makes those of us who are trying to do the right things look bad, when you have others that are similar, but have an underhanded approach. They come up with passing AYP reports, so the question becomes why don't you?" I feel that other schools that are making AYP may be doing dark things such as copying down test questions or either assisting a students in different ways. We have seen situations in other schools where that has happened.

“Mr. Smith believes that it is not worth doing something dishonest to make it appear that students are achieving.” Although he knows that schools and school systems have resorted to this tactic, these schools and school systems were dishonest only to be caught and suffer greater consequences than those consequences you receive by failing to make AYP. Mr. Smith went on to say:

I will put it this way, we have seen situations where a high percentage of students passed, and we think this was the result because something had been done on the administrative end. I am not saying what was done, but it almost had to be something, because results with similar groups of students here at this school were totally different. It is even possible that a select group of students did not get tested or scores were not reported.

Mr. Smith demonstrated his integrity when he shared, “I think we all ought to play on a level playing field, and we just need to do the same thing. We need to do it the right way.”

Negative Staff Concerns or Issues Regarding AYP

At the beginning of the school year, Jackson Smith and his administrative team had each grade level meet together and compile a list of reasons as to why they thought the school did not make AYP. Smith and his administrative team met together and shared each grade level's thoughts, ideas, and concerns. Mr. Smith and his administrative team delineated reasons the school did not meet AYP that were out of their control and decided “we don't mention those

again.” Then they targeted the other components in the administration’s control to make a difference in the lives of their students.

Mr. Smith explained why the grade level teachers were required to list their reasons in the following response:

The focus of our professional development over the past years has been geared towards dealing with the negative aspects which are just what we are talking about here. Professional development has dealt with issues such as a child that comes from one parent homes, a child that comes from poverty, the black male population, an exceptional child, and similar issues. The professional development has really helped us in these areas. I would say this focus evolved at the beginning of the year with a speaker, as well as the guy the other day that addressed how to deal with the negative aspects of the student population. Basically, it has boiled down to turning these groups around in spite of all else.

Jackson Smith believes that professional development dealing with these issues will assist the staff in motivating students in these subgroups. He also believes that the lack of knowledge about these subgroups has hindered his staff in previous years.

AYP Policies

“We just don’t really dwell on these policies. We focus on what we have to do and how can we get it done” were the comments made by the principal regarding AYP policies. Smith and his administrative team do not dwell on the law itself in terms of trying to justify certain things. They are just trying to take the data that they have and show the teachers how to use it for improvement of the instructional process within the classroom. He ends his response to AYP policies by stating, “We always say the grading is unfair because of the low kids and the way they are graded, and we believe this unfair grading of this subgroup is keeping us from making it.”

Staff Training and Development

The faculty within Mr. Jackson Smith's school receives professional development training from RESA on the different components of standards-based classrooms and the associated expectations. RESA is using a variety of teaching techniques to educate the staff on a standards based classroom. For instance, "walk-throughs," where the teachers are walking into to each other's classroom to see what is going on within that classroom have been put into effect. They are looking to see which teachers are using standards in their instruction. Grade level teachers meet to discuss their observations in each other's classroom and their own instructional methods. Mr. Smith and his administrative team require the staff to document how they are using the lessons learned from staff development within their classrooms. According to Mr. Smith, "This documentation can be in the form of lesson plans." Mr. Smith described this process as "being democratic on the part of me and my administration in giving the teachers freedom on how to document what they are doing with the professional development."

Reprimands Due to Accountability

Jackson Smith has not reprimanded any of his staff individually, but when there is an issue, he addresses it with the faculty as a whole during professional development. He wonders what will happen once he and his administrative team "get the new teacher evaluation forms." This year they will do five different five-minute walk-through evaluations for each teacher. When discussing the new evaluation procedures Jackson Smith shared, "This new evaluation process will be a way to deal with any need for individual reprimands." Mr. Smith added that he and his administrative team had to "verbally talk or reprimand" some of the staff in certain instances. Inefficiencies could eventually lead to dismissal. Overall, he and his administrative

staff have seen improvement and believe that there has not been “anybody that has held out on the effort.”

Section Summary

Mr. Smith realized that the delegation of duties among his administrative team was required to avoid conflicting duties. Open lines of communication assured support from his school board. He has developed a plan for his teachers that are not highly qualified. He intends to only hire highly qualified teachers for future positions at his school. Smith addressed conflicts in programs as they relate to instructional time by moving non-academic courses to ensure that his students receive the necessary or additional instructional time.

Mr. Smith perceives that the change that occurred in the nature of his work is due to “rethinking how he and his administrative team run the school.” He had to learn, “the old way was not necessarily the best way.” Smith does not allow himself to be “distracted” by dwelling on the effects of having a failing school label, AYP policies, and negative staff concerns and issues regarding AYP. Mr. Smith maintains his focus on school improvement, so that his faculty can concentrate on their “successes and opportunities for improvement.” Mr. Smith had teachers list why they thought they did not make AYP. From that list he had teachers “check off things” that they could not control and then asked teachers to “forget these items.” With the AYP policies, Mr. Smith focuses on “what has to be done.” He believes that the morale of his teachers is “better due to their cohesiveness” since they have learned how to “work together.” His teachers are learning how to use as a resource, other teachers within their grade level when they need help, instead of trying to function “independently without consideration of their grade level assets.”

Low parent involvement is not a problem for Jackson Smith. He attributes the success his school is experiencing with parental involvement to others including school counselors and the Spanish speaking parent involvement coordinator. His counselors make sure they keep parents informed by newsletters or informational meetings. A “lunch and learn” program has been implemented to increase parental involvement. This program is designed to encourage parents to come into the school during the day. Parents must also attend a conference at the school if their child is sent home as a consequence of a disciplinary action.

Smith has not experienced any dark thoughts. Although he has heard of unethical and even illegal actions in other schools to achieve AYP, he chooses to hold himself to a higher standard and not pursue those questionable actions. Mr. Smith further implied, “We want to make Adequate Yearly Progress but we want to do it the right way. We want to do it by everyone including students, staff, and parents putting forth the extra effort.”

The staff training and development focus is standards-based instruction. Outside agencies such as RESA come in to help teachers structure their classrooms as a standards-based setting. He has used verbal reprimand for a few teachers on an individual basis, but will use written reprimands as necessary and in the evaluation process.

Perceptions of the Principal’s Role and its Effects on Student Achievement and the Educational Process

The third research question sought to uncover how the principal of a failing school perceived his actions as principal. This question also sought to uncover how his actions as principal affected student achievement and the education process. The contents of this section are (a) role and student achievement, (b) role and accountability mandates, (c) relationship with

stakeholders, (d) leadership role, (e) desperation, (f) instruction and student achievement, and (g) other perceptions.

Role and Student Achievement

Mr. Smith perceives his role to be a “change agent.” As this agent of change, he is trying to get the staff to consider “what is beneficial for the instruction of students by looking at the data and using what the research says works.” He has had to become a “facilitator for his school.” As a “facilitator for his school,” Smith obtained helpful information from other schools and/or school systems, the local Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA), Georgia Learning Resource Service (GLRS), Georgia Department of Education (GDOE), and other outside agencies. These agencies assisted Mr. Smith in developing any necessary changes to help improve student achievement. He believes that his role entails “looking at any program or procedure that can help in delivery or presentation of instruction.” Mr. Smith hypothesized that “improved instruction tends to lead to an increase in student achievement.”

Role and Accountability Mandates

Accountability has definitely made the “buck stop with me, the principal,” Smith begins in response to the question. He believes that as a principal, he is held accountable for everything that takes place. He elaborated on this belief by commenting, “I am held accountable for students that are not passing the CRCT and those that do.” In his role as the principal, he wants to make sure that the students that are passing the CRCT receive classroom instruction that would help them reach the “exceeds” status. For the students that are not passing, Mr. Smith believes that they must “regroup and restructure to help those students.” He realizes now more than ever that he must find “methods, procedures, and materials to enhance student instruction and student achievement.”

Relationship with Stakeholders

With all of the stakeholders, especially the parents, Mr. Smith believes that he has become more “transparent.” He had to open doors and break down barriers to get all stakeholders involved. Smith’s panorama allows him to tell the stakeholders the areas for improvement and identify the responsible parties: the principal, administration, faculty, the stakeholders, or a combination of these groups. He stated that he has tried to share the fact that he and his faculty are motivated to do their part if the stakeholders will reciprocate. He has communicated with the stakeholders and comes to the conclusion that they all “need to do whatever has to be done to meet the needs of the students.” Overall, he and his faculty have all become more transparent in what they do.

Being transparent to all the stakeholders involved in the school improvement process, Smith believes, has helped his relationships with them. Smith shared that he has nothing to hide from them. If there is a problem, “it is shared and addressed” with stakeholders. Although he does share with his stakeholders, Mr. Smith believes that he must be at the “forefront of everything” since he is the leader and has to “spearhead” everything that takes place within his school.

Leadership Role

Mr. Smith has realized that he must be the “initiator and leader” for everything. He understands that he must be the “instructional leader” in this school. Smith believes that he must be able to convince the staff and students of the importance of “better student achievement.” Smith knows that he must be the “change agent” for his school, the community, and the stakeholders. Mr. Smith realizes that “he must put things out front and work with them.”

Desperation

Mr. Smith observed that he and his faculty feel “saddened” when test scores make it appear that they are “not meeting the needs of the kids.” Low CRCT scores are the basis for these feelings. Dissatisfied with the small number of his students that exceeded on the CRCT, Mr. Smith believes that those students that passed can achieve at a much higher score. He stated, “We often think about what we can try next. We often think that we have tried and done all we know to do.” Mr. Smith shared, often he and his administrative team “reflect on their roles, next steps, or the fact that improvement may be unattainable.” He admits that “sometimes they just did not know what would or would not work.” Concluding his thoughts on desperation, Smith responded with the following sentence, “So we did have some distressful thoughts.”

Instruction and Student Achievement

Currently, instruction at Mr. Smith’s school is geared more towards students’ individual needs. Mr. Smith believes that, “supportive research on best practices for instruction that are based on students’ needs must be taken into consideration.” Mr. Smith stated, “The old open the book to page 1 and to try to go from cover to cover of the book does not work.” He thinks that his faculty realizes that they must use a variety of teaching resources to deliver instruction including the integration of technology. He believes that technology has helped his school tremendously as teachers incorporated such technology programs as Classworks, Academy of Math, and Academy of Reading into their classroom instruction.

Other Perceptions

Jackson Smith was asked to share any other perceptions of what he was doing and how it affected student achievement and made the following remarks:

Again we involve parents a whole lot. We have become more transparent to them. We send information to parents in regards to the individual needs of their child. Hopefully

they will follow up with that. We provide staff development specifically for items that are of “needs improvement status.” We spend more time getting staff properly trained through staff development.

Co-teaching has become a major project for every member of his school and benefits the students with disabilities as well as the entire student body. He thinks that his faculty realizes that the students with disabilities subgroup has kept the school from making AYP, but he adds, “They are everybody’s kids.” His perception is that his teachers have realized that they must “teach what they have to teach.”

Section Summary

Mr. Smith perceives that his role is to be a “change agent” and “facilitator.” As the “change agent,” he believes that it is his responsibility to change the mindset of his faculty away from making decisions about instruction based on what they believe is good to an educational delivery method that is supported by data and research. In his role as a “facilitator,” he obtains the information his teachers need to help with the school improvement process. Accountability mandates have made him realize that if they do not make AYP, he will be the one held accountable so he feels, the “buck stops with me.” Mr. Smith realizes that instructional improvement and staff improvement are essential to school improvement.

Mr. Smith admits that he had moments of desperation in which he and his faculty just did not know what was effective in helping to improve their CRCT results. He also discussed his concern when his students that pass do not exhibit their potential with their test scores. Mr. Smith perceives that individual student needs are the focus for instruction at his school. He thinks his faculty realizes the need for change and how technology has contributed to their school improvement. Mr. Smith perceives that using the co-teaching model of inclusion at his

school has helped classroom instruction for all students, regular education and students with disabilities.

Perceptions of Changes in the Work of the Principal

The fourth research question sought to uncover the principal's perspectives about the most significant changes in his work as the principal since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This question also sought to uncover variables that affected this change in the principal's role. Areas discussed in this section are: affects in role, pressures or stressors, professional development, standardized testing, school improvement, data analysis, communication with stakeholders, and other changes in work.

Affects in Role

“Testing is regarded as very important now,” according to Jackson Smith. He affirms his school's move to standards-based classrooms has “really helped them to improve their test scores.” In fact, they have seen their student test scores improve over time. He considers data analysis to be important and commented, “That is pretty much what drives our instruction.” Breaking the data down to evaluate student achievement on both ends of the spectrum helps them “map their teaching strategies.” Discussing assessment, he made the comment, “There is more emphasis placed on assessment, not just the summative, but more emphasis on formative assessment now than ever.” Results of formative and summative assessment are used by his school to guide the instruction.

As he reflected on the role of testing in the past versus the role of testing today Mr. Smith disclosed:

We are really teaching the teachers how to analyze data and look at the results, the weaknesses and the strengths. We then build upon those weaknesses and expand upon the strengths of the students. We were always given our CRCT results, but it was more on an individual basis, it wasn't looked at collectively as a school. Back then, I would

just look to see how well the students did. We never really sat down and analyzed that data like we do now.

He summarized his answer to changes in his work by simply stating, “I think I have seen my work change from manager to instructional leader.”

Pressures or Stressors

Jackson Smith perceives that the stress of meeting the requirements of *NCLB* and making AYP has impacted everybody involved in the process: himself, the teachers, “just about everybody in the school system, probably even down to the board members, and parents.” He perceives that stressors have a negative affect on everybody. Mr. Smith added parents are not immune to the stress because they are more involved in the process than ever before. Finally, the principal admits that it has also affected him “because the buck stops with him.”

Professional Development

Jackson Smith shared that “his staff had more direct professional development this year as opposed to the past years.” By more direct professional development, he means that it has been “more task oriented and geared toward the goals and the areas of need.” His school is “fortunate” to have enough rotation teachers so that they can schedule for each grade level to meet together during their daily planning time. It is mandated that at least one day a week “they work on things that pertain to their grade level such as their unit planning.” Within their professional learning communities, the teachers have one meeting each week to focus on “instruction, examining student work, and things that they can learn from and continue to grow from.”

Standardized Testing

Jackson Smith had his teachers analyze the CRCT data from the spring for their incoming students to “guide their instruction for the school year.” The curriculum for his school is

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), but they look at the CRCT and take into account the domains and areas tested along with the weights of these domains. These domains are the ones that his teachers assure they address as they pace out their year. The teachers in his school have to make sure they focus on these particular areas before test time. The less weighted domains can be postponed until after test time. “Keeping this focus,” according to Jackson Smith, “just really guides what they do as well as think. He perceives that carries significant weight.” Mr. Smith completed his answer on this topic by stating the following:

We also do benchmark testing throughout the year, and we use the Online Assessment System (OAS). The Georgia Department of Education released level three test items from past CRCTs to the OAS and we used this system to create benchmark tests and to show our weaknesses and strengths.

The use of technology has greatly enhanced the way that Jackson Smith’s school prepares students for standardized testing.

School Improvement

“The school improvement process,” according to Mr. Smith, “has made us concentrate on finding things that would help improve the instructional process in our school.” He states that they were doing this “beforehand,” but their decisions were not based on the problems revealed from the needs assessments. He believes they are trying to “go directly to the problem,” and that all of their staff development over the last couple of years has been from directives like “how to improve test results among minorities and among special populations and how to incorporate more specialized school improvement activities.”

Data Analysis

When queried about data analysis, Jackson Smith revealed, “Teachers are trying to do a better job of covering some of the areas of student achievement by continuously breaking the down the data.” His teachers are looking at the data given for “each individual question on the

benchmark tests” to see if there are questions that a large percentage of their students missed. Smith’s teachers make sure that they go back and read these specific questions to see if there is a detail about the question that may have been overlooked that could be used to make it easier for students to comprehend what the question is asking. They look at these items to see if there is a word, a math word, synonyms, or a word that they did not use that they could go back and review and use to make the test questions easier for students to understand. He summarized his answer by stating, “Using data analysis, really looking and just breaking everything down, trying to get to the root cause is necessary.”

As far as the data analysis, that is important because that is what drives our instruction. Recognizing where our students have done well and where they are weak helps drive our teaching strategies. Teachers are being trained to analyze that data and look at the results, the weaknesses, and the strengths. “Teachers,” according to Mr. Smith, “build upon those weaknesses and then expand upon the strengths that the students possess.” “Data analysis has become a critical part of what we do in the quest for improved school improvement and student achievement,” according to the principal.

Communication with Stakeholders

“We are more involved with the parents as stakeholders in the operation of the school,” stated Jackson Smith. The faculty is always trying to get the parents to assist them in helping their child or children. Mr. Smith and his faculty seek parent volunteers to assist teachers with some of the non-teaching duties such as cutting and pasting materials to preparing for activities. This helps the teachers focus more on the instructional process. He and his staff communicate monthly or weekly with the parents via newsletter or some other type of communication. In conclusion, he stated, “We are going through district accreditation with the Southern Association

of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and as a result we had to become more transparent to our stakeholders because they are a vital part of this process.”

Other Changes in Work

One change at work that Mr. Jackson Smith alludes to is the practice of making research based decisions. He shared, “Everything the teachers do now is pretty much research based.” Expanding on this idea, he added, “Textbooks are bought based upon research. Staff development is based upon areas that need to be targeted, and if the presenter can target that area and has the credentials, then that is who we use.” Jackson Smith revealed that “he decides who he is going to hire based on the needs of his school based on research data and meeting highly qualified requirements.” He briefly talks about how he was hired:

When I was hired, my mother taught school for 55 years and the superintendent who hired me worked with her as an agriculture teacher, and she was a math teacher. My interview consisted of, if you are half as good a teacher as your mama is, you will be a good one. Well now when we bring prospective teachers in, the question is have you had experience with the standards or the activities? We tell exactly what we want in the classroom.

Mr. Smith believes that teachers must have the ability to adapt to the standards, objectives, and activities of today’s classroom in order to be successful.

Section Summary

From his third interview, it is apparent that Mr. Smith perceives that the role of data analysis has been the driving force behind the change in his work. Data analysis has changed his role from that of a manager to one of an instructional leader who requires his teachers to continually break down and analyze data from standardized testing results such as the CRCT and benchmarks. He requires them to evaluate the students’ strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers use this data in their school improvement process to help improve instruction of students by using weak areas to direct professional development.

He realizes as he discusses pressures or stressors that the buck stops with him when it comes to his school making or not making the *NCLB* requirements for AYP. He believes that every stakeholder feels the pressures or stressors too. He constantly communicates with stakeholders by sharing test data, sending out newsletters, and involving the stakeholders in certain aspects of the school's instructional process.

Accountability of the Principal

The fifth research question sought to uncover the ways this principal has been held accountable. It also sought to uncover changes in this principal's methods of accountability since not making AYP. Topics covered in this section include: affects of the role on student achievement, accountability and time management, public perception, parental conditions that impact student achievement, consequences experienced, risks experienced with school improvement, and other accountability thoughts.

Affects of the Role on Student Achievement

“As being the leader in the school of instruction, I think my role has a direct affect on students here and the fact that we do meet the scores,” stated Jackson Smith. He meets on a monthly basis with the students to reinforce the importance of their staying on task. Mr. Smith and his staff constantly meet with the parents of high risk or low achieving students with the student being present during the conference. He elaborated on why they conference with the parents of high risk or low achieving students in the following statement:

I am saying that to say this, if a child is suspended or something goes on because a child doesn't achieve in school, then we will take the teacher, the parent, as well as both administrators and meet, and everybody has to understand what is going on and what is expected.

Mr. Smith believes that everyone must do their “part.” The responsibility of achievement belongs to the student, parent, and teacher.

He realizes that he and his administrative team need “buy-in” from the staff and not only to dictate expected actions. Discussing the definition of “buy-in” he shared, “It is stated what we need to do, and then we get input from the teachers.” Mr. Smith knows that the teachers are the ones down in the trenches that do the work and they need the teachers’ input and buy-in because “the teachers are the ones that can make the difference.”

Accountability and Time Management

Jackson Smith has come the conclusion that “every bit of the school day has to be utilized appropriately to maximize accountability.” To keep with time on task, he shared, “There are few disruptions during the school day due to the fact that we limit intercom disruptions during class time.” He and his administrative team try not to have any “down time” during the school day. They start school at 8:00 A.M. and keep teaching until their dismissal time. With the curriculum linked programs that they have during the school day, Mr. Smith added, “We only have a few disruptions.” He ends by saying, “So it is not like we just decide to have a good time, everything is all for the betterment of our students.”

Public Perception

Jackson Smith declares that he has the support of the community. He thinks that the community has “bought into the fact that they are trying to do their best to get the students where they need to be.” Mr. Smith asserts that “his administrative staff share their testing data with the parents and school council.” He has not had any negative experiences when inviting the parents in for different programs and other activities. Mr. Smith elaborates pleasantly on his previous statements by adding, “We never have low numbers now on anything that we invite a parent to that supports instruction.”

Parental Conditions That Impact Student Achievement

Smith recognizes that economic conditions impact the achievement for most of the students in this school and that is not within his control. Reflecting on the impact of economically disadvantaged students, he stated:

I think in some situations the parents do want to do better but they can't do better. They are trying to put the necessities in the home and on the table, and we have parents all the time to say, well if I could get, if I could do this, if I could do that. However we have a lot of our parents who work two jobs, and they are trying to feed and clothe their children and get them to school, and provide for them. I think economic issues, lack of jobs, lack of job opportunities have a great impact on student achievement.

He perceives that a lot of his children's parents are "just doing what they can to survive." Also, Mr. Smith realizes that some of his children come from homes where "education is not valued."

Consequences Experienced

"There is some heat, and it is real heat," commented by Jackson Smith. He reflects on how he has not heard of anyone being fired because of not making AYP and extends his thoughts by saying, "When you have low test scores based on *NCLB*, the heat is being applied." He elaborated on how he is aware of the heat or pressure to perform, especially when you know you have not met your expectations by failing to make AYP. Mr. Smith is thinking about how they are working to continuously improve, but at the same time, they have the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) telling them that a state department assignee is going to come in and dictate how he and his administrative team run the school if they continue not to make AYP.

Mr. Smith has concluded, "there have not been any consequences, just certain privileges withheld." He thinks that both the community and school recognize the need "to meet some type of measurable results that will make them AYP eligible." Mr. Smith reported that he and his staff probably "put additional pressure on themselves." He does not believe the public is

“breathing down the school’s back saying they are going to take their child out and move somewhere else.”

Smith and his administrative team have determined weaknesses in less effective staff and provided remediation through constructive instructional items and/or materials. If corrective actions are not successful, termination is considered. He emphasized “Again, going back, everything we do is based on research, some type of research.” He believes that he and his administrative team are doing their best to help staff members that have weaknesses through evaluations and data. However, he knows that he has “to get to the folks that can help us, but the first thing we are going to try to do is remediate before we terminate.”

For the most part, Jackson Smith thinks that he and his administrative team have seen some improvement. He has not had to terminate anyone, but there have been some instances where “contracts have not been renewed.” Mr. Smith has seen some changes “in the attitude of his staff and the way they do things.” Some of his negative people have become “flag wavers” for him and his administrative team since the initiation of the improvement process.

Risks Experienced With School Improvement

One risk that the school is taking in its school improvement effort is pulling students from science or social studies classes to get extra reading time. Mr. Smith stated, “We have implemented the Science Research Associates (SRA) reading program for students struggling with reading and behind grade level. These students have a double dose of reading and in some instances the students would be pulled from science or social studies to get extra reading.”

Smith and his administrative team felt like they were taking a risk there but felt that when you look at the overall picture “if they can’t read then they can’t be successful.” Basically, he and his administrative team felt that if a student can’t read at all then they can not read the science or

social studies text. Therefore if they could teach these students to read they would do a better job all around.”

Jackson Smith perceives that he has taken a risk in sharing all of the data with his parents. He has shared the CRCT test and benchmark data for their child with them. Smith has shared the general school subgroup data with the parents too. He feels that he has taken a risk by being honest with his parents about where their child is academically regardless of their scores. Smith shared, “This risk involves having additional staff to serve these students.” Furthermore, Mr. Smith stated, “It also places more students with disabilities into the regular classroom setting and this is often the opposite of what some teachers expect.” Smith perceived incorporating the co-teaching inclusion model in a lot of his classrooms as a big risk.

Other Accountability Thoughts

Jackson Smith does not believe that any school “can make 100 percent by 2014, even if you have the best, somebody is going to have a bad day and it gets harder and harder as you go up the ladder.” He believes that it is increasingly difficult to climb that ladder to one hundred percent. Mr. Smith thinks that a child has to be balanced to meet the *NCLB* mandate. He endorses the mandate but realizes that “we just don’t think by two thousand nothing, that we can assure that everybody is going to be proficient.” Smith believes that everyone is striving for that goal, but he thinks that it is strategically impossible. Jackson Smith thinks his school has the resources to implement *No Child Left Behind*, but with budget cuts, it will become harder and harder to do so. He confirms this by stating:

I mean we hear that so many programs are going to be cut, this is going to be moved around, that has moved around, cutting programs is going to mean reduction in personnel, you are increasing the class size, and certainly that is going in the wrong direction.

Smith also shared that “A decrease in funds may force us to look for more creative ways to get the job done. We must also look at areas and programs that we can trim back.”

Mr. Smith does believe that *NCLB* and AYP requirements are helping to close the achievement gap between the subgroups because the teachers have to focus more on the individual child and their needs. He perceives that teachers are gravitating away from the philosophy that everybody is on the same page or the same activity level. Mr. Smith does not argue, however, as to whether or not *No Child Left Behind* accountability measures reflect sound educational practices. Smith supports *NCLB* but wants it to be understood that “some children just do not have the capacity to accomplish some of the requirements or to meet some of the requirements dictated by *NCLB*.” He believes that he and his staff are working hard with the time they have the children at school, and they are trying to “look beyond factors outside of school that they can not control.” Their focus must be “what they can do with the children while they have them there at the school.”

Section Summary

Although Jackson Smith has not experienced any consequences for not making AYP, i.e., threat of being fired, he does realize that he is the instructional leader for his School and that the ‘heat is real.’ With the acceptance of this role, Smith is aware that he is accountable for all instructional time during the school day. He tries to limit interruption of that time by limiting the amount of intercom disruptions that occur once instructions begins for the students. Mr. Smith realizes that not only does his role as instructional leader have an impact on student achievement at his school, but all stakeholders impact student achievement as well. Stakeholders include students, parents, and teachers. Smith meets with students on a monthly basis to remind them to focus on reaching their highest potential, and he meets with parents, specifically those of targeted

students, to share test data to reinforce the importance of staying focused at school and supported at home. Jackson Smith has not had any negative experiences with the parents or the public because “they realize that he and his staff are doing their best to help the students.” He realizes that his teachers control the delivery of instruction so he makes sure he has their input and support as the team strives to improve student achievement. Ultimately, Mr. Smith knows that “he is scrutinized and held accountable for the test scores of his students.”

Mr. Smith realizes that he cannot control the economic conditions that impact student achievement at his school, so he focuses on the thing he can control which is improving instruction. He decided to take a risk and assign two classes of reading to those students that were reading below grade level. Smith’s logic was that if the students can not read, they will not be able to comprehend science or social studies standards. He does not believe that every child will be on the same page by 2014. He thinks that his school can reach this goal if given a longer time frame with more funding and/or resources to complete this task.

Chapter 5 follows with the summary, conclusions, and recommendations. Further, Chapter 5 provides insights into the findings of the present study in relation to the review of literature in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a descriptive analysis of the perspectives of one elementary school principal in the state of Georgia whose school did not make adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years. This study sought to understand the principal's perspectives of the relationship between school leadership and school success related to the duties and the responsibilities he performed. The duration of the study was one year. This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perspectives of one elementary principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP for three consecutive years?
2. What is this principal doing to address the failure to make AYP and the obstacles involved?
3. What are the perceptions of this principal related to his actions and how they affect student achievement?
4. What have been the most significant changes in the work of this principal since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?
5. What are the ways in which this principal has been held accountable?

This chapter presents a summary of the study followed by a discussion of the findings. The discussion is followed by implications for future research based on the findings.

Summary of the Study

A qualitative case study approach was used to examine the perspectives of one elementary school principal in the state of Georgia whose school failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years. The use of qualitative methods in research “is to understand the meaning of an experience” and “how all the parts work together to form a whole” (Merriam, 1998, p.16). Three formal one-on-one interviews at the school provided insight into the principal’s perspectives of his principalship and its relationship to his lack of success with AYP.

In the first interview, the researcher asked questions to help uncover the perspectives of this elementary school principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP for three consecutive years. In the second interview, the researcher asked questions to help uncover how this principal has addressed the failure to make AYP and to reveal the obstacles he encountered. Also queried in the second interview were the principal’s perceptions of his actions and how his actions affect student achievement and the educational process.

In the third interview, the researcher asked questions to help uncover this principal’s perceptions concerning the most significant changes in his work since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and the ways in which he is being held accountable. Throughout each interview, the researcher took field notes and collected artifacts to use as additional sources of data.

Because this study was descriptive in design, there was only one participant interviewed, and the demographics of the system were “small rural,” the reader is cautioned not to make

generalizations about the findings. This study should be considered descriptive in nature; hence, generalizations should not be made based on the findings.

Discussion of Themes

The purpose of this section is to discuss the themes that developed from the findings in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. The themes have been separated into five categories. These categories are Perspectives About Policies Governing AYP and the Principal's School, Coping with Obstacles and Failure, Perspectives of the Principal's Role and its Effect on Student Achievement and the Educational Process, Perspective on Changes in the Principal's Work Since *NCLB* and AYP, and Accountability of the Principal. The reader is reminded that the themes in this discussion are based on findings from a case study of only one elementary school principal within the context of his school. The researcher is not attempting to make generalizations from the findings.

Perspectives About Policies Governing AYP and the Principal's School

The principal perceived that the *NCLB* and AYP testing requirements for students with disabilities were "unrealistic and unfair." This perception is shared by other principals that failed to make AYP in their responses to open-ended interview questions about accountability mandates and obstacles in Jackson's (2004) study.

In the current study, the principal perceived that the change in school vision and philosophy has helped his faculty in the school improvement process. According to Brown and Anfara (2003), the principal's responsibility as a visionary leader is to "create and communicate a view of a desired state of affairs that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to an even better future" (p. 16). A principal is expected "to cultivate and communicate a vision to teachers, students, and the community, not just function as an instructional leader, problem

solver and resource provider” (Brown & Anfara, 2003, p. 17). The fact that the principal in this study has cultivated and communicated this change in school vision and philosophy is evident in the interview transcripts, field notes, and certain artifacts. In one interview, Mr. Smith stated the following, “We support the same vision that we set at the system. We want all of our students to be successful and to prepare them to be successful citizens in the future.” This finding is supported by Jackson’s (2004) study where principals that made or did not make AYP were surveyed and the vast majority agreed that the principal’s vision guides the school program.

The support that Jackson Smith has received from the Central Office has been instrumental in the school improvement process for his school. This finding is supported by Jackson’s (2004) study where a survey given to principals that made or did not make AYP revealed that these principals agreed that the central office provides support and training for the implementation of *NCLB* mandates.

Coping with Obstacles and Failure

In discussing the obstacles that he incurred as the principal, it is evident that Mr. Smith has the ability to problem solve or “build capacity.” Badaracco (2002) described capacity building as the competence to face everyday challenges, provide time for accomplishment, dig into the problem, and allow flexibility in the rules without breaking the rules. Just like the principals surveyed in Jackson’s (2004) study, lack of time and students with disabilities were obstacles for this principal. However, unlike those principals in Jackson’s (2004) study, this principal did not find parental involvement, funding, and finding highly qualified teachers to be an obstacle for him. Table 5.1 shows obstacles that Mr. Smith faced, and the solutions that he developed.

Table 5.1

Obstacles and Solutions Table

Obstacles	Solutions
Time	Common planning and staff development during the school day.
Attendance	Fifteen day attendance policy for students. Reminders sent at 3, 5 and 10 absences.
Students with Disabilities	Two methods for delivery of instruction: co-teaching and resource recovery model.
Parental Involvement	Activities for parents during the school day; direct invitations.
Low Morale	Give and take relationship between administration and teachers; patience.
Conflicting Duties	Better evaluation process. Distribution of duties among his administrative team.
Stress	Monthly staff celebrations.
Bureaucracy	Good line of communication.
Highly Qualified (HQ) Teacher	Only hire HQ teachers. Developed a plan for current staff that are not HQ to become HQ.
Conflict in Programs	Adjusted times of nonacademic courses to allow for additional instructional time for reading.

The capacity building ability of this principal is reflected in how he met the challenge of each obstacle and found a solution for it.

In coping with failures, this principal chose to rethink what he was doing and not dwell on what he could not control. “Time management” was an instance Mr. Smith gave as an area in which he and his administrative team had to rethink and restructure. Table 5.2 amplifies the variables that Mr. Smith faced with solutions or approaches that he used to address the variables.

Table 5.2

Variables Faced with Solutions or Approaches	
Variables Faced	Solutions or Approaches
Increased Accountability Mandates	Work with the mandates utilizing the best techniques available.
Change and Nature of Work As An Instructional Leader	Rethink time management in terms of instruction and teacher evaluation.
Remaining In the Principalship	Set a personal goal of making AYP three consecutive years before retiring.
Label of failing	Look at what he has done well and the good that came out of those things.
Perceptions on Failing	Began to focus on the positive instead of the negative.
Parental Involvement	Improved effort to bring parents in for meetings and training sessions.
Teaching Technique	Use instructional techniques that are research based and data driven.
Dark Thoughts	He has heard of schools doing things that were unethical but chooses not to dwell on those thoughts.
Staff Perceptions	Faculty had to share thoughts on paper and verbally. Those thoughts that they have no influence over are left them behind.
Family Values	Increase parental involvement in their child's education.
Stress or pressures from AYP policies	Do not dwell on the policies. Just do whatever has to be done.
Staff Reprimands related to accountability	Require staff to keep records of their use of what they learned from staff development.

Smith and his administrative team had to decide how they were going to meet the demands for everything that needed to be accounted for including teacher evaluations, and how

they managed the school. When coping with the negative aspects of his staff's viewpoint of their school's ability to achieve AYP, as it pertains to accountability mandates, Smith is of the opinion that "you do what you have to do, as long as you work, keeping in mind that you are working for the boys and girls."

Perspectives of the Principal's Role and its Effects on Student Achievement and the Educational Process

Mr. Jackson Smith perceived himself to be a "change agent" and "facilitator" as it relates to the effects of his role on student achievement and the educational process within his school. The principal's description of himself as a "facilitator" is similar to Rallis and Goldring's (2000) description of the principal's role as a "balancer." Rallis and Goldring (2000) described the role of "balancer" as a translator within the system. The principal is responsible for building relationships with the hierarchy and the Central Office. This relationship makes the decisions about ideas brought forth by the principal more likely to be supported. In Mr. Smith's description of himself as a "facilitator" of the educational process within his school, he talked about helping his teachers with student achievement. He obtained the necessary information his faculty needed from other sources including the central office, other schools, and/or school systems. Smith stated, his "role has changed to that of mentor and facilitator of change. More staff meetings are focused on data analysis, instruction, and book studies."

In this study, the principal perceived that his role as leader meant that he should be "first or leading in every aspect of the school." He believed that in his role as leader he must convince the faculty and students of the importance of "better student achievement." This makes him the "change agent" for all of the stakeholders involved.

Perspective on Changes in Principal's Work Since NCLB and AYP

Jackson Smith perceived that the change in how his work is completed is based on the premise that his decisions are now data driven and research based. “It has prompted me to spend more time analyzing our test data for instructional strengths and weaknesses. I analyze data and use the results to help teachers prepare instruction,” Smith commented.

Mr. Smith concluded that his role has changed from manager to instructional leader. He recognized that:

The principal can no longer be manager. He/she must be teacher, leader, coach, mediator, problem solver, analyst, and student. The principal must shift his/her focus toward effective teaching and learning, monitoring the process, collecting and analyzing the data, and instructional planning.

Based on the data, it is evident that the principal has added duties that are required to make the responsibilities of his role more effective.

This study revealed that Mr. Smith noted that a change in the relationship and communication with parents and other stakeholders has become more evident. The principal believes in keeping open lines of communication with his stakeholders especially parents. “We are more involved with the parents as stakeholders in the operation of the school. We are trying to get them to assist us in helping their child or children in general,” stated Mr. Smith. He realizes that his parents need to be involved with the operation of the school even if it means their presence in the classroom. Weekly or monthly, Mr. Smith provides opportunities for parents to come to the school for informational meetings, workshops, or to volunteer as teacher assistants. He believes that being “transparent” to all stakeholders is necessary.

There have been many changes in the work of the principal. Mr. Smith detailed these changes in his work as principal in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

Changes in the Work of the Principal

Traditional Work of the Principal	Changes in the Work of the Principal
Instructional Leader	Moved from the traditional managerial role.
Testing	Focuses more on standards based classrooms.
Data Analysis	Data are analyzed and used to guide instruction specifically for individual students.
Instructional Support	Professional development is research based and geared for individual student instruction.
Stressors or Pressures	Directly affects all stakeholders involved including the parents instead of a few individuals.
Accountability	Realizes that the buck stops with him.
Time in classroom	Managing time spent on instruction in the classroom. Changed role from that of manager to instructional leader.
Professional Development/Faculty Meetings	Data driven professional development and faculty meetings.
Standardized Testing	More data analysis of CRCT and benchmarks and aligned the instruction based on that analysis.
Focus on School Improvement	Searches to find ways to improve the instructional process.
Communication of Stakeholders	Involve parents more in the educational process of their child. Become more transparent.

Mr. Smith revealed, “Whenever the school has an issue or is involved in an issue, it is in the work of the principal to deal with it.” From the data collected from this study, it became

apparent that the role or work of the principal has changed to reflect the teaching, coaching, and promotion of professional development of teachers using research-based “best practice” or “proven effective” instructional techniques.

Accountability of the Principal

The principal realized that he is held accountable for the low and high test scores of all students. Mr. Smith stated that this accountability:

simply means that somebody has given us a task and we have got to achieve the task. It is just something that we have got to do, something we have got to be, based on a test, data that they are collecting, information shows accountability as simply something we have got to do.

He realized that he must account for every second of instruction during the school day. “We try not to have any down time,” stated Smith.

With recent accountability mandates like *NCLB*, a focus has been placed on ensuring that every student has appropriate learning opportunities. Educational accountability is priority for government and educational agencies. The school is accountable for the effective teaching of students and for student achievement.

In most accountability systems the effectiveness of teachers and administrators is measured indirectly through the achievement of students. Principals are now held more accountable than ever. As accountability has increased, there have been changes in the everyday tasks of the principal as noted in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Accountability Areas and Changes in Perceptions

Accountability	Changes
Meaning of Accountability	Meaning has changed from a task that should be achieved to a task that must be achieved.

Table 5.4 (continued)

<i>Accountability Areas and Changes in Perceptions</i>	
Accountability	Changes
Student Achievement	His actions are believed to have a direct effect on student achievement and test scores.
Staff Morale	Negative at first but with professional development from outside resources those viewpoints have changed.
Time Management	Principal is held accountable for every instructional minute of the school day.
Effective Principal	Defined by test scores and AYP.
Expectations of students	Higher expectations. Meeting daily or monthly with the students to remind them of the higher expectations.
Public Perception	Public now view school and staff as doing the best they can.
Consequences	None experienced.
Staff Member Consequences	Remediation of staff members in needed areas.
Risks	Implementing the Science Research Associates (SRA) program with students struggling in reading. Some students receive two periods of reading.
Other Thoughts	All schools must make 100% AYP by 2014. This is not a realistic goal.

Accountability is now the norm in education, not the exception. Principals must be accountable for student achievement at all levels of the school operation (Torres, 2004).

Accountability systems improve performance when they target important objectives, identify problems, monitor results, stress positive incentives, affect individuals involved, include all stakeholders, build capacity, and invest in results (Lingenfelter, 2003). However, principals

must often take risks to improve student performance. Principals must also become more focused on individual students and student groups. Assessment and accountability systems that are well designed help the principal focus on the students or groups of students that need the most help while evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and programs (Goertz & Duffy, 2003). The principal in this study noted, “One good thing about *NCLB* and accountability is that it makes you pay attention to each student, especially the students with disabilities who often went unnoticed.”

Implications for Further Research

Principals involved in the school improvement process must recognize the impact that their leadership has on student achievement. Principals must also recognize the impact that specific subgroups have on achieving AYP. These student subgroups include students with disabilities, economic disadvantaged, and black males. In future studies, the participant sampling should be limited to the perspectives of those principals whose school did not make AYP for three consecutive years due to their students who are classified within the subgroup of disabilities.

This study was limited to one male principal in one elementary school whose school did not make AYP for three consecutive years. This study can provide baseline data for further research on the perspectives of a larger number of principals. Extending the current study to other school systems and other principals could also provide opportunities for the results to be compared. The limitation of the perspectives of one elementary school principal in the participant sampling should be expanded to include middle and high school principals’ perspectives whose schools did not make AYP for three consecutive years. Also, the limitation

of gender in the participant sampling should be expanded to include the perspectives of female principals.

Based on these recent unethical events resulting from “dark thoughts,” another implication for further study could be a study to look at unethical testing practices in the quest for AYP. This study could examine documented court cases of testing allegations. Future studies could also take a look at the pressure or pressures that administrators feel in the quest for AYP that may lead them to “dark thoughts” or unethical behavior.

Concluding Thoughts

This study was designed to provide a descriptive analysis of the perspectives of one elementary school principal in the state of Georgia whose school did not make adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years. This study sought to examine the principal’s perspectives of the relationship between school leadership and school success related to the duties and the responsibilities he performed. The study revealed that the principal believed his school could attain AYP even after failing to achieve it for three consecutive years. The data also revealed that the principal perceived the work he was doing in his role was helping the education process within his school. The principal in this study also believed that the fulfillment of this role had a positive affect on student achievement.

As it pertains to the changes in the work of the principal since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* and Adequate Yearly Progress, the data revealed that the principal perceived that the major change to occur in his work was the change from the role of manager to that of instructional leader. The data also revealed that this principal did not perceive that his accountability had changed since not making AYP for three consecutive years.

The findings of this study also revealed that the students with disabilities subgroup appeared to be the subgroup that has the greatest impact on a school not making AYP. With this thoughtful reflection, principals must assist teachers in implementing methods that are designed to meet the needs of the students with disabilities subgroup.

With the present requirements of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), systems must make changes to alleviate the stress associated with adequate yearly progress due to the limitations of the students with disabilities subgroup. This study revealed that the students with disabilities subgroup was the major obstacle and the data further revealed that effective principals must continue to make school improvement changes and develop programs and assistance to specifically target the students with disabilities subgroup. The data also showed that this group must become the focus of any school in order to attain AYP.

Accountability is embedded in our lives. As we approach the year 2014, in which 100 percent of the students must pass the CRCT in the areas of math, reading, and language, we must focus on the understanding of accountability. We must recognize that this quest for 100 percent accountability underscores the need for continued study of the principalship, school improvement, student achievement, accountability, and adequate yearly progress.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Interview Guide for A Case Study: The Perspectives of One Elementary School Principal Whose School Did Not Make Adequate Yearly Progress in the State of Georgia

Interview 1

I. Research Question 1

What are the perspectives of one elementary principal about his school and the policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when his school failed to attain AYP?

Interview Questions

1. Describe any changes in testing requirements for your school since *NCLB (No Child Left Behind)* and AYP.
2. What impact does the Highly Qualified Teachers requirement have on your school?
3. What are your thoughts relating to the requirements of students with disabilities and not making AYP?
4. How does your vision guide your total school program?
5. What role has the central office played in your quest for AYP?
6. What has been the change in support and training from the central office since *NCLB* and AYP?
7. How has the individual school philosophy changed since *NCLB* and AYP?
8. Describe your perceptions of accountability.
9. What affect does accountability have on various AYP subgroups?
10. How has funding affected your quest to make AYP?
11. How has funding changed since not making AYP?
12. Describe your perception of *IDEA* (Individuals with Disabilities Act) and *NCLB/AYP*?
13. Describe your perception of expecting each subgroup including special education students, free/reduced lunch, etc. to make AYP?
14. Describe how you communicate expectations of *NCLB/AYP* to teachers?
15. Please share any other thoughts relating to *NCLB/AYP* and other accountability initiatives?

Interview 2

II. Research Question 2

What is this principal doing to cope with the failure to make AYP and the obstacles he faced?

Interview Questions

1. Please share any reflections, thoughts, or changes since we last met regarding your principalship?
2. What obstacles have you faced as principal while striving to achieve accountability mandates such as AYP and how are you dealing with these obstacles to include:
 1. Time Issues/Lack of Time
 2. Attendance Issues
 3. Students with Disabilities
 4. Low Parental Involvement
 5. Low Morale
 6. Funding
 7. Management Duties Conflicting with Instructional Duties
 8. Stress
 9. Bureaucracy
 10. Highly Qualified Teachers
 11. Conflicting Programs
 12. Paperwork
 13. Pressure/Stress
 14. Other Obstacles
3. How are you coping with increased mandates for accountability?
4. How are you coping with the changing nature of your work as instructional leader?
5. What are your thoughts on remaining in the principalship due to accountability mandates?
6. What are your thoughts on remaining in the principalship due to not making AYP?
7. How has the label of “failing” affected you and your school?
8. What are your perceptions on failing to make AYP based on only one subgroup failing to meet the requirement?
9. How has accountability impacted teacher morale?
10. How has parental involvement changed since *NCLB* and AYP?
11. How has teaching techniques changed at your school since accountability measures like AYP?
12. What sort of “dark” thoughts have crossed your mind as you face the reality of consequences for not making AYP?
13. What are your perceptions regarding others using “dark” ideas to achieve AYP?
14. How have you dealt with the obstacle of getting the staff to believe that they can achieve in spite of poverty, low-level education of parents, lack of appropriate student attainment levels, lack of parental involvement, and other negative

- aspects?
15. How do you deal with families that do not have high standards for student achievement?
 16. How are you dealing with the stress or pressure from the policies governing AYP?
 17. Describe any staff reprimands related to accountability “not doing their jobs” to include students not being prepared for the CRCT and low test scores?

III. Research Question 3

How does one principal of a failing school perceive what he is doing, and how does what he does affect student achievement and the education process?

Interview Questions

1. How do you perceive your role and how does this role affect student achievement?
2. How has accountability mandates changed your role as leader?
3. What changes have taken place in your relationship with stakeholders since not making AYP?
4. What leadership roles do you assume?
5. Describe any sense of desperation you may have experienced since not making AYP?
6. How has your view of instruction changed in relation to student achievement since AYP?
7. Please share any other perceptions of what you are doing and how it affects student achievement.

Interview 3

IV. Research Question 4

What have been the most significant changes in the work of this principal since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

Interview Questions

1. Please share any reflections, thoughts, or changes since we last met regarding your principalship?
2. How have the implementation of *NCLB* and AYP affected your role as instructional leader to include the following areas?
 - 1) Testing
 - 2) Data Analysis
 - 3) Instructional Support
 - 4) Other
3. Describe any increases in stressors or pressures since the onset of *NCLB* and AYP.
4. How has the pressures of accountability affected your stress level?
5. How has your time spent in the classroom changed since *NCLB* and AYP?
6. How has professional development and/or faculty meetings changed since not

- making AYP?
7. In what ways has standardized testing changed your focus of what things are the most important?
 8. How has accountability mandates changed your focus on school improvement?
 9. What changes have taken place in the way you analyze data since not making AYP?
 10. How has your communication changed with stakeholders for your school?
 11. Please share any other thoughts regarding changes in your work as principal since *NCLB/AYP*?

V. Research Question 5

In what ways has this principal been held accountable?

Interview Questions

1. What does accountability mean for you and your school?
2. Describe how your role affects student achievement?
3. How has accountability affected your staff morale?
4. How has accountability affected your time management?
5. In what ways do you believe your evaluation as an effective principal has changed since AYP?
6. How have your expectations for students changed since AYP?
7. Describe how the public perception of your school has changed since not making AYP?
8. What aspects do you believe are beyond the control of the school and/or system that have a huge impact on the school and its student achievement and ability to make AYP?
9. What consequences have you experienced since not attaining AYP?
10. As a result of the consequences in question 9; have there been any consequences for any staff members?
11. Has there been any “fall-out” from these consequences for the staff?
12. How have you handled any “fall-out” from the consequences the staff may have been issued?
13. Describe the biggest risk that you may have experienced relative to school improvement?
14. Please share any other thoughts about accountability?

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent

Dear Principal:

I am writing to request your participation in a dissertation research study titled “A Case Study: The Perspectives of One Elementary School Principal Whose School Did Not Make Adequate Yearly Progress In the State of Georgia.” This dissertation research is being conducted as the final requirement for my Doctorate of Education degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Georgia, under the direction of:

Dr. Sally J. Zepeda
Professor
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
University of Georgia River's Crossing
850 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30602-4811
(706) 542-0408 - Office

The dissertation research focuses on the changes in work of the principal during the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This study also focuses on the principal’s perception of his work and how it affects student achievement. The selected participant will be a principal in a school district from the state of Georgia.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. However, I would hope that you see the potential benefit in this research dissertation and choose to participate. There are no school district, school, or educator identifiers in the interview questions. The interviews contain open-ended questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the principal. It will take 90 minutes for each of the three interviews. I will mail to the principal a packet containing a cover letter and the interview questions. The packet will also contain transcribed notes from prior interviews for so that the principal can verify the transcribed data for accuracy.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this dissertation research. If additional information is needed to help complete this request, please do not hesitate to call me at
or email me at

Sincerely,

Elvis B. Davis
Doctoral Candidate

Research at The University of Georgia which involves human participants is overseen by the

Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Institutional Review Board, Office of the Vice President for Research, 606 Boyd Graduate Studies Center, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA. 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199.

APPENDIX C

District Consent

Dear School District:

I am writing to request your school district's participation in a dissertation research study titled "A Case Study: The Perspectives of One Elementary School Principal Whose School Did Not Make Adequate Yearly Progress In the State of Georgia." This dissertation research is being conducted as the final requirement for my Doctorate of Education degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Georgia, under the direction of:

Dr. Sally J. Zepeda
Professor
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
University of Georgia River's Crossing
850 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30602-4811
(706) 542-0408 - Office

The dissertation research focuses on the changes in work of the principal during the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This study also focuses on the principal's perception of his work and how it affects student achievement. The selected participant will be a principal in a school district from the state of Georgia.

The participation of the principal in your district is strictly voluntary. However, I would hope that you see the potential benefit in this research dissertation and choose to participate. There are no school district, school, or educator identifiers in the interview questions. The interview questions will contain open-ended questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the principal. It will take 90 minutes for each of the three interviews. I will mail to the principal a packet containing a cover letter and the interview questions. The packet will also contain transcribed notes from prior interviews so that the principal can verify the transcribed data for accuracy.

Thank you for agreeing to allow the school in your school district to participate in this dissertation research. If approved, please forward written permission on your school letterhead to: Elvis B. Davis, . If additional information is needed to help complete this request, please do not hesitate to call me at or email me at:

Sincerely,

Elvis B. Davis

Doctoral Candidate

Research at The University of Georgia which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Institutional Review Board, Office of the Vice President for Research, 606 Boyd Graduate Studies Center, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA. 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199.

APPENDIX D

Participant Consent Form

I agree to take part in a research study titled “A Case Study: The Perspectives of One Elementary School Principal Whose School Did Not Make Adequate Yearly Progress in the State of Georgia” which is being conducted by Elvis B. Davis, a doctoral student in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia, , under the direction of Dr. Sally J. Zepeda, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia, 706-542-0408. My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty OR LOSS OF BENEFITS TO WHICH I AM OTHERWISE ENTITLED. I can ask to have information related to me, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to provide an analysis of the perceptions of one elementary school principal from the state of Georgia relating to the perceptions of duties and responsibilities when his school did not make adequate yearly progress. Through reflection the principal will be able to examine his practices related to being a principal, work he does to facilitate school-wide improvement, and to envision what steps are necessary to turn a school around.

The benefits of this research will be to provide personal insights to help other schools and principals in the area or state to handle the facets of not making AYP. This study will seek to help provide strategies that are beneficial to elementary school principals as they prepare to transform their schools from failing to non-failing. Hopefully, the findings of this study will also help to provide insight about the obstacles, trials, actions, concerns, and successes that this principal experienced during the 3 years his school failed to make AYP. Moreover, the researchers want to explore the perspectives of the principal related to the personal and professional toll that not making AYP took on him as principal.

I will participate in three interviews over a period of 3 months. The total duration of my participation in this study will be 8 months. There will be a time limit of 90 minutes per interview. The setting for the interviews will be the school and office of the principal so that artifacts and other supporting documents can be easily accessible. The principal will be mailed a copy of the interview questions prior to each interview. Each interview will be audio taped as the researcher takes fieldnotes. The first interview will consist of asking open-ended questions regarding the principal’s perceptions of policies governing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The second interview will consist of asking open-ended questions dealing with obstacles the principal faced while trying to achieve AYP, perceptions of the principal’s role and how this role affects student achievement, and follow up questions from the 1st interview. The third interview will consist of asking open-ended questions pertaining to changes in the work of the principal, ways the principal has been held accountable since not attaining AYP, and follow up question from the 2nd interview. The data from the audiotapes will be transcribed after each interview and verified by the principal for accuracy. No risks are foreseen. No discomforts or stresses are expected. There will be no deception involved in this study.

Any INDIVIDUALLY identifying information to include audiotapes, field notes, artifacts, and

other supporting documents will be kept confidential and secured in a locked filing cabinet. The participant can review any collected data at any time. All INDIVIDUALLY identifying information will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. All audiotapes will be erased at the conclusion of the study, transcripts will be kept secured in a locked file cabinet for 5 years AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY. The only people who will know that the participant is a research subject will be the researchers. No individually identifiable information about the participant, or provided by participant during the research, will be shared with others. Pseudonyms will be used for the participant and the school district.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at:

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Researcher Signature Date

Telephone _____

Email _____

Name of Participant Signature Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu