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IMPOVERISHED SCHOOLS THAT ARE PERFORMING SUCCESSFULLY IN
SOUTH CAROLINA: HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM IMPOVERISHED SCHOOLS
THAT ARE UNDERPERFORMING?

By
Sheka Houston

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Sheka Houston under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

IMPOVERISHED SCHOOLS THAT ARE PERFORMING SUCCESSFULLY IN SOUTH CAROLINA. HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM IMPOVERISHED SCHOOLS THAT ARE UNDERPERFORMING? Houston, Sheka, 2021: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

This case study examined four impoverished middle schools in South Carolina to identify the factors prevalent in successfully performing impoverished middle schools which set them apart from underperforming impoverished middle schools. The study's objective was to provide principals working in similar (impoverished) settings an understanding of the factors they might wish to replicate in improving school achievement. Data were collected from several sources. Qualitative data points were collected from the principal and teacher interviews as well as obtained from school report cards to assess student performance, school environment, student engagement, and teacher retention rates. A walkthrough was to be conducted at each school; however, the restrictions of COVID-19 did not permit that to happen. An interview was conducted with the principals to allow them to elaborate on what attributed to the successful performance or underperformance of their schools. All the data collected was utilized to determine if the impoverished schools that were performing well were more aligned to Edmonds's (Taylor, 2008) Seven Correlates than the two schools that were not performing well.

Keywords: impoverished, middle schools, school performance, effective schools

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Currently, there is legislation in place in South Carolina that is slated to sanction districts, schools, teachers and school leaders under the new accountability rating. Since no school in South Carolina received a school report card for the past 4 years, school leaders have not been provided with any clear direction as to how to increase performance or understand how the report card would turn out since the calculating formulas were just recently approved. Sanctions without directions or appropriate training place certain districts and leaders in a position to potentially fail immediately. This research study will provide suggestions on training and resources school leaders and districts may need to combat this unexplained phenomena. This is a very important piece of the puzzle currently missing from the new model of accountability in South Carolina.

Under the Every School Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements, South Carolina recently updated its accountability model for the state to meet federal guidelines (Southern Regional Education Board, 2018). This is the first time since 2014 schools in South Carolina have received a report card rating (Gilreath, 2018). The rating system implemented by the state, as in most other states, uses end-of grade, standardized high stakes testing as a measure of accountability. On a 100% scale, standardized high stakes tests in English language arts and math account for 40% of the points an elementary or middle school can be awarded for achievement. Another 40% is used to account for student growth in the areas of English language arts and math, examining all students and the lowest achieving 20% of students. Ten percent of the points are dedicated to the proficiency of students in the areas of science and social studies, and 10% is awarded for a positive and effective learning environment as evidenced through engagement surveys

(Southern Regional Education Board, 2018).

Statement of the Problem/Nature of the Problem

The problem with the accountability model is that research in New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Iowa, and Michigan found that the outcomes of standardized testing do not reflect the quality of instruction, schools, or school leaders it may be intended to conclude (Tienken, 2017). Technical manuals produced by standardized testing companies do not even support the notion (Tienken, 2017). Therefore, when legislation such as The Education “Reform” Bill proposes to sanction schools and add labels such as state “turn-around” schools, dismissing the principal and teachers for underperforming under the new accountability model, it raises great concern for many educators (Gilreath, 2018). More specifically, educators in middle schools that serve in areas where high instances of poverty are prevalent is a concern because of the correlation between poverty and lower standardized test scores (Malburg, 2012). These children enter school with needs that may be different from their more affluent counterparts, but the expectation is that all schools, no matter what challenges may exist, perform with the level of expected outcomes (Malburg, 2012; Southern Regional Education Board, 2018). The challenges that exist within the middle school model itself make it even more challenging for educators (Rockoff & Lockwood, 2010). Finally, research has already informed us that teacher-made assessments or grade point averages (GPAs) are much better indicators of student success as a first year college student than the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores (Tienken, 2017). With these known facts, the question must be asked, “why are standardized high stakes tests so heavily relied upon to determine the performance outcomes of students, teachers, school leaders, schools, and

districts?” With the new accountability model in place in South Carolina, what can school leaders learn from schools that are meeting the mark, especially middle schools in impoverished areas?

This study examined four impoverished middle schools in South Carolina to identify the factors prevalent in successfully performing impoverished middle schools and what sets them apart from underperforming impoverished middle schools. The four different schools have a rating of either “excellent,” “good,” “below average,” or “unsatisfactory.” The objective is to provide principals working in similar impoverished settings an understanding of the factors worth replicating to improve school achievement.

Background of the Problem

Student and teacher struggles are easily identified in impoverished schools. Students of poverty normally come from single parent homes, where mom or dad works multiple jobs or very long hours to support the family. If both parents are in the home, many times both work outside the home to provide basic necessities for the family to survive. In many cases, the oldest child is left with the responsibility of acting as the parent by providing dinner, helping siblings with homework, and ensuring bedtime routines are in place (Malburg, 2012). In some cases, without the supervision of an adult, students of poverty may fall prey to gang activity, become promiscuous, or get involved with drugs. Skipping school, resulting in attendance issues, may become a problem as well. Thus, increasing a student’s chances of dropping out of school becomes one of the realities students of poverty must face. This may leave a struggling student living in poverty without the basic needs to survive in school and without a great deal of parental support. As witnesses to their parents, often following the path of their grandparents in

some cases, many students of poverty feel destined for the same journey of knowing someone in jail, having used food stamps for purchases, or having gone to bed hungry (Malburg, 2012).

Students are not the only individuals who struggle in impoverished schools; teachers have a number of issues with which to deal with as well. These teachers work with students who struggle to survive, find food, and stay out of trouble. Teachers must still be cognizant of these issues in determining ways to meet the students' academic needs. The task can be overwhelming to teachers. The more teachers can identify with students, what they have going on in their lives, and their living situations, the more helpful it can be to the student and increases the likelihood of having a chance at success (Malburg, 2012).

According to the National Center for Children of Poverty (2018), 15 million (21%) children in the United States live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level of \$22,350.00 per year for a family of four. Research shows that twice this amount is needed to cover basic expenses for families of this size. In 1965, legislation to address this socioeconomic gap was passed in the form of Title I or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; Hooker, 2013). The program provides grants to states from the federal government to provide districts serving low academically achieving students in low-income areas. The program was designed to accomplish the four following goals:

- Provide supplementary education to students eligible for services;
- Provide additional funding to schools and districts serving high concentrations of children from low-income families;

- Focus educators on the needs of special education populations; and
- Improve the academic achievement of eligible students, reduce performance gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students, and assist eligible students in meeting high academic standards.

Tackling the challenges of poverty can be difficult, but coupled with the challenges that exist with the middle school model can be damaging (Rockoff & Lockwood, 2010). The middle school model was adopted 40 years ago and typically includes Grades 6-8 or Grades 5-8. Neither middle schools nor junior high schools that span Grades 7-8 have ever been popular among private schools. However, for the past 2 decades, education researchers and developmental psychologists have documented changes in attitude and motivation as children enter adolescence. Some have concluded that these changes are a result of middle school curricula and practices. Now reformers in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Maryland, and New York with large urban districts are challenging the notion that grouping students in middle grades in their own building is the right approach. Many districts in these areas have now moved to a K-8 model. Researchers found that students who entered middle school as opposed to remaining in a K-8 setting experience declines in academic achievement (Rockoff & Lockwood, 2010). Moreover, the group at the middle school continued to decline in academic achievement the longer they remained in the setting. The researchers pointed out these findings were apparent in urban and rural settings with large incidences of poverty and not in affluent middle schools. When comparing the models, there was no significant difference in resources or class size, but the biggest difference was cohort size. What was found is that cohort size had a profound influence on student achievement

with students scoring 0.04 standard deviations in English and math away from the norm. Middle school cohort average sizes are roughly 200 students, whereas student cohorts in K-8 models are approximately 75 students. The challenges of poverty and the middle school model can become overwhelming to districts and teachers who are already struggling to close the achievement gap (Rockoff & Lockwood, 2010).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Title I funding aims to bridge the gap between low-income students and other students in any setting, “ensuring that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (Malburg, 2015, p. 1). Title I funds can be used for improving curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and programs and increasing staff. In many cases, Title I funding is used to supplement instruction in reading and math. Annually, the Title I program serves over six million students primarily in the elementary grades. Students served by Title I funds include migrant students with limited English proficiency, homeless students, students with disabilities, neglected students, delinquent students, at-risk students, and any students in need (Malburg, 2015).

Although many states accept the federal funding, there are several requirements with which they must be compliant such as

- have academic standards for all public elementary and secondary school students;
- test students in English and math every year between Grades 3 and 8 and once in high school;

- report on student achievement by average school performance as well as by the performance of specified subgroups;
- ensure that all students are academically proficient by the spring of 2014; and
- hold districts and schools accountable for demonstrating adequate yearly progress in student achievement (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004).

Although the federal program has invested \$200 billion into districts and schools, findings about its impact on student achievement are mixed (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004). From the early 1970s to the late 1980s, the Black-White achievement gap narrowed tremendously by at least one-third, much of which may be accredited to Title I efforts. Although positive, some emphasized the gains were made in the mastery of basic skills versus the mastery of the rigorous state standards (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004). In addition, some naysayers argue the narrowing gap was attributed more to the rising living standards for minorities and school desegregation than Title I (Mast, 2003). Two other authoritative studies from the 1990s found that achievement gaps between disadvantaged and advantaged students were not reduced by Title I, and that Title I tends to achieve only “modest short-term benefits” (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004, p. 2). The biggest problem with determining the effectiveness of Title I as a grant program is that it is not a specific intervention that can be easily evaluated but a significant funding stream with a large number of requirements that cut across other complex areas such as teacher quality, school reform, and curriculum and instruction (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004). Since growth has been stagnant since the 1970s and 1980s, there is little to

no evidence that supports Title I is helping low-performing students, making many question the funding and if the funds would be put to better use elsewhere (Mast, 2003). Title I does provide students living in poverty with extra educational supports needed to achieve academically. However, despite its efforts, Title I funding alone cannot solve all the educational needs of children living in poverty (Michelman, 2016).

In 2011, Stanford sociologist Sean F. Reardon concluded that the test score differences associated with poverty were considered greater than those associated with race (Camp, 2018). Reardon also concluded the gap was widening (Camp, 2018). Therefore, the notion that the best way to alleviate poverty is to increase accountability by way of test scores ignores the fact that two thirds of all educational outcomes are influenced by out-of-school factors (Camp, 2018). Unfortunately, factors outside of school, such as poverty, correlate strongly with academic results. For example, the ACT identified a set of benchmarks to compare how well students are prepared for college and career. Students from families with incomes above \$100,000 met all four benchmarks, while only 13% of low-income students did. In 2017, the gap was reflected by similar results in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. Approximately two thirds of the students from low-income families did not meet grade level standards in English language arts. In addition, one third of the students from nonimpoverished families reflected scores that exceeded standards, but only one in 10 students from low-income families did so (Camp, 2018). College completion rates have grown higher for higher income families without changing dramatically for low-income families. In addition, the gap between mastering soft skills and participating in extracurricular activities continues to widen. Research has found that poor children, as

opposed to children in homes with higher incomes, are not read to aloud as often or exposed to complex language and large vocabularies. Low-income students are twice as likely to be retained and one-third less likely to attend college than their more advantaged peers (Wong, 2003). Since poverty often fosters an unstable and even unsafe home environment, many citizens in one of the richest countries in the world struggle to survive. They are unable to earn decent living wages because they do not possess the skills that are needed to compete. There are 13 million people unemployed and 3.8 million jobs available that do not have skilled workers to fill them, making the phenomena of closing the achievement gap a very major concern (Hooker, 2013).

Finally, the rural rate of child poverty is growing and has exceeded the urban rate every year since the 1960s (Hooker, 2013). Although challenges exist in schools with a higher incidence of poverty, these schools are still held to the same accountability model, and the students are expected to achieve at the same levels as their higher income peers. It has been referred to as “high expectations,” No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to name one. Some impoverished schools do not receive Title I funding at all since the district determines how the grant is distributed. This is true especially in states like South Carolina that have recently updated the accountability model to follow the federal guidelines for ESSA (Gilreath, 2018).

The South Carolina Department of Education released the state report card on November 29, 2018. Several districts in South Carolina expressed that the state report cards did not “fairly measure students, teachers, and administrators” (Kreber, 2018, p. 1). One district released a press release indicating there were significant problems with the data in several report card calculations that caused the state to delay the release of the

school report cards from November 15 to November 29 (Gilreath, 2018). The delay caused many districts to question the accuracy of the ratings with the new system. All elementary, middle, and high schools receive an overall rating based on a 100-point scale. Aforementioned, this is the first time schools have been rated since 2014. Ratings range from “excellent,” “good,” “average,” “below average,” to “unsatisfactory.” The ratings compare the performance of schools in South Carolina as well as how schools have performed nationally. The new accountability system measures academic performance, college and career readiness, and student achievement. The report card also features the Educational Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) that looks at student growth year after year at a school versus student performance on one assessment for elementary and middle schools. In addition, academic performance, college and career readiness, and student engagement are also measured (Gilreath, 2018).

One superintendent complained that 10% of the schools in the state were predetermined to fail since the bottom 10% of schools will automatically be placed on a priority list in the state. That superintendent’s release discussed how the district knew the quality of its teachers, administrators, and schools and further discussed how professionals from around the world have long argued that testing is not always a fair measure of student success. South Carolina has ranked low in educational assessments such as the ACT and National Assessment of Educational Progress in the past. In 2017, the U.S. News and World Report ranked South Carolina last in educational state rankings (Gilreath, 2018).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the contributing factors to the success

of two impoverished middle schools that scored “excellent” and/or “good” as compared to two nonperforming middle schools in South Carolina that scored “below average” and/or “unsatisfactory.” Looking beyond a rating on a report card will provide school leaders the opportunity to become familiar with the new accountability system, thus providing insight into what this approach looks like in a school, more specifically a middle school. According to the National School Boards Association, the ultimate success of grants like Title I depends upon the ability of local school administrators to determine how to best use limited program funds to serve the needs of children who are struggling to achieve academic success (Hooker, 2013). Sociologist Alan Sadovnik contended that students will benefit if researchers seek to understand why students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not perform well in school and provide practical policy recommendations for successful school reform to reduce the achievement gap (Johnson, 2018). Although some schools in South Carolina have been identified as priority (schools performing in the bottom 10% as compared with all other schools in the state) or comprehensive support and improvement schools (schools performing in the bottom 5% as compared with all other schools in the state), some with high levels of poverty, high percentages of African-American students, and high levels of academic achievement are notable exceptions to this trend (Johnson, 2018). These schools have discovered a way to connect deeply with parents where administrators may spend 50% of their time in the classroom with the teaching staff focused on instructional issues (Johnson, 2018).

In some impoverished schools that receive Title I funds, the grant funds are not adequate to bridge the socioeconomic gap or may not be used most effectively if received

at all (Dynarski & Kainz, 2015). Large portions of school principals report using Title I funds for teacher professional development, which many studies have shown to be ineffective since teachers have reported very little value in the selected professional developments. Title I funds are also spent on after-school and summer programs, technology purchases, and supplemental services, which also have been shown to be ineffective; and class-size reductions, which are unlikely to be of the size needed to generate effects found in previous research (Dynarski & Kainz, 2015).

This study identifies strategies used by two impoverished schools exceeding “good” or “excellent” performance standards in South Carolina to identify focused and effective interventions that will bridge the gap between disadvantaged students and their higher achieving peers. The cohort sizes of each middle school were also examined. Determining strategies to close this gap will be extremely beneficial to schools and communities. By the end of high school, African-American and Latino students have skills in both reading and math that are identical to those of White students at the end of middle school (Lyman & Villani, 2004).

This case study examined qualitative data to identify the actions of four impoverished middle schools in South Carolina. The hope was to provide replicable information to other principals and districts in impoverished settings in an effort for more schools of poverty to experience higher levels of achievement and close the achievement gap. Poorly performing schools of poverty that receive Title I grants fuel the notions that such grant programs should be cut in addition to other sanctions that result from accountability. Not only did South Carolina introduce a new accountability system for every school in the state, there is also proposed legislation, the Education “Reform” Bill

H.3759 and S.419, that would sanction schools that are not performing as measured by the new accountability model (Fanning, 2018). If a school is underperforming (in any area), the school would receive a new label as outlined below:

- A. State “Turn-Around” School: If a school is underperforming the school must become a State “Turn-Around” School which would require the following:
 - a. Use funds to provide compensation incentives in the form of salary supplements to classroom teachers
 - b. Increased monitoring by the State Department of Education.
 - c. New requirements for School Boards
 - d. All individual teachers’ evaluations must be reviewed by the State Department of Education.
 - e. Specific “Font-Size: requirements for advertisements notifying that schools are not performing in local newspapers with a 4.5 by 10 inch advertisement with 24 point font. The ad must also list the names and phone numbers of school board members, the superintendent and the principal.
 - f. Offer annual orientations to parents of turn-around schools.
 - g. Tiered SDE Intervention—Send new non-teachers to “transform” school
 - h. Tiers of SCDE Technical Assistance could include:
 - i. Fire Principal (replaced by SDE employees)
 - ii. Fire all teachers (school will be “Reconstituted” with new teachers
 - iii. SDE can declare a “State of Emergency”
 - iv. External Review Teams will be reinstated.

- B. Chronically-Under-Performing Schools: A new label given to schools who are “unsatisfactory” for 3 of 4 years. All teachers will be fired....and one of the following will happen at the school level as determined by the SDE:
- a. Entire School Reconstituted: Fire all teachers and principal immediately; SDE hires new staff. SDE hires a separate entity to run the school.
 - b. School closed and re-opened: Fire all teachers. Re-Open as a charter or run by a business or non-profit.
 - c. School Closed: Send kids to another school {59-18-1620; pg. 63-64}.
- C. State of Emergency Schools: If the majority of schools in a school district are “Below Average” or Unsatisfactory,” the State Superintendent of Education will declare a *State of Emergency*:
- a. Send ERT’s to make recommendations to SDE how schools should be run.
 - b. Take over decision-making
 - c. After 4 years in “State of Emergency,” the State Board of Education chooses one of the following:
 - i. Transfer schools out of the district....to another district.
 - ii. Close the schools and reopen them as charter schools—or run by a private company.
 - iii. Abolish the school board {59-18-1640; pg. 64-65}
- D. Creates the “SC Transformation School District:” State Superintendent of Education contracts with private companies to run these schools. Schools waived of normal requirements.
- a. All teachers immediately fired...replaced by those selected by private

company.

- b. Receive money per pupil from state (with hope of separate state allocation)
- c. School district where these schools are from...required to provide to school:
 - i. Food service
 - ii. Transportation
 - iii. Student Testing
 - iv. Other
 - v. Schools allowed to use building in former school district. {59-18-1650; pp. 66-68}(Fanning, 2018, pp. 2-3)

The biggest problem with accountability models is that the inclusion of high stakes testing undermines rather than enhances education for all children (Amrein & Berliner, n.d.). Actually, technical manuals published by the creators of standardized assessments ascertain that none of the assessments in use have been validated to judge teachers, school administrators, or student achievement. For example, none of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers research indicates that the assessments were designed to diagnose learning but are simply monitoring devices as evidenced by their technical reports (Tienken, 2017). However, standardized test results are used regularly to make high stakes decisions such as student promotion, student eligibility to participate in advanced coursework, eligibility to graduate high school, and teacher tenure. In 40 states, teachers are evaluated in part based on the results from standardized state tests, as are school administrators in 30 states (Tienken, 2017).

Research in New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Iowa, and Michigan found that the outcomes of standardized testing do not reflect the quality of instruction they are intended to assess; but examining the characteristics of the community could be even more reflective than the tests themselves, raising the possibility of serious flaws with the educational accountability system (Tienken, 2017).

Student scores on mandated standardized tests have been used to evaluate United States educators, students, and schools since President George W. Bush signed NCLB in 2002. Although more than 20 states had previously instituted state testing in some grade levels in the 1990s, NCLB mandated annual standardized testing in all 50 states. The mandate required standardized mathematics and English language arts tests in Grades 3-8 and once in high school. In addition, a standardized science test was required in fourth grade, eighth grade, and once in high school.

The findings of this study could impact lower achieving impoverished schools by providing them with tools and resources that, when implemented, could help them increase academic achievement. With such drastic measures proposed in new legislation surrounding accountability in South Carolina, it is essential to provide school leaders with as much insight as possible to be successful, especially at the middle level. This study took a deeper look into school leaders and their experiences in both high-performing impoverished middle schools and underperforming impoverished middle schools in South Carolina. The school programs and initiatives were examined as well as the experience levels of the teaching staff and their perceptions on factors influencing their schools' levels of performance.

Research Question

My research focused on the significant differences that exist, if any, between the South Carolina middle schools studied in the four rating areas of “excellent,” “good,” “below average,” and “unsatisfactory.”

How aligned are the schools in each rating category to the “Correlates of Effective Schools” by Edmonds, based on principal/teacher responses to the More Effective Schools Staff Survey items and the information gathered in the interview process?

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework to transform high-poverty schools into high-performing schools was developed by Ronald Edmonds through his research conducted during the 1970s. Edmonds’s research began in response to the 1966 Coleman Report that concluded economically disadvantaged minority students could not learn as well as their White counterparts because of a lack of cultural capital (Taylor, 2008). Edmonds, believing all students regardless of background could learn, determined it was the job of the schools to ensure the goal was reached. He began to study schools with high levels of achievement in poor and minority students and from that research developed the effective schools movement. The premise behind the movement was that in order for a school to provide effective instruction to all students, it needs to have the five essential elements referred to by Edmonds as correlates:

1. Strong leadership at the administrative level.
2. High expectations on the part of students and staff.
3. A safe and orderly climate for teaching and learning.

4. An emphasis on school instruction over all other school activities.
5. Frequent and consistent monitoring of student progress.

Edmonds's works include a famous article, "Educational Leadership" (October 1979) in which he concluded,

It seems to me, therefore, that what is left of this discussion are three declarative statements: (a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; and (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.

(Taylor, 2008, p. 2)

This statement was built on research that found that if certain organizing and cultural characteristics were present, all children could be taught the intended curriculum and be held to the high academic standards that would allow them to achieve successfully at the next grade level (Taylor, 2008).

The effective schools movement began to grow not only in the United States but globally, replacing despairing expectations for students in most large cities and rural districts with a vision of hope. The researchers grew in numbers, and thousands were working in over 700 school districts across the country. Some of the momentum from the movement was lost when Ronald Edmonds died of a heart attack in 1983 until the National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development was founded in 1986. This organization was founded in Okemos, Michigan near Michigan State University, where Edmonds carried out his work with colleagues until he moved to the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University in the late 1970s (Taylor, 2008).

It is estimated that over 300 districts were able to implement the full Effective Schools Process in the years 1985-1995. Schools exist today that benefited from this transformation and still harbor the characteristics of effective schools, called Correlates of Effective Schools by Edmonds. These schools continue to reach and teach students so they can achieve intended objectives and are well-prepared for the curriculum taught at the next grade level.

The five correlates were later reorganized, recrafted, and expanded by the National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development's board of Edmonds's former colleagues and other followers, and are the official Effective Schools Process stated correlates.

Clear and Focused School Mission

There is a clearly articulated mission for the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.

Safe and Orderly Environment

There is an orderly, purposeful atmosphere that is free from the threat of physical harm for both students and staff. However, the atmosphere is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

High Expectations

The school displays a climate of expectation in which the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that they (the staff) have the capability to help students achieve such mastery.

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task

Teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in basic skills areas. For a high percentage of that allocated time, students are engaged in planned learning activities directly related to the identified objectives.

Instructional Leadership

The principal acts as the instructional leader who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents, and students and understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program at the school.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Feedback on student academic progress is frequently obtained. Multiple assessment methods such as teacher-made tests, samples of student work, mastery skills checklists, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-referenced tests are used. The results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.

Positive Home-School Relations

Parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given an opportunity to play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission (Taylor, 2008).

Definition of Terms

To properly discuss and research the topic of this study, several key terms need to be defined. The operational definitions of the key terms are as follows.

Accountability

Being held responsible for specified results or outcomes of an activity over which

one has authority (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004).

Adequate Yearly Progress

The measure by which schools, districts, and states are held accountable for student performance under Title I of NCLB, which is currently ESEA (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004).

At-Risk Students

Term used to describe students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school. It is also applied to students who face circumstances that could jeopardize their ability to complete school, such as homelessness, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, or transiency. In addition, it refers to learning disabilities, low test scores, disciplinary problems, grade retentions, or other learning-related factors that could adversely affect the educational performance and attainment of some students (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

According to a report from the state of Washington in 2012, ESEA was passed in 1965 as a part of the “War on Poverty.” ESEA emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability. The law authorizes federally funded education programs that are administered by the states. In 2002, Congress amended ESEA and renamed it NCLB. Because of the negative connotations associated with NCLB, the Obama administration reworked some of the legal requirements, reverted back to the name ESEA, and has yet to complete the necessary work for reauthorization (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.).

Poverty

The three most common measures of poverty are income, assets, and socioeconomic metrics. Measures in the last category go beyond financial data to account for health, nutrition, infant mortality, sanitation, and other aspects of human well-being (Gorman, 2003).

Title I

Title I, Part A (Title I) of ESEA as amended provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children can meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are currently allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Priority School

Priority schools are defined as schools performing at or below the 10th percentile among all schools in the state. Priority schools are identified every 3 years, in alignment with the state's interim target cycles, with the exception of this cycle which will extend from 2018-2020. Each school will receive state technical assistance funds and access to the South Carolina School Improvement Framework, Evidence-Based Intervention Guide, and professional learning opportunities (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018b).

Comprehensive Support and Improvement School

Comprehensive support and improvement schools are defined as Title I schools performing at or below the fifth percentile of all Title I schools in the state.

Comprehensive support and improvement schools are identified every 3 years, in alignment with the state's interim target cycles, with the exception of this cycle which will extend from 2018-2020. Each school will receive technical assistance funds and be assigned a state level transformation coach (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018a).

Educational Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS)

Developed by SAS which is headquartered in the Triangle area of Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, EVAAS collects student data and creates reports that are used to measure teacher and school effectiveness (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018c).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In an effort to fully investigate the research question, it was imperative to obtain information about successful programs and great examples of Edmonds's correlates in practice in schools to better grasp the perspective of different educators who were included in the study. The information provided the necessary background to assist in the approach to this study. In addition, the information gathered helped provide insight into the success or lack of success experienced at the schools included in the study. It is not only important to gain a great understanding of the correlates but also poverty and middle school challenges.

Challenges of Schools of Poverty

Poverty

There are several myths surrounding poverty. One myth is that poor people are lazy and have poor work ethics. The National Center for Children in Poverty (2018) showed 54% of children in low-income families have at least one employed parent and many work more than one job. Jobs that require parents to work evenings and have unpaid leave restrict access to school involvement and create the myth that poor parents do not value education. Other myths are that poor people are deficient linguistically and tend to abuse drugs and alcohol. Language is assumed to be deficient, and drug use is as prevalent in middle class and wealthy communities but more visible in poor neighborhoods. Educators must be willing to ignore the myths (Crum, 2013).

Although several myths exist about poverty, it is something that can affect student learning and a teacher's classroom in a variety of ways. Students living in stressful, high crime areas may lack the necessary sleep for the brain to function properly (Crum, 2013;

Huettl, 2016). Students arriving to school tired and anxious may lead to behavior problems in the classroom and add extra stress for the teacher. Research has shown that before age six, affluent children spend 1,300 more hours outside their homes than low-income children. Affluent children have opportunities to attend daycare and visit shopping malls, museums, or other schools. When high-income children start school, they have spent approximately 400 hours more than poor children in literacy activities. This could mean that students from affluent families are starting school with 57 extra school days than less affluent children (Crum, 2013).

Research shows that students in poverty do not start school on equal footing with students above the poverty line and may never catch up academically. Students of poverty can drop out of school as early as 9 years of age. Educators versed in poverty realize that students need hope, despite being poor or a minority student. In these instances, many students thrive in spite of poverty, becoming avid readers to escape a poverty stricken home life. Students with special talents or abilities rise above poverty and excel in life. Gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have traits of resilience. Abraham Lincoln rose to fame from poverty through his own achievements. He was aware of his uncultured background but pressed forward toward his goals (Crum, 2013). These are some of the same characteristics that may exist in students of high-poverty, high-performing schools in South Carolina. In addition, the teachers in these schools may have had specialized training in how to manage the challenges of high-poverty students, resulting in success with the population versus not having the training or success in other school settings that do not have the initiative.

Perceptions of Schools of Poverty

Not only are there myths surrounding poverty but also perceptions about schools of poverty. Prior studies have indicated that high-poverty schools are perceived as having ineffective leadership. Additionally, depending upon where the school is located, views surrounding school culture may assume that many students are working below level (Crum, 2013). Some anthropologists categorize this as ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is a perception where the culture of others is seen as less important or not as natural as the culture the person is experiencing. Teachers in high-poverty, low-performing schools may have this perception. Other studies support the notion that dedicated teachers have strong personal feelings about working in high-poverty schools and are loyal, dedicated, and invested in supporting the school's leadership and continuously improving the school's culture. School culture, leadership, and poverty were reviewed to determine if a significant difference existed in the perceptions of teachers working in impoverished schools and non-impoverished schools. A school located in a high-poverty area may appear less effective than one located in an affluent neighborhood. Educators know that schools are ever changing with each attempt to reform public schools, and this affects school culture and leadership. School administrators know that in order to maintain a positive perception of a school, there must be a healthy school culture while lending support to faculty with managing student conduct, instructional practices, and strong school leadership (Crum, 2013).

Woes in the Middle School Coupled with Challenges of Poverty

The challenges of poverty coupled with the challenges that exist in a middle school setting can be very damaging to students. Entering a middle school causes a sharp

drop in student achievement as opposed to the performance of students remaining in K-8 schools. The achievement of middle school students continues to decline in the subsequent years they spend at the middle level. More disturbing than the decline is that there is no evidence to show that students catch up with those who remained in the K-8 environment once they have all entered high school (Supovitz, 2019). Achievement drops are also observed as students move from middle school to high school, suggesting that moving from one grade span to another adversely affects student performance. However, the drops experienced at the high school level are only noted in the ninth grade, suggesting that a transition during the middle years is more damaging to adolescent students. Research has suggested that entering middle school in sixth grade increases the probability of an individual becoming an early dropout by 18%. Entering seventh grade does not appear to increase the dropout rate but increases the probability that a student will be retained in ninth grade by 1%. For some time, researchers believed that negative effects of middle school only existed in urban areas and large cities; however, it has now been proven that adverse effects also exist in rural areas (Supovitz, 2019).

After examining several characteristics of Florida elementary, middle, and K-8 schools, the most apparent difference across school types involved cohort sizes or the average number of students in each grade level. Research in Florida schools by way of a survey of middle school and K-8 principals suggested that parents are worried about violence in the school (Rockoff & Lockwood, 2010; West & Schwerdt, 2012). Through those surveys, it was also concluded that the overall climate for student learning is worse in middle schools than in schools that serve students from elementary through Grade 8 (West & Schwerdt, 2012). Developmental psychologists have shown that adolescent

children commonly exhibit traits such as negativity, low self-esteem, and an inability to judge the risks and consequences of their actions, which may make them especially difficult to educate in large groups (Rockoff & Lockwood, 2010). This information can be useful as South Carolina attempts to reform education. It may be more productive to restructure schools that are problematic rather than release the school leaders and all of the teachers as a solution to some of the problems that exist in education, especially at the middle level (West & Schwerdt, 2012).

Successful Schools of Poverty

Despite the many challenges that exist in impoverished schools, there are schools across the nation that experience groundbreaking achievement for all students, affording students with individual access and opportunity (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Maynard, 2012). Furthermore, there are unique characteristics and processes common to schools where all children are learning, regardless of family background called correlates (Lezotte, 1999). The seven correlates that refuted the 1966 Coleman Report that suggested family background as opposed to public schools was the reason for student success in school are as follows: clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn time on task, safe and orderly environment, and home-school relations. Ronald Edmonds, the director of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University, set out to find schools with low-income families that were experiencing high levels of success. His research and the replicable research of others such as Lezotte found the seven correlates above to exist in successful schools with low-income student populations. This type of research has been conducted in all types of schools to include suburban, rural, urban, high schools,

middle schools, and elementary schools; and high, middle, and low socioeconomic communities (Lezotte, 1999).

Clear and Focused School Mission

Edmonds defined a clear and focused school mission as a clearly articulated mission for the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability (Taylor, 2008). When the mission is clear and focused, everyone can work towards common goals and be held accountable for the work towards those goals. A clear and focused school mission would have an impact on the school culture and the ability to retain teachers (Taylor, 2008).

School Mission

At one school of poverty that has experienced success, Newfield School in Bridgeport, Connecticut, the teachers, staff, and the principal collaboratively created their mission. The unit decided children were first. Their mission was to develop an effective partnership among all parents, community members, and staff members as stakeholders in student lives (Lyman & Villani, 2004). Together, the stakeholders planned to work collaboratively to develop positive learning communities where all students will benefit from quality education in a secure and nurturing environment. As a result, the unit believed students would become lifelong learners and become productive citizens who would empower the community through their many successes (Lyman & Villani, 2004). Part of Newfield's success can be attributed to the clear and focused school mission. Fifty-four percent of the students from Newfield achieved mastery on the reading assessment as compared to 37.5% in the district and 69.2% in the state. In writing, 69.8%

achieved mastery compared to 57% districtwide and 76.5% statewide. In mathematics, 55.3% of students achieved mastery compared to 52.4% in the district and 78% in the state. The school also developed shared goals for literacy, numeracy, school climate, pupil services, and parent communication (Lyman & Villani, 2004).

School Culture of Impoverished Schools

A clear school mission is important and definitely can impact the school culture. School culture has been described as the interaction of attitudes and beliefs held by stakeholders inside and outside the organization to include cultural norms of the school and the relationships among individuals in the school (Crum, 2013). School culture embodies leadership, environmental conditions, and morale (Crum, 2013). School culture is multifaceted and has the ability to influence every aspect of an organization. A positive school culture involves teachers feeling included and supported. Teacher job satisfaction improves when the school supports active involvement in decision-making. Changing school culture in high-poverty schools is a difficult task and requires teachers and leaders to make paradigm shifts (Crum, 2013). School culture is built on trust and good training. School cultures become stronger when the staff know what is expected and how to accomplish those expectations, and then a sense of freedom and innovation is released while trust begins to develop.

One way to maintain a positive school culture is by investing in human capital. In many cases this boosts morale (Crum, 2013). Maintaining high teacher morale requires a principal's support of high student learning and nurturing the school environment. Without the proper school culture, even dedicated teachers may begin to feel burnout. Educators who choose to stay and teach in high-poverty conditions view their job as an

asset when they consider it extremely rewarding and deeply personal (Crum, 2013). A recent study by MetLife showed a decline in teacher morale nationwide that may be linked to results from test scores and evaluations (Crum, 2013). Teachers may be allowing the negative test scores to impact their morale instead of using data as an incentive to improve (Crum, 2013). These different mindsets may be prevalent in the four schools that were included in the study.

Teacher Retention of Impoverished Schools

Clear and focused mission could create a positive school culture, resulting in teacher retention in impoverished schools. Turnover rates in teaching are much higher than in most high-status, high-paying professions (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Of the 3.5 million public school teachers in the United States, about half a million leave their schools annually. Approximately 60% of the turnover results from teachers transferring between schools, and about 40% results from teachers leaving the profession (Simon & Johnson, 2013). High rates of turnover make it difficult for schools to attract and develop effective teachers (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Teacher retention is especially important for low-income students who research suggests are especially dependent upon their teachers (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Many teachers avoid employment at schools with high levels of poor and minority students all together, while others leave within 3-5 years (Simon & Johnson, 2013; Maynard, 2012). Inequity, as it relates to access of effective teachers, contributes greatly to the large achievement gap between poor and minority students (Maynard, 2012). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 45% of White fourth-grade students achieve at or above the proficient level in reading, while only 14% of Black students achieve at that level. In many states the gap between White

and minority students' graduation rates is startling, with some instances of disparity as much as 40 or 50 percentage points. Seventy-two percent of White students enrolled in ninth grade graduated from high school on schedule as compared to just over half of the Black and Hispanic students of the same group (Maynard, 2012). It was interesting to investigate how high-poverty, well-performing schools are maintaining quality teachers and if some other factors contributed to success in the area of teacher retention.

The disparity in a child's education begins early for children of color. According to Maynard (2012), 30% of White kindergarten students go on to graduate from college, while only 15% of Black kindergarten students go on to graduate from college. Maynard also concluded that providing low-income and minority students with highly effective teachers can significantly boost their learning ability and narrow achievement gaps. If Black students were taught consecutively by four highly effective teachers, it would close the average Black-White achievement gap (Maynard, 2012).

Teacher retention not only contributes to the achievement gap but is also very costly. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimated that nationally, \$7.34 billion are spent each year replacing teachers (Simon & Johnson, 2013). On average, in urban districts, individual schools spend \$70,000 annually on costs associated with turnover, while non-urban schools spend \$33,000 per year on average. Teachers are more likely to leave high-poverty, high-minority schools (Simon & Johnson, 2013). The fundamental finding from the Education Trust (2010) studies was that no matter how important demographic variables may appear in their association with student achievement, teaching quality is the most dominant factor in deterring student success (Maynard, 2012). Teacher quality was validated by Marzano (2012) as the most

important factor in student achievement. It may be helpful for administrators in high-poverty schools with low achievement and high turnover to learn how high-performing counterparts are attracting and maintaining teachers (Marzano, 2012).

Teachers working in impoverished schools serve many children who travel to school hungry. Hungry children operate in survival mode and prioritize meals as more important than schoolwork. On the contrary, teachers in low-poverty or more affluent schools may have more students arriving at school ready to learn because they have access to more support and resources from home. These two very different realities cause teachers in low-poverty or more affluent schools to face very different obstacles than teachers in high-poverty schools (Crum, 2013). These very different environments are in no way accounted for in the South Carolina accountability rating system.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Edmonds defined a safe and orderly environment as one that is orderly and has a purposeful atmosphere, free from threat of physical harm for both students and staff (Taylor, 2008). In addition, the atmosphere is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning (Taylor, 2008). A safe and orderly environment can be obtained through smaller class sizes, alternative schooling, noninstructional services that build student achievement, learning communities, support services, and school-based health and human service centers (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Smaller Class Sizes

Many teachers of secondary learners believe small class sizes benefit low-achieving students, allowing teachers to spend more time working with them one-on-one in small groups. According to Rubenstein and Wodatch (2000), small classes help

teachers find more opportunities to cover the curriculum in greater depth; spend less time on administrative functions, leaving more time for teaching; and improve the monitoring of student behavior. Although most of the research involving small class sizes involves primary schools, three of the secondary schools in the study used funds to reduce class sizes in core subject areas due to the benefits cited above (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Eisenhower in Illinois and East Hartford in Connecticut offer summer transition programs for incoming ninth graders who were considered at risk of performing poorly in high school. The programs are designed to ease student anxiety about entering high school. They also review the study and academic skills needed for high school. A middle school in Minnesota offers weeklong intersession programs during school vacations. The goal is to help students catch up at key points during the school year instead of waiting until it is too late for help (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Alternative Schooling

Many schools house self-contained and alternative education programs for students who have not succeeded in traditional school settings. The program is designed for students who have dropped out or fallen behind in earning graduation credits. Hoover High School in San Diego is open from 2:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. and serves 70 students. Students can also earn up to three credits every 6 weeks independently in outside classes (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). Providing students an alternative setting could provide students who would otherwise make the environment unsafe an opportunity to thrive.

Noninstructional Services that Build Student Achievement

The 18 schools involved in the secondary study of educational improvements in impoverished schools not only offered instructional strategies that could be helpful for schools of poverty but noninstructional strategies as well. The students of poverty who

may be hungry, tired, sick, or separated from family and friends may oftentimes have vastly different needs than more affluent students. In addition, students who have experienced failure in school repeatedly enter secondary school with a greater risk of dropping out and could benefit from additional supportive noninstructional resources. The noninstructional services offered by secondary schools in the study shared four common goals:

- To increase student attendance at school.
- To address student basic human needs.
- To give students opportunities for meaningful relationships with caring adults and with groups.
- To foster connections between schools, families, and the community.

Learning communities, building student engagement, career awareness, and parent involvement are the areas in which the noninstructional services were provided in the study (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Learning Communities

All of the middle and high schools in the study had learning communities that were developed for schools with 200 or more students to increase student success. The idea was to create a smaller learning environment more conducive to learning such as a team or house within the school. The grouping helps address problems associated with large, impersonal institutions as described by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. The teams or houses contain approximately 100 students taught by four to eight teachers. The students are assigned to the same core classes (language arts, math, science, and social studies), lessening alienation and isolation that could happen in larger

more impersonal schools. Teams also reduce teacher isolation and increase collaborations and shared responsibility for students, forming a more collegial environment. Some schools simply rely on the learning communities to give students the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with adults, but others establish formal programs. In Arkansas, Pine Bluff High School formed a Teachers-as-Advisors Program where 20 students were matched with each teacher. The students and advisors met monthly so students could receive guidance on career paths, skills for employment, help in problem-solving, and goal setting. The program also holds a college information night, a financial aid workshop night, and a study skills seminar to involve parents in postgraduation planning with students (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Support Services

Schools that may or may not utilize learning communities or engage students with community service or extracurricular activities may utilize support services for students by licensed practitioners and other experts. Services can range from academic counseling to health care and are intended to handle stresses that interfere with student abilities to succeed in school (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

School-Based Health and Human Services Centers

Many students in schools of poverty may not succeed due to chronic illness, poor eyesight, hearing problems, and mental health problems that go unaddressed due to student lack of access to health care. Several schools in the study addressed this issue by offering on-site health and social service centers. Services include immunizations; physical exams; and medical care for poor eyesight, hearing problems, diabetes, asthma, and other health conditions. Other services for high school students included family

planning, pregnancy testing, and diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. Services not offered were outsourced. East Harford High School in Connecticut, along with a center at the middle school, logged 3,600 visits in 1 year serving 3,000 students (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

High Expectations

Edmonds defined high expectations as a school that displays a climate of expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that they have the capability to help students achieve such mastery (Taylor, 2008). High expectations are sought from high-quality teachers, and high-quality teachers are very important assets in schools of poverty (Taylor, 2008).

Teacher Quality of Impoverished Schools

According to Education Trust, low-income students and students of color are more likely than their higher income and White counterparts to be taught by an ineffective teacher. In Tennessee, 23.8 % of teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools are rated “least effective,” while only 16% of staff at low-poverty and low-minority schools fall into this category. Students in the poorest schools in Los Angeles were three times more likely to have teachers from the bottom quadrant of effectiveness than students in the district’s most affluent schools. Nationally, teachers with stronger credentials tend to teach in schools with more advantaged and higher performing students. Core academic classes in high-poverty secondary schools are almost twice as likely as classes in low-poverty schools to be taught by teachers with neither a major nor certification in their assigned subject--14% compared to 27%. High-minority secondary schools have almost double the percentage of math classes taught by teachers with

neither certification nor a major in this area as do their low-minority counterparts. In Illinois, the highest minority schools have approximately 22% inexperienced teachers, while 16% of teachers at the lowest minority schools were inexperienced. In North Carolina, 24.6% of teachers at high-poverty middle schools are inexperienced, compared to 13.9% of teachers at low-poverty schools. In Fort Worth, Texas, almost one of every five teachers has fewer than 3 years of teaching experience, nearly twice the rate of the districts with the lowest minority schools. The disparity between the caliber of teachers found in a minority school has a tremendous impact on student achievement. The effects of having a top-quartile teacher versus a bottom-quartile teacher for 4 years in a row would be enough to close the Black-White test score gap (Crum, 2013). Once again, the disparity that exists in some high-poverty, high-minority schools is not factored into the new South Carolina accountability rating system.

Support Programs

Quality teachers with high expectations would offer support programs for students like several schools in a study that offered a variety of support groups for students led by graduate students, social workers, and licensed counselors. Eisenhower High School in Illinois developed comprehensive intervention strategies for troubled students. The team was composed of an administrator, social worker, counselors, and school psychologist. The team met once per week to discuss the students referred to them by staff members and parents. The team met with parents and students and devised a plan to provide interventions for the problems the students were experiencing (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Successful Private Remediation Programs in Schools of Poverty

Quality teachers with high expectations would not accept failure as an option. Some would offer private remediation for students not meeting academic goals. With schools of poverty generally not producing satisfactory results in the area of student achievement, several urban school districts around the nation contracted with learning centers to work in the public schools using Title I and other public education funds. A study researched the effects of Sylvan Learning Systems, Kaplan Educational Centers, and the Huntington Learning Center. Parents who were spending \$2,000 to \$4,000 a year for extra academic support were seeing tremendous growth in their children's academic performance (Snell & Anderson, 2000).

Students who received remediation through the Sylvan Learning System reflected strong academic gains in student reading performance in the 1997-1998 school year (Snell & Anderson, 2000). Vocabulary scores increased by 19% on average. Reading comprehension scores increased 35% on average. Total overall reading scores increased 25% on average. The Sylvan Academic Reading Program helped students at all grade levels increase reading skills. Sylvan Learning Center uses the California Achievement Test (CAT) to measure the progress of every student enrolled in its public school program. Results are expressed in normal curve equivalents (NCE). NCEs are derived from national percentile rankings. The NCE compares each student's individual level of achievement to the national norm group at the same time of year. When student NCEs increase from fall to spring, those students have gained on the norm group or have accelerated their growth in relation to the national norm group. The U.S. Department of Education has set a desired gain of plus-two NCEs as significant. On national average,

students enrolled in the Sylvan at School Academic Reading Program achieved a gain of seven NCEs. The average student showed a gain of five NCEs on the vocabulary portion of the CAT and a gain of eight NCEs on the reading CAT. Elementary students increased their total reading scores an average of 32%. Middle school students increased their total reading scores an average of 21%. High school students increased their total reading scores an average of 30%. One Sylvan Learning Center school, Maple Elementary School in Dorchester, Maryland, received the only award for outstanding Title I school of the year for all of Maryland. The Sylvan at School program was specifically cited as a contributing factor in the improvements the school demonstrated. At Easton High School in Maryland, all the ninth graders who failed the math test originally passed it after participation in the Sylvan program. In a study in St. Paul, Minnesota, where a contract for math and reading remediation was implemented to provide assistance for 800 minority students who made the largest gains, 60% of students made reading gains greater than the nationwide average, while 79% of students made gains greater than the national average in math (Snell & Anderson, 2000). The average gain for students in the bottom-quartile was eight NCEs or more over a 1-year period in reading, 10 NCEs for comprehension and six NCEs for vocabulary. One school's beginning reading program started with 71% of its students as nonreaders, but after attending the Sylvan program, 100% were reading. In Texas, Sylvan contracted to provide basic reading and math at two middle schools. After students in the Sylvan program achieved extensive gains, Sylvan was asked to help students with the subject of algebra. Before students became involved with Sylvan, only 30% passed algebra. After receiving services with Sylvan, 100% of the students passed.

In a pilot program at three Los Angeles public elementary schools during the summer of 1997, 240 third, fourth, and fifth graders gained an average of 7.95 months in initial reading skills and 4.92 months in reading comprehension after spending 1 hour per day in the 8-week Sylvan program. At George Washington High School in New York City, students in the program showed an average grade-equivalent increase in reading of 1 year in 55 hours of instruction based on the CAT. The principal of the school asked Kaplan to extend the program and offer the same opportunity to 10th- and 11th-grade students. In Philadelphia Public Schools, Kaplan provided basic skills instruction and career development to 900 students. Students progressed an average of 8 grade-equivalent months in vocabulary and 9 grade-equivalent months in comprehension, based on the CAT.

Huntington conducted reading and math programs for students whose basic skills were below grade level. Initial results showed improvement in overall reading skills and higher Stanford Achievement Test (Stanford 9) scores. Eighty-three percent of the students were below basic and advanced to the basic level. Overall, 31% of the students advanced one full ranking (Snell & Anderson, 2000). When administrators of nonperforming schools gain knowledge of programs that are helping students grow academically, they can pilot such programs in the hopes of experiencing growth as well.

Opportunities to Learn and Time on Task

Edmonds defined opportunity to learn and time on task as the time teachers allocate to instruction and basic skills (Taylor, 2008). During a high percentage of the allocated time, students are engaged in planned learning activities directly related to the identified objectives. This type of engagement was noted in a study involving 18

secondary schools of poverty that used integrated vocational and academic content, interdisciplinary instruction, experimental learning tasks, extra instruction, and student engagement.

Integrated Vocational and Academic Content

At Pine Bluff High School in Arkansas, the Advanced Integrated Model project gave the academic and vocational teaching staff shared planning time to develop integrated units and review information about effective practices. The English department and three teachers from the vocational department met weekly and developed an integrated unit entitled the Romantic Era Landscapes Project. The project combined English, horticulture, and computer-assisted design classes. Students read and compared neo-classical and Romantic literature. They then used a computerized landscaping software program to design a garden influenced by Romantic design concepts (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Interdisciplinary Instruction

Interdisciplinary instruction connects the content areas, giving students the opportunity to study a subject from different perspectives and understand how the disciplines relate. Social studies classes at Marshall Middle School in Chicago incorporated some math concepts into their Perfect City Project that required students to design a perfect city. The assignment included drawing a map of the city to scale, justifying the location of their city in writing, and constructing graphs and charts depicting demographic information about their city. In math, students were required to build a bridge using toothpicks and other building supplies. Each student was given a budget and checking account to purchase building materials. The bridge also had to be

incorporated in the perfect city (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Experiential Learning Tasks

Experiential learning takes learning outside of the classroom for students conducting original work or research. Unlike a field trip where students spend most of their time listening to others, students are assigned real responsibilities for completing important tasks or collecting and analyzing data for other purposes. This approach makes learning a real world experience and relevant for students. In an eighth-grade science unit on caves at Louisville's Iroquois Middle School, students spend a day with an earth scientist in a cave. The scientist conducted a hands-on science lesson with students and then helped them collect information on the climate and geology of the cave. On their return to school, the students used what they learned to transform their classroom into a cave, complete with climate control and stalactites and stalagmites (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

The 18 schools in the study are all using strategies that blend into the students' regular school schedules. Two of the most common approaches include hiring a certified teacher or an instructional aide to provide in-class assistance to low-performing students and establish a computer or reading lab. These two strategies were implemented using extra instruction during the school day, small classes, extended learning time, and alternative schooling (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Extra Instruction

Extra instruction during the school day revolved around helping students meet state or local performance standards on standardized tests, sending the message that failure was not an option. In Oregon's Blanco Middle School, a teacher pre-teaches

accelerated math to low-achieving students to prepare them for their regular math classes. The class helps fill gaps for students and prevents them from falling further behind. At an El Paso high school, students rotate through a 3-week rotation preparing them for the math, writing, and reading portions of the state test. The top 15% of students attend an advanced reading and math rotation. The Tutorial Assistance Program lab at Illinois Eisenhower High School gave students access to one-on-one assistance with course work. The lab is staffed with teachers or assistants continuously working with students during their study hall periods (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Building Student Engagement

Timilty Middle School in Boston has a 12-year-old mentoring program called Promising Pals designed to enhance literacy and writing skills by providing opportunities for students to meet positive role models, share interests, and realize their own responsibilities to make positive contributions to the world. Students are paired with adults in the community with whom they exchange letters. At the end of the year, the school hosts a Promising Pals celebration for all participants. One year the celebrations drew 600 attendees (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Extracurricular Activities

Several schools in the study emphasized student participation in school-related activities as a way to increase student achievement in impoverished schools. Extracurricular activities can increase attendance, self-esteem, and interest in academics in students. In addition, students are able to establish friendships, refine their skills, and develop positive relationships with adults such as coaches or sponsors who care about their academic and social growth. One study of an after-school program for poor, urban

youth found that students in the program had higher achievement in math, reading, and other subjects, as opposed to students who were not involved in the program (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Academic Counseling

Counselors at several schools in the study work with students to develop academic plans. At Highland High School, students explore career goals and develop an academic plan to meet the goals they have set for themselves. Counselors review their performance and help them determine what is needed to help them reach their career goals. In addition, they explain college entrance requirements and financial aid opportunities, referring to the plan regularly to make sure students are on track to graduate and pursue postsecondary plans (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a national program that gives extra support in the college application process to students from populations traditionally underrepresented in college, is used at San Diego's Hoover High School. Teachers and advisors meet with students in AVID for one class period each day to help with college and financial aid applications, college essay writing, and preparation for college entrance exams. The program also includes field trips to universities (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Community Service

Some schools in the study utilized community service as a means to engage students further in school as opposed to extracurricular activities. Community service not only promotes academic achievement and self-confidence but also provides experience in the workplace and connections to the community. One study noted involvement in

community service decreases rates of truancy and vandalism. Students in the Minnesota Center Middle School engage in community service regularly to repay the community for the service it provides to the school. They help wash fire trucks and assist the local historical society with newspaper clippings fostering a spirit of community and volunteerism (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Instructional Leadership

According to Edmonds, the principal acts as the instructional leader who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents, and students and understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program at the school (Taylor, 2008).

Leaders of Impoverished Schools

Leadership in any school is one of the most important aspects regardless of poverty level. The 21st century principalship is one that requires a wealth of data analysis, mastery of management, creativity with discipline, exposure to new disciplines surrounding technology and social issues, and the ability to repair or maintain positive teacher morale. Leaders who build relationships may be the most effective (Crum, 2013).

Leadership is less about coercion and more about influencing a group towards a common goal. Oftentimes, leadership is confused with management; but leadership has more to do with relationships, transformation, and skills. Hoy and Miskel contended that leadership is a process where an individual places intentional influences over others in order to build activities or relationships in an organization or group (Crum, 2013). Two functions of leadership, sharing and distributing, maintain a focus on the learning environment and learning. Fostering caring relationships among peers, providing a safe

and orderly workplace, and building a bond between the school and students creates leadership capacity (Crum, 2013). Comparing the leadership practices of schools scoring at the top and bottom of the new South Carolina accountability system should provide helpful insight for South Carolina school leaders.

Principal Turnover of Impoverished Schools

Research on principal turnover is not plentiful, but the research conducted has found that turnover patterns among principals mirror those of teachers. Much like teachers, novice principals are often placed in schools serving poor, minority, and low-achieving students. As the principals gain experience, they tend to either leave the profession or transfer to schools with fewer disadvantaged children. Research has also found that too often principals of such schools carry the tremendous burden of being singularly responsible for the success of their school, making their position undesirable and unstable. Increasing support for principals and distributing responsibilities among district and school-based personnel could improve struggling schools by not leaving the principal solely responsible for the school's advancements (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Comparing the district level supports afforded to school leaders of high-performing and low-performing schools in South Carolina will provide insight for not only district leaders but also for state leaders and lawmakers, especially since district report cards are no longer issued, placing even more pressure on school level leaders.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Edmonds's sixth correlate, frequent monitoring of student progress, involves feedback on student academic progress being frequently obtained (Taylor, 2008). Multiple assessment methods such as teacher-made tests, samples of student work,

mastery skills checklists, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-references tests are used. The results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program. Some states such as South Carolina use high stakes standardized testing to measure student progress, while some states have found better methods of assessing students (Taylor, 2008).

High Stakes Testing

The use of tests to hold individuals or institutions responsible for performance and to sanction poor performance or reward achievement has become the cornerstone of the United States federal education policy especially since NCLB mandated annual standardized testing in all 50 states (Supovitz, 2019; Tienken, 2017). The assessment industry has grown from \$260 million in test sales annually in 1977 to an over \$700 million industry today (Supovitz, 2019). Taking notice of the trend and increase in bottom line sales, testing companies have now even purchased companies that supply curriculum resources to schools. One example is the major testing company Data Recognition Corporation's purchase of McGraw Hill (Broussard, 2014). Research shows that high stakes assessments can and do motivate changes in instructional practices. However, critics contend that the changes are superficial adjustments that focus on the content covered and test preparation as opposed to deep improvements to instructional practice (Supovitz, 2019). In the 1990s, standardized, multiple-choice high stakes testing was scrutinized for containing gender bias, ethnic prejudice, and socioeconomic favoritism. Critics also were concerned about the narrowing of the curriculum (Supovitz, 2019).

The biggest criticism of high stakes standardized testing is that it serves as more

of a predictor of out-of-school characteristics than the measure of the quality of instruction, student growth, and quality of the school or school leader. A 3-year study of test scores from Grades 6-8 in more than 300 New Jersey schools reviewed the community households with an income over \$200,000 a year, the percentage of poverty that existed in the community, and the percentage of people in the community with a bachelor's degree and predicted the percent of students who would score proficient or above in 75% of the schools sampled (Tienken, 2017). An earlier study focused on fifth-grade test scores in New Jersey and predicted the results of proficiency accurately for 84% of the schools in the study over a 3-year period. Researchers contend that these predictions do not mean that money determines how much students can learn. Instead, they contend that scores can be used to measure improvement, how much students learn, how well teachers teach, or how effectively school leaders lead their schools are clouded by the noise of whether or not a student had a bad day on test day, felt sick or tired, had a computer malfunction, or some other unrelated factor (Tienken, 2017). Even technical manuals written by the testing companies do not support the use of standardized assessments to judge the factors stated above, which supports the argument that whether measuring proficiency or growth, standardized tests are not the answer (Tienken, 2017). In fact, the misuse and overuse of standardized testing has greatly damaged children of poverty and minority group children, often turning their schools into test preparation programs (Neill, 2018). This further supports the notion that South Carolina's new accountability system is not a step in the right direction.

Better Ways to Assess Students

Although many school systems are still using high stakes standardized testing to

judge children, teachers, school leaders, and districts, other districts have found success with assessment alternatives. The New York Performance Standards Consortium is an example for high schools that is even relevant to elementary and middle schools. The group focuses on inquiry-driven, project-based learning measured by performance-based assessments. Their success with the most vulnerable students makes their outcomes very impressive. The consortium is made up of 38 traditional public high schools. Thirty-six of the schools are in New York City. The student populations largely mirror the city's population with nearly identical shares of Black and low-income students with disabilities and higher percentages of Latinos and English language learners (ELL). Their admissions process is also identical to city schools. A recent report contended that the consortium schools significantly outperform other New York City public schools. The consortium's dropout rate is significantly lower than those of regular New York City public schools. Four- and 6-year graduation rates for all categories of students are higher than for the rest of the city. Graduation rates are about 50% higher for ELL students and students with disabilities. Eighteen months after high school graduation, the college enrollment rate is 83 %, or 24 points higher than the city's. The rates compare favorably with national data, and the college enrollment rate for "minority males" is more than double the national average (Neill, 2018).

The consortium attributes its success to "proven practitioner-developed, student-focused performance assessments" (Neill, 2018, p. 2). The assessments are created by teachers and rooted in inquiry-based curricula and teaching. Students learn to investigate topics in depth and to explore their own interests within each subject (Neill, 2018). Assessments made by teachers are better indicators of student achievement than

standardized tests. For example, a high school GPA, which is based on classroom assessments, is a better predictor of student success in the first year of college than the SAT (Tienken, 2017).

In order to demonstrate college and career readiness for graduation, the consortium schools require students to complete four performance-based assessment tasks. The tasks include an analytic literature essay, a social studies research paper, a student-designed science experiment, and high-level math problems with real-world applications. The assessments consist of both oral and written components. The oral component consists of students responding to questions from a panel of teachers and outside experts, similar to a graduate school thesis defense (Neill, 2018). Performance-based assessment tasks require students to learn perseverance, how to assess and apply evidence, and how to explain their thinking in written and oral forms all synonymous with 21st century learning skills (Neill, 2018). If adopted by other states, teacher- and student-led performance assessments allow for true instructional personalization. The consortium is collaborating with elementary and middle school teachers to design new assessments. States could also take advantage of ESSA's Innovative Assessment pilot project based on New Hampshire's success in transitioning from standardized tests to teacher-crafted performance tasks, reflecting great success where it matters most—with the students (Neill, 2018). These new innovative assessments could be an answer to the problem with accountability and high stakes testing in South Carolina.

Positive Home-School Relations

The final correlate, positive home-school relations, contends that parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given opportunities to play an

important role in helping the school achieve its mission (Taylor, 2008). Research has indicated that involving parents and family members in a child's education is important because students achieve higher test scores and grades, attend school more often, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate at higher rates, and enroll at greater rates in higher education. According to one study, 27% of students whose parents were involved in their high school education completed college, compared to 8% of students whose parents were not involved. Unfortunately, barriers such as work schedules and language barriers interfere with parental involvement with involvement declining in the upper grades (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Several schools involved in the study went beyond the traditional parent conference to communicate with parents. Fairedale High School takes a bus into the community to meet family members at a local housing project. Fritsche Middle School hosts parent conference nights at a high school and a community center to accommodate parents who do not live near the school. Hambrick Middle School sends "good news" postcards to parents with positive comments about academics, improved behavior, and showing kindness to others (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). Impoverished schools may have challenges, but some impoverished schools have found ways to overcome those challenges in order for their students and schools to experience success. Being knowledgeable of the things that are helpful could be beneficial to districts and school leaders in South Carolina who are working to experience the same success in their areas with the new accountability system.

Successful Schools of Poverty

A new assessment model could be helpful to state and national leaders in solving

the problems with accountability in the state, but looking at successful schools who are meeting the mark and have evidence of the presence of Edmonds's correlates could be helpful as well. For example, in Ohio, the Department of Education has identified and recognized the progress of high-performing schools in an effort to determine the school characteristics that set them apart and to explore concrete strategies for replicating their successes in other low-income communities (Maynard, 2012). They identified schools with high levels of poverty and oftentimes high percentages of Black students who were also able to maintaining high levels of academic achievement. The 113 high-achieving Schools of Promise have a student population of more than 40% considered as having low-incomes and yet are in compliance with all state and federal yearly academic progress requirements. In addition, at least 75% of the total student body was proficient in reading or math, of which 75% are economically disadvantaged and minority students (Maynard, 2012). More than 73% of students from these schools graduate, a higher percentage than the national average for schools in other disadvantaged communities in America (Maynard, 2012). In the Schools of Promise study, the Ohio Department of Education found five elements that reflect the unique community of each school. The five constant elements that can be compared to Edmonds's correlates are (a) rigorous standard and instructions (high expectations); (b) strong instructional leadership (instructional leadership); (c) instruction designed for the success of all students (opportunity to learn and time on task); (d) parent and community involvement (positive home-school relations); and (e) a positive school culture (clear and focused school mission and safe and orderly environment; Maynard, 2012).

Well-defined standards and strong school leadership are present in Schools of

Promise. Educators feel supported by their leaders with administrative supports and materials needed to perform well with their students. School administrators in Schools of Promise not only provided structure and support but brought a hands-on approach to their work, spending 50% of their time in the classroom with their teaching staffs focused on the details of instructional issues (Maynard, 2012).

Also present in Schools of Promise are extensive professional development opportunities and a dynamic culture of collaboration and peer support. Professional development in these instances occurred on a daily basis and consisted of teachers collaborating and learning from one another. There is a continuing process of adapting instruction and perfecting the craft (Maynard, 2012). In this model, teachers were dedicated to trying new and creative teaching methods to engage students from various backgrounds and cultures, not just identifying and teaching a standard but making the standard come alive for students. Students at Schools of Promise reported that learning was fun and that they were treated with respect (Maynard, 2012).

The 90/90/90 schools research examined the extent to which there was a common set of behaviors exhibited by the leaders and teachers in schools with high achievement, high minority enrollment, and high-poverty levels (Maynard, 2012; Reeves, 2003). The five characteristics common to all 90/90/90 schools emerged and are also comparable to Edmonds's correlates: (a) a focus on academic achievement (opportunity to learn and time on task); (b) clear curriculum choices (opportunity to learn and time on task); (c) frequent assessment of student progress (frequent monitoring of student progress); (d) multiple opportunities for improvement (high expectations); (e) an emphasis on nonfiction writing (frequent monitoring of student progress); and (f) collaborative scoring

of student work (frequent monitoring of student progress), which are all characteristics driven by the leadership of the school (instructional leadership and clear and focused mission; Maynard, 2012).

Marzano (2012) provided 12 key factors that have been shown to impact student achievement and are closely related to Edmond's correlates. The 12 factors are organized into school-level factors, teacher-level factors, and student-level factors. Schools that follow the research could have tremendous results with students.

The school-level factors include (a) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, (b) challenging goals and effective feedback, (c) parent and community involvement, (d) a safe and orderly environment, and (e) collegiality and professionalism. Instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design embodied teacher level factors. Finally, the student-level factors include home environment, learned intelligence, background knowledge, and student motivation (Maynard, 2012). The final factor considered the most critical by Marzano (2012) was the role of leadership, which he considered the single most important aspect of effective school reform. Speaking with the leaders of the schools at different rating levels will provide insight into the type of leadership exhibited at performing versus nonperforming schools.

South Carolina's New Accountability Model

Schools with Edmonds's correlates present have found success regardless of the socioeconomic level of students (Taylor, 2008). The alignment to the correlates could help schools in South Carolina as they adapt to the new accountability model. An independent review of South Carolina's accountability system concluded that the system is built on indicators that are aligned with college and career readiness. The state also

included science and social studies in its accountability system, which is a plus, stressing the importance of a well-rounded education. The system places tremendous emphasis on the growth of the school's lowest performing students; and the state will report the percentage of graduates who are college ready, career ready, or college and career ready. In addition, the state will likely identify a greater number of very low-performing schools by going beyond ESSA's minimum requirement for identifying schools for comprehensive support and improvement. The exit criteria for schools identified for comprehensive support requires schools to demonstrate some improvement rather than simply no longer qualifying for the designation. Finally, South Carolina was applauded in the review for taking a strong stance on the 95% assessment participation rate. The state counts untested students as a zero for determining achievement ratings. Schools that miss the participation requirement cannot receive the highest rating of achievement in the summative rating. The state will also potentially lose Title I funds if the problem persists (Bellwether Education Partners, 2018).

Areas noted for improvement in the plan concluded that the state's goals were complex and disconnected from the accountability system. The process for awarding points and ratings was described as unnecessarily complicated. Without the use of student subgroups, an overemphasis on high-performing students runs the risk of overlooking underperformance or achievement gaps. The state also was criticized for not providing more details about plans to support and intervene in struggling schools. The state did not go into detail about the formula that is used to award money set aside for school improvement (Bellwether Education Partners, 2018).

Summary

The review of the literature confirms that there are many challenges that exist in impoverished schools. There may even be additional challenges for impoverished schools at the middle level simply due to the structure and set up of the middle school model. However, even with the challenges that exist in impoverished settings, some districts and school leaders have used strategies that have allowed them to be successful in spite of the challenges, such as schools with Edmonds's correlates present (Taylor, 2008). It was interesting to determine if the schools performing well in the study were using any of the strategies outlined in the review of literature and how well the school practices aligned with the correlates of Edmonds. Some of the strategies mentioned could help school leaders who have not experienced success in impoverished middle schools in South Carolina where a new accountability system has been adopted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This case study examined qualitative data to identify the actions of four impoverished middle schools in South Carolina, two that received “excellent” and “good” ratings and two that received “below average” and “unsatisfactory” ratings, to determine if there were any significant differences in the practices of teachers and leaders in each of the settings as it relates to the *Correlates of Effective Schools* by Edmonds (Taylor, 2008). The hope was to provide replicable information of the things that are contributing to the positive performances of the middle schools that were performing well to other principals and districts in impoverished settings. This could result in more schools of poverty experiencing positive achievement and closing the achievement gap. Little research exists that provides insight into high-poverty schools. This research attempts to provide useful information to education practitioners in hopes of raising achievement in South Carolina (Simon & Johnson, 2013). The research plan, study participants, procedures, data analysis, and delimitations and limitations are also components of this chapter.

Research Question

My research focused on the significant differences that existed, if any, between the South Carolina middle schools studied in the four rating areas of “excellent,” “good,” “below average,” and “unsatisfactory.”

Question: How aligned are the schools in each rating category to the “*Correlates of Effective Schools*” by Edmonds, based on principal/teacher responses to the More Effective School Staff Survey items and the information gathered in the interview process?

Methodology Selected

A qualitative study is appropriate when the process of inquiry is used to understand social phenomena in a natural setting (Hammarberg et al., 2016). A quantitative research approach is appropriate when the researcher wants to understand the relationship between variables and factual data are required to answer the research question(s) (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Since the purpose of this study was to examine the actions of teachers and school leaders as they relate to the correlates of Edmonds in their school setting, a qualitative approach was most appropriate (Taylor, 2008). Qualitative research allows the researcher to study selected issues in depth and detail without being constrained to predetermined categories of analysis. Qualitative research values openness and flexibility. In addition, in order for qualitative research to be deemed credible, the researcher must identify the most relevant characteristics of the phenomena and triangulation or the use of multiple sources of data reducing systematic bias (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Multiple Case Study Design

Based on the literature review, I determined the best way to answer the research question was to utilize a qualitative approach using a multiple case study design as a strategy of inquiry to examine four schools through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Hammarberg et al., 2016). A multiple case study design will allow the researcher to conduct an analysis within each setting and across each setting. The purpose is for the researcher to understand the similarities and differences between the cases. Multiple case study design can be used to (a) predict similar results or (b) predict contrasting results but for a predictable reason (Creswell,

2006). Since the issues of impoverished schools are so complex and intertwined with the culture that exists in a school and/or community, this study will not provide a prescriptive approach to closing the achievement gap completely; and additional studies will need to be conducted to further examine other intricacies (Creswell, 2006)

The Researcher

I have been working in education for the past 17 years and hold a Bachelor's of Business Administration Degree from Montreat College, a Master's of Education from Columbia College, and an add-on certification in School Administration from Wingate University. I was a teacher for 5 years, assistant principal for 8 years, and am currently completing the fifth year of the principalship at a rural middle school. No participant participating in the study represented a conflict of interest or research bias.

I have been trained in the skills necessary to carry out the research study. I have conducted a number of interviews in my career and have had cognitive coaching training, which stresses the art of listening. In addition, I completed a research course at Gardner-Webb University, and my career in administration has afforded me the opportunity to be responsible for a number of managerial tasks and decisions, while serving as the instructional leader of my school.

Study Participants

To determine the degree of alignment of the correlates with the schools' performance levels, I have chosen one impoverished middle school in each of the "excellent," "good," "below average," and "unsatisfactory" categories. Each school is rated 70% or above on the poverty index for South Carolina. The first middle school serves students in Grades 6-8 and has 400 students enrolled. The school received a rating

of “excellent” on the 2018-2019 South Carolina School Report Card. Seventy percent of the students at the school live in poverty. The school implemented the first year of AVID for eighth-grade students. In addition, the school also implemented Positive Behavior Incentives and Supports (PBIS). The principal has been employed at the school for 1 year. There are 27 teachers employed at the school.

The second school I chose for the case study is a South Carolina middle school with a “good” rating on the South Carolina School Report Card. The middle school serves students in Grades 6-8 and has 733 students enrolled. The school utilizes effective instructional practices that include STEM, Project-Based Learning, and literature circles to implement innovative and effective instructional approaches. Seventy-five percent of the school’s students live in poverty. The principal has been employed at the school for 1 year. There are 49 teachers employed at the school

The third school I chose for the case study is a South Carolina middle school with a “below average” rating on the state report card. The middle school serves students in Grades 6-12 and has 380 students enrolled. The school uses the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Medical Detectives course to allow students to explore different concepts that are unavailable in the traditional curriculum. Seventy-seven percent of the students from this middle school live in poverty; the principal has been employed at the school for 2 years; and there are 32 teachers employed at the school. The middle school serves students in Grades 7-8, but the school configuration is 6-12. There is a principal for the middle school and a principal for the high school. Both schools are forced to share teachers in some content and special areas. The principal has been employed with the district in their position for 1 year.

The fourth and final middle school I chose for the case study is a South Carolina middle school with an “unsatisfactory” rating on the state report card. The middle school serves students in Grades 7-8 and serves 420 students. Eighty-three percent of the students at this middle school live in poverty. The school hosts a STEM Early College Academy that is in its seventh year of inception that allows students to take high school credit courses at the middle level. The principal has been employed at the school for 2 years. There are 39 teachers employed at the school.

I asked the principal to send an email explaining the research to staff members. I mailed consent forms and surveys to principals and teachers with a self-addressed stamped envelope for them to mail back to me. I anticipated 20-30% participation at each site.

Instruments

The Association for Effective Schools, Incorporated, in Stuyvesant, New York, produces surveys with questions based on the effective schools correlates and the most recent research findings. The staff survey produced by this company was utilized in this study (see Appendix A). A cross group comparison was conducted, and the summary responses were arranged by correlate. All More Effective Schools Staff Surveys addressed seven characteristics or correlates of effective schools to include high expectations for success, clear school mission, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring, opportunity to learn/time on task, positive home-school relations, and safe and orderly environment. The surveys were purchased from the company and were sold in packages of 50 at a cost of \$12.50. The survey report was \$149.00 and was shipped within 10 business days from the time the completed surveys were received by the

organization. This company was selected to provide high-quality survey instruments with unbiased survey questions.

After I received the survey reports, I developed additional questions for the principal that were asked in a one-on-one interview setting (see Appendix B). This allowed the principal to respond to the survey results. The principal was provided the survey results in advance of the interview, to allow the principal to reflect on the data before the interview.

Finally, I used the description of the correlates and took anecdotal notes of any evidence that existed that related to the correlates. The school tour was to be conducted by the principal or their designee and would have included at least four classroom observations at various grade levels; however, this did not take place due to the restrictions of COVID-19.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

The school improvement process developed by the Association for Effective Schools was evaluated by seven agencies over 17 years. Findings consistently conclude that the process produces positive results in student achievement. The American Institute of Research study of 18 whole school improvement models found scientific evidence of student achievement being raised when the correlate model was utilized. A Syracuse University study of 49 schools using whole school reform programs and 47 control schools found the correlate model had a significant impact. A study conducted by the Kentucky Department of Education found that 248 schools had significantly better achievement than 998 control schools. The questions developed by the Association for Effective Schools have been validated through outside research.

Once I received the reports from the Association for Effective Schools that uses survey questions to determine how well a school is implementing or incorporating the correlates, I developed questions for the principal to answer. Those questions were given to an expert group of educators to include two school administrators working in impoverished schools and one former district Title I coordinator who rated the questions using a Likert scale of 1-5 determining what questions were valid as well as the reliability of the instrument and responses.

Data Collection

In an effort to effectively compare and contrast the schools in the case study, I used three instruments to collect data. The first instrument is a set of survey questions created by the Association of Effective Schools, Inc. centered around Edmonds's correlates (Taylor, 2008). I emailed the principals of each school participating in the study explaining what the research was about. The principals forwarded the email to the teachers. The assistant principals and teachers who responded to the email were mailed a survey and consent form to return in a self-addressed, stamped envelope that was mailed back to me. The principal also completed and mailed a survey and consent form back without discussion, so the results were not skewed in any way.

A second set of questions were asked of principals only. These questions were asked using a Zoom meeting link. The questions were developed by me after the survey report was received from the Association of Effective Schools that compares the results of the principals' surveys to those of school staff members' survey results. The one-on-one interview with the principals was recorded and transcribed with scripted notes for me to refer to later.

In addition to the questions asked of the principal and teachers, an analysis was conducted after reviewing and analyzing the school report cards to identify commonalities and differences among each school. The analysis was conducted to determine the commonalities and differences between the principal and teacher survey questions. Finally, the report card data were analyzed for triangulation in order to determine validity of the one-on-one principal interview answers.

Procedures

Approval from the Institutional Review Board was sought from Gardner-Webb University. Once the approval was granted, I emailed a letter (see Appendix C) to the superintendents (copied to each principal) of each district seeking permission to conduct the study with the schools selected within the district. An email with an explanation of the study seeking permission from the principal and teachers to participate in the study was sent to the principal at each site. In the letter, principals and teachers were informed of the anonymity of the study. All participants were anonymous throughout the study. Participants were informed of their ability to withdraw from the study at any point (see Appendix D).

Participants (teachers and principals) answered survey questions that were mailed after the participants responded to an email that they were willing to participate. The principals were interviewed by me individually. Afterwards, I conducted an analysis of the school report card information.

Data Analysis

The research question answered used qualitative data from the surveys and interviews conducted by me with the teachers and the principals. The qualitative data

were analyzed to identify any differences or commonalities that existed in the four middle schools and to determine to what degree Edmonds's correlates exist in the schools.

Data were retrieved from state report cards to review achievement levels. In addition, the narratives were examined to gain insight about each school. Finally, the student engagement information, classroom environment information, student safety, financial data, and additional information provided about student teacher and parent opinion surveys were examined on all school report cards.

By examining the perception data along with the report card data, I was able to determine the degree to which Edmonds's correlates existed in the four middle schools. In addition, I was able to determine to what degree the correlates attributed to the success of each school or if the lack of the correlates led to unsuccessful performances (Creswell, 2006).

Delimitations and Limitations

Research was gathered to inform audience members about specific topics, but necessary constraints imposed limitations on the quality of the information (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It was important to understand how a study is limited, so readers can determine its usefulness. The following limitations need to be considered when reading this study: (a) the schools researched in this study are all located in South Carolina and utilize the accountability system supported in South Carolina; and (b) this study is limited to the descriptions and explanations provided by the principals and teachers interviewed in the study.

Summary

High-performing, high-poverty schools reject the theory that low-economic, minority students do not learn as well as their White peers (Taylor, 2008). Although there are a number of schools that have experienced success by using various effective strategies, more research is needed, specifically at the middle level to help principals and districts that have yet to experience these same types of high performance results with high-poverty populations of students. Success in more impoverished schools will discourage policymakers from targeting Title I funds to be cut, reduced, or redirected and from legislators attempting to label and sanction schools. More importantly, it will help students and educators realize success in spite of the challenges they face daily.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine qualitative data to identify the actions of four impoverished middle schools in South Carolina, two that received “excellent” and “good” ratings and two that received “below average” and “unsatisfactory” ratings to determine if there are any significant differences in the practices of teachers and leaders in each of the settings as it relates to the Correlates of Effective Schools by Edmonds (Taylor, 2008). It was my hope to provide replicable information of the things that are contributing to the positive performances of the middle schools that are performing well for other principals and districts in impoverished settings. The hope was to provide insight into high-poverty schools that will result in more schools of poverty experiencing positive achievement while closing the achievement gap. This research attempts to provide useful information to education practitioners in hopes of raising achievement in South Carolina (Simon & Johnson, 2013).

The following research question guided this study:

How aligned are the schools in each rating category to the “Correlates of Effective Schools” by Edmonds, based on principal/teacher responses to the More Effective Schools Staff Survey items and the information gathered in the interview process?

This chapter presents the results of the More Effective Schools Staff Survey that measures alignment of survey participants to the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools (clear and focused mission, frequent monitoring of student progress, high expectations for success, home-school relations, instructional leadership, opportunity to learn/student

time on task, and safe and orderly environment). Surveys were administered to administrators and teachers from four schools with report card ratings of “excellent,” “good,” “below average,” and “unsatisfactory.” The administrators and teachers were asked to read each question carefully and answer in terms of what has occurred in the current school year and not previous years. Respondents were asked to answer in terms of their perceptions, opinions, and experiences on a Likert scale with the ratings *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *don’t know*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. The administrator and staff surveys of each school in the rated areas were compared to one another, and the school report cards were examined. In order to devise a more in-depth perspective of the schools, each school principal was interviewed one-on-one. The principals were asked the following questions in the one-on-one interviews:

1. Do you think standardized testing results reflect the quality of instruction, schools, teachers and leaders? Why or why not?
2. Do you think the current accountability rating system in SC is a fair one? Why or why not?
3. What were the districts’ responses to the report card rating?
4. What is your knowledge of the current education reform bill? (If none, I informed them and asked them for their thoughts.)
5. As the principal, how are you held singularly responsible for your school’s success?
6. Does your school receive Title I money?
7. If so, how did you spend those allocations?
8. What are the demographics of your school?

9. What are the demographics of your staff?
10. What are some challenges that exists in your opinion that are specific to middle school?
11. What other settings besides middle school have you served?
12. What extracurricular activities are offered?
13. Do you offer academic counseling?
14. Do you offer community service projects?
15. What is your vision for your school? How are you achieving your vision?
16. Seventy percent or more of students live in poverty in your school, what are some of the challenges they face?
17. How do those challenges impact them at school?

Principal 1 was a Caucasian female who has been in education for 26 years. Most of her experiences were at the elementary level, but she did have five years of experience as an instructional facilitator. The school she serves is comprised of the following student body: 400 students in Grades 6-8 who are 93% Caucasian, 6% African-American, and 1% other. The demographic makeup of the 27 member teaching staff mirrors that of the student body population according to Principal 1. She also has one assistant principal who serves the school and community alongside her. She was in favor of accountability but did not believe a 1-day snapshot of student ability represented on the South Carolina State Assessment was a true indication of the student's ability or that it factored in their willingness to engage in state testing. She also contended it was not a true measure of what teachers could do. Although her school received an "excellent" report card rating, it was not celebrated or noted by the district staff. Principal 1 did celebrate her students and

staff members but was disappointed by the lack of response from the district since the school was the only middle school in the district with an “excellent” rating for 2 years in a row. She was knowledgeable of the Education Reform Bill and felt state guidelines are political and not student centered. She also contended that legislation does not have the voice of the educator attached. She desires and welcomes more district-level support and wishes lawmakers would visit a school to experience a week an administrator, teacher, or a student experiences. Finally, she wants lawmakers to know that South Carolina has fantastic teachers. She desires that the legislature stops being negative about teachers and promote and celebrate the positive things teachers are doing.

Principal 2 was an African-American female who has been in education over 20 years. Most of her previous experiences were in high school and alternative settings. The school she serves is comprised of the following student body: 733 students in Grades 6-8 who are 50% Caucasian and 50% African-American. The demographic makeup of the teaching staff is predominately Caucasian with four of the 51 teachers being Black, according to Principal 2. She has two assistant principals who serve the school and community alongside her. Most of her experience has been at the high school level and alternative setting. She was apprehensive about starting a principalship at the middle school but now really enjoys that level. As an African-American female in leadership, she feels that she has had to deal with issues relative to being a stereotype as the leader of the school and in the community. She said her staff, which does not reflect a majority of African-Americans, was afraid to speak with her at first, and community members who were African-American wanted special treatment, while those who were not were not very accepting of her in her leadership role. She felt standardized testing did reflect the

quality of instruction, especially if teachers are “doing what they are supposed to do” in the classroom. She expounded that if the state standards taught are addressing the content, there is not a reason for students not to perform well, and sometimes the quality of the teaching strategies and practices have to be examined. Principal 2 felt the money associated with the South Carolina Accountability System is a waste of resources in regard to the amount of money spent on testing and that those funds could be better spent elsewhere since we frequently measure what is happening in the classroom by other means. She felt the system was designed to appease politicians more than anything. Much like Principal 1, Principal 2’s district did not celebrate or mention the “good” report card rating the school achieved. It also was not advertised in the newspaper, according to her. Again, like Principal 1, Principal 2 celebrated the students and staff members at her school. She contended that the Education Bill was ridiculous, as it talks about releasing teachers and large numbers of staff member for not performing, and there is already a teacher shortage. She felt the plan needed to be more about growing people and helping people find suitable placement to match their talents, if education was not an appropriate fit. She contended that when she first started the position, she was told, “It’s your school now, run it.” Also, like Principal 1, Principal 2 welcomed support from the district level. She also felt networking would be helpful for principals and university professors to stay in touch with first-year principals to give them an idea of where they need to direct coursework and instruction for principals.

Principal 3 was an African-American female who has been in education for 20 plus years at various levels. The school she serves is comprised of the following student body: 380 students in Grades 6-12 who were 50% Caucasian and 50% African-American.

The staff demographics of the teaching staff makeup did not mirror those of the student body population, according to Principal 3, with one of the 32 teachers being an African-American teacher. Principal 3 also felt the school needed more male teachers and certified teachers in general. Principal 3 had a co-principal who headed the high school component of the school, and neither principal had assistant principals. She did think there was a correlation between standardized testing and the quality of instruction in schools, teachers, and leaders, but that it was not 100% representative. She did not, however, think the accountability model for South Carolina was a fair one. She felt it had unrealistic expectations and did not compare “apples to apples” in most cases. She also felt it needed to be more of a stationary measure of progress and not a bar that continues to move. The district’s response to her report card rating was just identifying what the rating was, “below average”; but no strategies or areas were examined for improvement. No one examined resources that were needed or provided support. Principal 3 was knowledgeable of the education bill and did not feel that it was the answer, and several things would need to be examined. She wanted it to be known that although the school was small in population, the school still had the same challenges as larger schools, and the needs of those students needed to be met. Sometimes people think smaller is easier, and that is not the case. Finally, she did not feel there were any district supports that were in place except for the one-size-fits-all approach including instructional rounds for everyone that she did not find to be helpful because they were punitive and fault finding versus coaching oriented. Principal 3 also felt being on the opposite end of the county from the other schools did not make her school a priority geographically.

Principal 4 was an African-American male who had 18 years of experience in

education at the high school level. The school he serves is comprised of the following student body: 420 students in Grades 7-8 who are 84% African-American, 12% Caucasian, and 4% other. The demographic makeup of the 39 member teaching staff was 85% African-American, 10% Caucasian, and 5% Philippine. Principal 4 has two assistant principals who serve the school and community alongside of him. He does think the standardized test reflects the quality of the instruction, the schools, teachers, and leaders to an extent; but he mentioned there is some bias in the testing that has to be considered as well as the fact that students may not be good test-takers or possible issues existing in the testing environment on the day of administration. He felt the growth matrix provided for the last report card accountability measure was unfair because no matter the circumstances, a certain percentage of schools are going to fail no matter what, as based on the prescribed standards. The district's response to the report card rating for that middle school was to change the principal of the school, which made Principal 4 the only new incoming principal in the district. He did not feel the report card rating was a reflection on him since the grade was there when he arrived and was upset that he did not get an opportunity to change the rating since South Carolina State Testing was canceled due to COVID-19, so all schools in South Carolina kept the rating from the year prior. He was familiar with the education bill and felt the bill itself was flawed; and this has a lot to do with the fact that the writers are uninformed about what actually happens in the day-to-day operation in the education spectrum. He felt very supported by the district-level staff and superintendent of the district.

The remainder of the transcribed interviews were coded by me to identify themes around Edmonds's seven correlates. Finally, in order to provide triangulation in the

analysis process of each school, the school report cards were also examined by me for information from the report card relative to the themes of Edmonds's seven correlates.

Research Question Results: How Aligned Are the Schools in Each Rating Category to the “Correlates of Effective Schools” by Edmonds, Based on Principal/Teacher Responses to the More Effective Schools Staff Survey Items and the Information Gathered in the Interview Process?

School 1: The School with an Excellent Rating

To answer the research question as it relates to School 1, the “excellent” school, the More Effective Schools Staff Survey was administered to the school administrators and teachers. The More Effective Schools Staff Survey was sent to three school administrators and 27 teachers. Two school administrators and 16 teachers returned the surveys, which was a 55% return rate. The respondents are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Responses for More Effective Schools Staff Survey

Responses for school position	Response count
School administrators	2
Teachers	16

Clear and Focused Mission: School 1

Edmonds's “Correlates of Effective Schools” defined clear and focused mission as clearly articulated for the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability (Taylor, 2008). The survey results yielded that both the administrators and the teachers agree that a clear and focused mission, as defined, was in place since there was a 94% positive response rate from administrators and a 93% positive response rate

from teachers. Table 2 displays the survey results and comparisons of the first correlate, clear and focused mission.

Table 2

Responses for Clear and Focused Mission

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
13	100	81
21	100	100
23	100	100
29	100	100
30	100	93
35	100	100
41	50	81
52	100	100
60	100	94
61	100	100
66	100	94
70	100	100
81	50	81
84	100	100
87	100	56
88	100	100
Total	94	93

Note. Two administrators and 16 staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview revealed several things about the principal's core values that could influence the mission and vision of the school. The mission supports the vision and serves to communicate the purpose and directions to stakeholders (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009). Although the school received an "excellent" rating, the principal contended there was still room for improvement lending itself to lifelong learning, tweaking, and improvement. The principal's vision for the school was to become an AVID demonstration school. AVID demonstration schools undergo a rigorous validation process and are required to be revalidated every few years to ensure high levels of

implementation, with quality and fidelity to AVID strategies schoolwide. AVID helps schools shift to a more equitable, student-centered approach by focusing on students who fall in the academic middle by training the teachers to use consistent strategies schoolwide for writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading (Bernhardt, 2013). The principal also ascertained a great deal of success came about when the mission for the district was clear from the district level where state standards, Response to Intervention, and technology were focuses for 7 years and that knowing the targets and concentrating on them over a period of time helped them grow tremendously. A mission and vision for the school were not only important for the principal; but also, the mission and vision from the district were also necessary to ensure there was alignment.

The school report card also exhibited evidence relative to the school's mission. It stated that School 1 is helping all students develop the world-class knowledge, skills, and life and career characteristics of the Profile of a South Carolina Graduate. School 1 spoke to preparing students to excel as productive and responsible members of society by providing rigorous instructions and extracurricular programs in academics, athletics, and the arts. In addition, the report confirmed the expansion of AVID at the school. Finally, School 1 noted it enjoyed celebrating a report card rating of "excellent" for the 2017-2018 school year.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: School 1

Edmonds defined frequent monitoring of student progress as obtaining feedback on student academic progress frequently (Taylor, 2008). Multiple assessment methods such as teacher-made tests, samples of student work, mastery skills checklists, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-referenced tests were used. The results of testing are used to

improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program (Taylor, 2008). The results of the survey as it pertains to frequent monitoring of student progress yielded 100% positive responses from the administrators and 94% positive responses from the teachers. Table 3 exhibits the results.

Table 3

Responses for Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
7	100	94
9	100	67
19	100	100
20	100	100
33	100	94
55	100	100
63	100	100
65	100	100
73	100	100
86	100	100
106	100	75
Total:	100	94

Note. Two administrators and 16 staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview yielded that although the principal was completely in favor of accountability, Principal 1 did not believe that a 1-day snapshot of state testing was a true measure of student efforts or abilities or what the teacher could accomplish. This answer from the one-on-one interview correlated with what was found on the school report card. The school report card listed the South Carolina standardized assessments, STAR 360, and classroom assessment data as a basis for informing and creating instructional plans using South Carolina College and Career-Ready Academic Standards. In addition, district instructional initiatives, Leveled Literacy Intervention resources, and Response to Intervention were also noted as strategies used to identify and improve

academic weakness and accelerate strengths on the school report card.

High Expectations for Student Success: School 1

Edmonds defined high expectations for student success as the school's ability to display a climate of expectation in which the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and they (the staff) have the capability to help students achieve such mastery (Taylor, 2008). The survey yielded that both the administrators and teachers had high expectations for students, with the administrator producing a 100% positive response rate to questions and the teachers a 97% positive response rate to questions. Table 4 exhibits the survey results of administrators and teachers.

Table 4

Responses for High Expectations for Student Success

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
1	100	100
14	100	100
18	100	100
25	100	94
32	100	94
47	100	100
57	100	88
58	100	94
77	100	94
79	100	100
80	100	100
82	100	94
91	100	94
105	100	100
108	100	100
Total:	100	97

Note. Two administrators and 16 staff members completed the survey.

In the one-on-one interview, the principal expressed it would be considered a great failure for any student to have left the school without the tools necessary to

accomplish their goals, demonstrating that a culture of high expectations exists at the school level. In addition, although the rural school community has high poverty, drug use, and unemployment numbers, Principal 1 wanted students to know what their possibilities were and for the community members to understand the opportunities available to students. Principal 1 expressed that the AVID early college program that allows students moving from the middle level AVID program into ninth grade allows them to take community college and university level courses. Principal 1 expressed “allowing students to understand what they can do is huge.” Principal 1 not only exhibited high expectations for her students but even the families. Principal 1 described the families as bright and capable, although many did not earn a high school diploma or a college degree. Principal 1 expressed high expectations for students and parents by inviting GED completer programs and colleges to the schools in which families could enroll and receive information; Principal 1 indicated how much it could change their lives. A statement from the school report card narrative further exemplifying the high expectations for student success at School 1 stated that student academic and personal growth were the priorities. In addition, ensuring that students complete each school year with the world-class knowledge, world-class skills, and the life and career characteristics necessary to be successful at the next level is the goal of all stakeholders.

Positive Home-School Relations: School 1

Edmonds defined positive home-school relations as parents understanding and supporting the school’s basic mission and providing the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission (Taylor, 2008). The survey revealed that this is an area that has room for growth, with the percentage as positive for administrators

in this area yielding 85% and the percentage positive in this area for teachers yielding 73%. Table 5 displays the results from the survey on home-school relations.

Table 5

Responses for Home-School Relations

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
4	100	94
5	100	69
8	50	94
15	50	31
17	100	44
22	100	100
26	100	88
27	100	88
34	50	69
36	100	100
45	100	69
48	100	87
68	100	27
75	50	44
78	100	88
98	100	100
103	50	56
Total	85	73

Note. Two administrators and 16 staff members completed the survey.

Principal 1 described in the one-on-one interview that a great deal of parental support is provided in regard to discipline. It was stated that parents want and expect their children to be polite and respectful in most cases. However, there is not a great deal of support in the area of academics for future goal setting; unfortunately, a great deal of apathy exists in this area. Although apathy has been exhibited by many parents, the principal has tried to build this area by inviting parents to provide input into the Title I needs assessment in the area of instruction. Principal 1 explained that the schools' highly involved parents saw a need for new novels since the same ones had been used for many

years. In addition, Principal 1 devised a “Daddy Do Day” where dads come in and improve the campus with cleaning activities or building things like tables. Normally, it is a family affair.

Finally, the school report card revealed that 85% of teachers, 80% of students, and 81% of parents were satisfied with school-home relations when they were surveyed using the state-administered survey tool at the time of the survey. Only students at the highest grade level in the school and their parents are surveyed. The data points are not comparable to the effective schools survey results, but I noted the three groups when surveyed using the state tool had comparable results in all three groups and the percent positive rate was not very different from the percent positive rate on the More Effective Schools Staff Survey.

Instructional Leadership: School 1

Edmonds’s seven correlates concluded that the principal acts as the instructional leader who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents, and students, who understand and apply the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program at the school (Taylor, 2008). The survey yielded 97% percentage positive ratings in this area for administrators and 92% positive response rate for teachers. Table 6 displays the results of instructional leadership from the survey.

Table 6*Responses for Instructional Leadership*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
2	100	94
12	100	100
24	100	100
28	100	100
44	100	100
51	100	100
64	100	94
74	100	81
83	50	81
85	100	94
92	100	63
95	100	94
97	100	94
100	100	88
107	100	100
Total	97	92

Note. Two administrators and 16 staff members completed the survey.

Principal 1 expressed that before learning can take place, a relationship must be established. It was also expressed that the most beneficial strategy in instructional leadership was the instructional visits headed by the former superintendent and the instructional department. They would visit twice per year with one visit announced and the other unannounced. Their visit would follow with a lengthy conference where special education, data, and notebooks would be discussed. The visit was very inclusive of all facets of the school day. This level of district support was welcomed by Principal 1 who felt 10 “sets of eyes” were very beneficial to her and the staff. Principal 1 welcomed the district support in the area of instruction but ascertained the teachers were open as well because they wanted to improve. One thing that was attributed to the growth at the school was the teacher autonomy to select their own professional development options after

observations and conferences had taken place. They discussed options such as attending a professional conference, visiting another school as an observer, or observing a teacher within their own school. There were several teachers in the district who had put together professional development modules that were self-paced, but the biggest contribution was peer observations and sharing. The peer observation and peer support went so well because teachers had developed really great relationships with one another. The partner teacher would scaffold things and together the pair would formulate action steps. It was noted by me using the school report card that teachers participate in school, district, and self-selected professional development to be well-equipped to challenge students to reach their full potential which correlated extremely well with the statements made during the one-on-one interviews.

Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task: School 1

Edmonds defined opportunity to learn and time on task as teachers allocating a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in basic skills areas (Taylor, 2008). For a high percentage of that allocated time, students are engaged in planned learning activities directly related to the identified objectives (Taylor, 2008). The survey yielded positive responses in this area from both administrators and teachers at 96% and 93% respectively. Table 7 depicts the survey results of time on task from administrators and teachers.

Table 7*Responses for Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
3	100	94
11	100	100
16	100	88
37	100	94
38	100	100
39	100	100
42	100	75
43	50	81
46	100	100
49	100	100
50	100	81
54	100	81
56	100	80
59	100	100
67	50	94
71	100	94
72	100	94
76	100	100
89	100	100
93	100	87
96	100	94
101	100	100
104	100	94
Total	96	93

Note. Two administrators and 16 staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview revealed opportunities to learn were in place as evidenced by a large portion of the budget being spent on instructional materials. In addition, a broadcasting elective was instituted to hone the technology skills of students in a positive direction. iPads were also added to classrooms with downloadable apps that allowed students to critique a golf swing. This type of technology was very engaging for students according to the principal and allowed teachers to connect it to the curriculum. A large sum of money was also spent on instructional materials for leveled literacy

intervention, especially for the lower level readers. Principal 1 really wanted to focus on a strong literacy background. As a school, math was a struggle, but now they are beginning to see students who had pretty strong foundational math skills since Common Core math was instituted 5 years ago. Evidence from the school report card that further supported what was stated in the one-on-one interview was that School 1 teachers implemented AVID schoolwide strategies for students and teachers. In addition, it was noted that teachers engage students through STEM using PLTW and that students acquired world-class skills through innovative thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, technology, coding, media, and communication. Also noted was that students use personal devices (computer laptops) to expand, research, and communicate capabilities. Prime instructional time on the school report card was raised to 91%, up from 82.6 % the previous year. Finally, the percentage of teachers, students, and parents satisfied with the learning environment was 100%, 79%, and 97% respectively as noted from the groups surveyed in the highest school grade level on the state survey instrument for students and parents. All teachers are provided the opportunity to respond to the state survey.

Safe and Orderly Environment: School 1

Edmonds defined a safe and orderly environment as an orderly, purposeful atmosphere that is free from the threat of physical harm for both students and staff; however, the atmosphere is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning (Taylor, 2008). The survey results from the excellent school yielded 93% positive responses from administrators in this category and 90% positive responses in this category from the teachers. The presence of oppression was not measured from student and parent perspectives. The results yielded from the survey on a safe and orderly

environment are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

Responses for Safe and Orderly Environment

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
6	100	100
10	100	88
31	100	94
40	100	56
53	100	100
62	100	75
69	50	94
90	50	94
94	100	88
99	100	88
102	100	100
109	100	88
110	100	100
111	100	100
Total	93	90

Note. Two administrators and 16 staff members completed the survey.

In the one-on-one interview, Principal 1 referenced that teachers had great relationships multiple times and that the teachers had great relationships with the students. Principal 1 also noted that during one of the support visits conducted by the district, it was concluded the school had a strong environment as the building was safe, respectful, and conducive to learning. She concluded that this was attributed to the initiatives they had in place. The school report card narrative mentioned PBIS where students had the opportunity to earn “Wildcat Cash” for positive behavior. Students also experienced increased opportunities to improve personal integrity and life and career characteristics by participating in the Junior Achievement Program, character education classes, and career fairs to strengthen soft skills and provide opportunities for career

awareness. The one-on-one interview statements were further supported by report card survey reports completed by teachers, students, and parents yielding that 97%, 80%, and 91% respectively were satisfied with the social and physical environments.

School 2: The School With a Good Rating

To answer the research question as it relates to School 2, the “good” school, the More Effective Schools Staff Survey was administered to the school administrators and teachers. The More Effective Schools Staff Survey was sent to two school administrators and 51 teachers. Two school administrators returned the survey, and six teachers returned the survey which is a 16% response rate. The respondents are depicted in Table 9.

Table 9

Responses for More Effective Schools Staff Survey

School position	Response count
School administrators	2
Teachers	6

Clear and Focused Mission: School 2

School 2 did not share a similar outcome on the survey results for a clear and focused mission when administrators and teachers were compared. The administrator response was 97% favorable, and the teachers had an 84% response rate. This could be an area in which Principal 2 reviews with the staff to ensure the mission is clear. The results yielded from the More Effective Schools Staff Surveys are listed in Table 10.

Table 10*Responses for Clear and Focused Mission*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
13	100	83
21	100	100
23	100	67
29	100	83
30	100	83
35	100	100
41	50	83
52	100	83
60	100	100
61	57	67
66	100	100
70	100	83
81	100	50
84	100	100
87	100	83
88	100	83
Total	97	84

Note. Two administrators and six staff members completed the survey.

In the one-on-one interview, Principal 2 had a vision to be the best middle school in the area. Principal 2 wanted to become a model school that others could visit, learn from, and replicate. Principal 2 was on a mission to be the top school. The mission to provide educational experiences to assist students in achieving their potential as they develop confidence, increase leadership skills, and assume more responsibility was also noted in the narrative of the school report card. In addition, the report card narrative also contended that stakeholders of School 2 would work diligently to make the school a model middle school that is supportive of staff and students in an environment that propels teachers and students to realize the best version of themselves.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: School 2

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey results for School 2 yielded 97% positive ratings in the area of frequent monitoring of student progress from administrators and 90% positive ratings from teachers. Both groups appear to be in agreement in this area. The results from the survey are depicted in Table 11.

Table 11

Responses for Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
7	100	100
9	50	33
19	100	100
20	100	100
33	100	83
55	100	100
63	100	83
65	100	83
73	100	83
86	100	80
106	100	100
Total	95	86

Note. Two administrators and six staff members completed the survey.

In the one-on-one interview, Principal 2 discussed how students with deficiencies are identified each quarter and provided more intense instruction. In addition, the career facilitator works with students in the bottom 20%. The school report card narrative did not provide any major themes around frequent monitoring of student progress.

High Expectations for Student Success: School 2

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey revealed a 97% response rate from the administrators and a 90% positive response rate from the teachers. The two groups appear to have responses that correlate in this area. The results from the survey are displayed in

Table 12.

Table 12*Responses for High Expectations for Success*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
1	100	100
14	100	83
18	100	100
25	100	100
32	50	100
47	100	100
57	100	83
58	100	100
77	100	100
79	100	67
80	100	67
82	100	100
91	100	83
105	100	83
108	100	83
Total	97	90

Note. Two administrators and six staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 2 revealed that there are high expectations in place. Principal 2 stresses to teachers that they cannot exhibit bias in teaching by only teaching to the top 1-3%, as she contends that someone has to also teach the 97%. Principal 2 also stresses to teachers that the students' time is just as valuable as the adults. Not only are high expectations relayed to teachers but also to students. When students are not exhibiting the appropriate behavior in class, Principal 2 is relentless in her messaging about upholding classroom expectations. She stresses to students to keep a focus on the business of school and not waste time because learning is the number one priority. The school report card narrative mentions the primary goal is to increase academic achievement for all students encouraging excellence in an effort to increase

efficacy supporting the statements made during the interview.

Positive Home-School Relations: School 2

The results from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey yields a 97% positive response from the administrators and a 90% positive response rate from the teachers. The results exhibit a level of agreement among the two groups in this area. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

Responses for Home-School Relations

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
4	0	17
5	100	33
8	100	67
15	50	0
17	0	17
22	100	67
26	50	100
34	100	50
36	100	83
45	50	100
48	100	50
68	0	67
75	50	50
78	100	67
98	100	100
103	100	50
Total	68	55

Note. Two administrators and six staff members completed the survey.

Although both groups produced positive responses on the surveys, the one-on-one interview with Principal 2 revealed there may be some challenges in this area. Principal 2 is an African-American female and feels as if she receives what she described as “pushback” from the community. African-Americans and Caucasian community

members have not been accepting of her in a leadership role, according to Principal 2 because (a) she is considered to be an outsider (not originally from the area, although she has lived there for 20 years); and (b) some community members are not open to an African-American female in leadership. She mentioned that in her first year at the school, her life was threatened by a Caucasian male student. According to Principal 2, the perception of the school in the community is negative, but they are working on that. They have laid the foundation for work on a growth mindset with staff and students. She also mentioned the support from the district level to help field parent complaints has been helpful. Finally, the school report card revealed that 75% of teachers, 76% of students, and 68% of parents were satisfied with school-home relations when they were surveyed using the state-administered survey tool at the time of the survey, which appears to be more adequately aligned to the responses provided in the one-on-one interview.

Instructional Leadership: School 2

The results from the survey revealed that there was a 93% positive response from the administrators in this area and an 84% positive response rate from the teachers. Unlike some of the other areas, there does not appear to be consistency between the two groups' responses. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14*Responses for Instructional Leadership*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
2	100	100
12	100	83
24	100	83
28	100	83
44	100	100
51	50	100
64	100	83
74	100	83
83	100	67
85	100	80
92	50	33
95	100	100
97	100	83
100	100	83
107	100	100
Total	93	84

Note. Two administrators and six staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview revealed that Principal 2 feels the best instructional leaders focus on growing teachers and allowing them to flourish, focusing on their strengths. It could be another teaching area or in another industry all together, but the focus should be to help and not just discard or fire personnel as much of the legislations in South Carolina suggest for nonperforming teachers. She gave an example of a teacher she helped get another job selling flowers who is doing extremely well and another teacher who had trouble as a co-teacher in the exceptional children's department who is flourishing as a resource support teacher and has even won national awards. She stated putting people in the right places could make them feel empowered, changing the outcome of their performance. She contended that teachers must know how to analyze data, must know what to do with that data, and understand that data drives every decision.

Finally, Principal 2 contended that keeping what is in the best interest of children first and foremost will help tremendously. The school report card narrative indicated that to build instructional capacity, teachers should engage in continuous professional development through professional learning communities, which is an ongoing process that allows teachers to implement research-based strategies and the latest technologies. Teachers also unpack content-area standards and implement innovative and effective instructional approaches such as science kits, STEM, literature circles, Moby Max, Project-Based Learning, multimedia projects, and 1:1 technology integration. There was nothing in the one-on-one interview or the report card that explained the disparity in positive responses between the two groups on the surveys. This may be an area in which Principal 2 would like to gain more insight from the teachers.

Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task: School 2

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded a 93% positive response from administrators and a 90% positive response from the teachers. The responses from the administrators and teachers were comparable. Table 15 displays the results of the survey below.

Table 15*Responses for Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
3	100	100
11	100	100
16	100	100
37	100	83
38	100	100
39	100	100
42	100	100
43	100	67
46	100	83
49	100	100
50	50	83
54	50	83
56	100	100
59	100	83
67	100	83
71	100	83
72	100	100
76	100	83
89	100	83
93	100	67
96	100	100
101	100	100
104	100	100
Total	93	90

Note. Two administrators and six staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 2 revealed that she stresses to teachers it is not how fast or how often you teach what is exciting to you but that you know what kids need, keeping in mind their interests and abilities and cater to who is front of you. She gave an example of herself teaching a Motown lesson with music that she thought was wonderful, but the students were not familiar with the music and not engaged at all. She had to adjust to using what they were familiar with and what would engage them, which was at the time popular rappers. The school report card narrative indicated the

school was proud of how students participated in Genius Hour to research and present projects to the School Improvement Council and school board members that addressed the question, “What can we do to make Sims a better School?” The information shared led to the installation of the Elkind Water System and a social media campaign to promote kindness. Prime instructional time on the school report card was up to 88% from 86% the previous year. Finally, the percentage of teachers, students, and parents satisfied with the learning environment was 86%, 66%, and 77% respectively, as noted from students and parents surveyed in the highest school grade level on the state survey instrument.

Safe and Orderly Environment: School 2

The results from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded a 79% positive response from the administrators and a 75% positive response rate from the teachers. The responses from the two groups appear to be aligned in this area. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 16.

Table 16*Responses for Safe and Orderly Environment*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
6	100	83
10	0	83
31	100	83
40	100	50
53	50	67
62	100	67
69	100	67
90	100	83
94	100	83
99	0	100
102	50	83
109	100	67
110	100	83
111	100	50
Total	79	75

Note. Two administrators and six staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 2 revealed there have been some challenges in the area of a safe and orderly environment. Some of the members of the teaching staff's perception of the students was that they were "bad." There were also some students who experienced the loss of a parent while at the school, a fact of which the teachers were not aware. Principal 2 challenged them to get to know the students by building relationships with them. Principal 2 was also able to better coach teachers through the process when a greater level of trust was developed for her by the staff. They were able to start the process of building relationships with students by instituting a club day where each teacher sponsored a club for students. Teachers were able to interact with students around their interests. In addition, the institution of the Care Closet where students could shop as needed for essential items such as combs, tooth brushes, clothes,

and shoes helped students connect to school, according to the principal. Principal 2 contended when the basic needs of students are met, learning is not impeded.

School 3: The School With a Below Average Rating

To answer the research question as it relates to School 3, the “below average” school, the More Effective Schools Staff Survey was administered to the school administrators and teachers. The More Effective Schools Staff Survey was sent to one school administrator because the school did not have an assistant principal and 32 teachers. One school administrator returned the survey, and eight teachers returned the survey with a 28% response rate. The respondents are depicted in Table 17.

Table 17

Responses for More Effective Schools Staff Survey

School position	Response count
School administrators	1
Teachers	8

Clear and Focused Mission: School 3

School 3 also did not share a similar outcome on the survey results for a clear and focused mission when administrators and teachers were compared. The administrator response was 69% favorable, and the teachers were 84% favorable. There was a great deal of variation on positive responses between these two groups in this area. The results yielded from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey are listed in Table 18.

Table 18*Responses for Clear and Focused Mission*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
13	0	75
21	100	100
23	100	88
29	0	63
30	0	100
35	100	100
41	0	63
52	100	100
60	100	100
61	100	75
66	100	100
70	100	75
81	0	63
84	100	100
87	100	50
88	100	100
Total	69	84

Note. One administrator and eight staff members completed the survey.

In the one-on-one interview, Principal 3 had a vision to be a place of excellence for everyone every day, so every child is achieving. The goal was for no child to fall between the cracks. Principal 3 thought it was important to keep this perspective at the forefront when dealing with students who have attendance, academic, social, and emotional issues. When asked why there may have been such a disparity between the administrator and teacher assessment in this area, Principal 3 felt like it was just the doubt she felt in herself as the school leader of the school in improvement without support from the district. The school report card narrative stated the school was helping all students develop the world class skills of the Profile of a South Carolina Graduate.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: School 3

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey results for School 3 yielded 100% positive ratings in the area of frequent monitoring of student progress from administrators and 92% positive ratings from teachers. The results from the two groups were very comparable. The results from the survey are depicted in Table 19.

Table 19

Responses for Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
7	100	100
9	n	63
19	100	100
20	100	100
33	100	75
55	100	100
63	100	100
65	100	100
73	100	100
86	100	88
106	100	88
Total	100	92

Note. One administrator and eight staff members completed the survey.

In the one-on-one interview, Principal 3 did not provide a great deal of information about the frequent monitoring of student progress. The school report card narrative did not yield any information surrounding frequent monitoring of student progress.

High Expectations for Student Success: School 3

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey revealed a 67% response rate from the administrator and a 94% positive response rate from the teachers. This was another area that yielded a great deal of variation between the two groups in response to this area. The

results from the survey are displayed in Table 20. The one-on-one interview with Principal 3 did not reveal any evidence or examples of high expectations for student success. In addition, the school report card narrative did not contain information surrounding the theme either.

Table 20

Responses for High Expectations for Success

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
1	100	100
14	100	100
18	100	100
25	100	88
32	100	100
47	100	100
57	0	75
58	0	100
77	0	88
79	0	88
80	100	100
82	100	88
91	100	88
105	100	100
108	0	100
Total	67	94

Note. One administrator and eight staff members completed the survey.

Positive Home-School Relations: School 3

The results from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded a 47% positive response from the administrators and a 56% positive response rate from the teachers. The two groups' responses appeared aligned in this area. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 21.

Table 21*Responses for Home-School Relations*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
4	100	13
5	100	63
8	0	75
15	0	0
17	0	75
22	100	100
26	0	25
27	0	75
34	100	75
36	100	88
45	0	50
48	100	75
68	0	13
75	0	13
78	100	88
98	100	100
103	0	25
Total	47	56

Note. One administrator and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 3 revealed educational support from home was very lacking. Students were very transient, living with non-blood relatives for periods of time that could be a few weeks or a full grading period. Many students also lived in homes where they were the first members of the family to receive a high school diploma, so academics may not have been something that anyone stressed in the home. Unfortunately, there was no information from the school report card surrounding this theme as the data were not populated on the report card.

Instructional Leadership: School 3

The results from the survey revealed that there was an 87% positive response from the administrators in the area and an 88% positive response rate from the teachers.

The results from the two groups were aligned in this area. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 22.

Table 22

Responses for Instructional Leadership

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
2	100	100
12	100	100
24	100	100
28	100	100
44	100	88
51	100	100
64	100	100
74	0	75
83	100	88
85	100	88
92	0	25
95	100	100
97	100	100
100	100	63
107	100	100
Total	87	88

Note. One administrator and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview revealed that Principal 3 felt there was a burden of setting the tone for the achievement of the school. Principal 3 also concluded that it is the principal's responsibility to set the tone and lead the staff in the direction it needs to go. There was no information surrounding this theme that could be extracted from the school report card narrative for School 3.

Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task: School 3

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded a 91% positive response rate from administrators and a 89% positive response rate from the teachers. The two groups' responses appeared aligned in this area. Table 23 displays the results of the survey.

Table 23*Responses for Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
3	100	88
11	100	100
16	100	75
37	100	100
38	100	100
39	100	100
42	0	100
43	100	50
46	100	63
49	100	100
50	100	88
54	100	88
56	100	100
59	100	100
67	100	75
71	100	100
72	100	88
76	0	88
89	100	75
93	100	75
96	100	88
101	100	100
104	100	100
Total	91	89

Note. One administrator and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 3 revealed that the purchase of reading materials in the classroom that were content specific as well as science subscriptions for independent reading opportunities with which to learn were essential. The school report card narrative included information about students taking part in STEM course offerings that included PLTW Robotics and Automation and Medical Detectives. The report card narrative contended that the course offerings allow students to explore concepts that are unavailable in the traditional curriculum. In addition, the courses were said to promote an

atmosphere of collaboration and exploration. Several students also are enrolled in dual credit courses in partnership with USC-Lancaster. The prime instructional time listed on the school report card was 89%, which was down from 92% the previous year.

Safe and Orderly Environment: School 3

The results from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded a 71% positive response rate from the administrators and a 66% positive response rate from the teachers. The results from the two groups in this area appeared aligned. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 24.

Table 24

Responses for Safe and Orderly Environment

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
6	100	75
10	0	88
31	100	100
40	0	25
53	100	50
62	100	13
69	100	50
90	100	38
94	100	88
99	0	100
102	100	100
109	0	75
110	100	75
111	100	50
Total	71	66

Note. One administrator and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 3 revealed one of the things the school was working on was building relationships. The PBIS program and the mentor program were instituted to make that happen. This allowed for incentives such as rewarding

students for reading a certain number of books with a field trip to the movie theatre and lunch. In addition, the school sent a group to see the Harriet Tubman musical and the statehouse, exposing students to culture while rewarding the positive behaviors they wanted to see from students. One thing Principal 3 noticed as a difference compared to working in other communities was that the students were not cruel to one another. She also noted that staff members really met the needs of the students. She concluded that students were not “shamed,” like they may have been in other places for being served in the exceptional children’s program or wearing very worn shoes and clothing. There were multiple occasions she recalled where students who may have needed extra food to go home received it. There was no information surrounding this theme that could be extracted from the school report card narrative for School 3.

School 4: The School with the Unsatisfactory Rating

To answer the research question as it relates to School 4, the “unsatisfactory” school, the More Effective Schools Staff Survey was administered to the school administrators and teachers. The More Effective Schools Staff Survey was sent to three school administrators and 39 teachers. Three school administrators, and eight teachers returned the surveys yielding a 28% response rate. The respondents are depicted in Table 25.

Table 25

Responses for the More Effective Schools Staff Survey

School position	Response count
School Administrators	3
Teachers	8

Clear and Focused Mission: School 4

School 4 yielded a 94% positive response from administrators and a 92% favorable response from teachers. The results yielded from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey are listed in Table 26.

Table 26

The Responses for Clear and Focused Mission

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
13	67	100
21	100	100
23	100	100
29	100	67
30	100	100
35	100	100
41	67	67
52	100	100
60	100	100
61	67	83
66	100	100
70	100	100
81	100	67
84	100	100
87	100	83
88	100	100
Total	94	92

Note. Three administrators and eight staff members completed the survey.

In the one-to-one interview, Principal 4 had a vision to become an institution of continuous improvement. Principal 4 thought it was important to set standards and celebrate the small victories when goals are accomplished. Later, the team would set new goals and work towards the goals with small benchmarks along the way, ultimately making continuous growth. The school report card narrative contended that the mission of the school was to prepare students for success once they transition into high school,

college, and career by developing and enhancing their social, emotional, and academic skills. The narrative explained that the school accomplished the mission by embracing the South Carolina state standards, meeting the demands of rigorous coursework, and helping students develop the world class skills of the Profile of the South Carolina graduate.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: School 4

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey results for School 4 yielded 100% positive ratings in the area of frequent monitoring of student progress from administrators and 92% positive ratings from teachers. The results from the survey are depicted in Table 27.

Table 27

Responses for Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
7	100	100
9	n	63
19	100	100
20	100	100
33	100	75
55	100	100
63	100	100
65	100	100
73	100	100
86	100	88
106	100	88
Total	100	92

Note. Three administrators and eight staff members completed the survey.

In the one-on-one interview, Principal 4 elaborated that the team leaders and guidance department maintain good relationships with parents by monitoring and tracking academic problems students may be experiencing and developing solutions to frequently monitor student progress. The report card narrative listed how the school took

pride in the results of student performances on the English I end-of-course examination and for showing academic growth in reading and mathematics as evidenced by the Measure of Academic Progress assessment.

High Expectations for Student Success: School 4

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey revealed a 93% response rate from the administrator and a 96% positive response rate from the teachers. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 28.

Table 28

Responses for High Expectations for Success

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
1	100	100
14	100	83
18	100	83
25	100	100
32	100	100
47	100	100
57	100	100
58	100	83
77	100	100
79	33	100
80	67	83
82	100	100
91	100	100
105	100	100
108	100	100
Total	93	96

Note. Three administrators and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 4 revealed that high expectations for success existed since Principal 4 feels it is his job to monitor and inspect what is expected. Principal 4 contended that this is something he and his administrative team take very seriously. Information surrounding high expectations for success could not be

located on the school report card narrative.

Positive Home-School Relations: School 4

The results from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded a 75% positive response from the administrators and an 85% positive response rate from the teachers.

The results from the survey are displayed in Table 29.

Table 29

Responses for Home-School Relations

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
4	67	67
5	100	100
8	100	100
15	67	50
17	33	50
22	100	100
26	67	67
27	67	83
34	100	100
36	67	100
45	33	100
48	100	83
68	67	80
75	50	67
78	100	100
98	100	100
103	100	100
Total	75	85

Note. Three administrators and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 4 revealed that through positive home-school relations it discovered that over 51% of the homes did not have high speed internet access when school was released in March. This caused them to have to rely heavily on paper pencil packets in the spring. The absence of access really guided the decision to the modified virtual environment to begin school in the fall. Frequent phone

calls home is another way positive home-school relations are maintained. The school report card surveys demonstrated that 40% of teachers, 75% of students, and 46% of parents were satisfied with the school-home relations.

Instructional Leadership: School 4

The results from the survey revealed that there was a 96% positive response from the administrators in the area and a 96% positive response rate from the teachers. The two groups shared the same percentage points of positive responses in this area. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 30.

Table 30

Responses for Instructional Leadership

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
2	67	100
12	100	100
24	100	100
28	100	100
44	100	100
51	100	100
64	100	100
74	100	83
83	100	100
85	100	100
92	100	67
95	67	100
97	100	100
100	100	83
107	100	100
Total	96	96

Note. Three administrators and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview revealed that Principal 4 felt ensuring the school is growing in the area of academic achievement is a great responsibility for him as the instructional leader. The report card narrative contended the school is a Winthrop

University and University of South Carolina Partner School that supports the school in the area of instructional leadership.

Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task: School 4

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded an 86% positive response rate from administrators and a 96% positive response rate from the teachers. Table 31 displays the results of the survey below.

Table 31

Responses for Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
3	67	100
11	100	83
16	67	83
37	67	100
38	100	100
39	100	100
42	100	100
43	33	83
46	100	83
49	67	100
50	67	100
54	67	100
56	100	83
59	67	100
67	100	100
71	100	100
72	100	100
76	100	83
89	100	100
93	100	100
96	100	100
101	100	100
104	67	100
Total	86	96

Note. Three administrators and eight staff members completed the survey.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 4 revealed a plan that allows the

administration team and the counselors to identify students with learning deficiencies; the team leader provides the intervention to insure that opportunities to learn are in place.

Another way is the STEM Early College Academy. The report card narrative also mentioned the STEM Early College Academy further supporting the statements made in the one-on-one interview. In addition, 80% of the teachers, 71% of the students, and 92% of the parents were satisfied with the learning environment as based on the school report card surveys. The prime instruction time was down from the year prior at 89% to 85% on the school report card.

Safe and Orderly Environment: School 4

The results from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey yielded a 71% positive response from the administrators and an 85% positive response rate from the teachers.

The one-on-one interview with Principal 4 revealed that the school has students, like most middle schools, with varying levels of maturity; good things happen on days when the majority are exhibiting positive behavior, and things do not go so well on days when behavior is more negatively inclined. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 32.

Table 32*Responses for Safe and Orderly Environment*

Question	% positive administrator response	% positive teacher response
6	67	100
10	33	83
31	100	100
40	67	67
53	67	67
62	67	67
69	67	67
90	100	100
94	67	100
99	33	100
102	100	83
109	100	100
110	67	83
111	67	67
Total	71	85

Note. Three administrators and eight staff members completed the survey.

Results of the Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter was to exam the data that provided an answer to the following research question:

How aligned are the schools in each rating category to the “Correlates of Effective Schools” by Edmonds, based on principal/teacher responses to the More Effective Schools Staff Survey items and the information gathered in the interview process?

The tables and qualitative information provided throughout this chapter were created to summarize the surveys of four South Carolina middle schools that were rated by the South Carolina Department of Education with one of the following designations for each school: “excellent,” “good,” “below average,” and “unsatisfactory.” The groups

that made up the survey from each school were administrators and teachers. This limitation resulted in severe restrictions on sample size. The survey was based on Edmonds's Seven Correlates of Effective Schools: (a) clear and focused mission, (b) frequent monitoring of student progress, (c) high expectations for success, (d) home-school relations, (e) instructional leadership, (f) opportunity to learn and student time on task, and (g) safe and orderly environment (Taylor, 2008). The sample sizes were formatted as follows: school rating (number of administrators surveyed; number of teachers surveyed). These are the sample sizes from each school. The "excellent" school (2, 16); the "good" school (2, 6); the "below average" school (1, 8); and the "unsatisfactory" school (3, 6).

This chapter summarizes the comparison between administrator and staff survey results. The results were analyzed as a single school and across the four schools. As stated in the previous paragraph, the sample sizes were very small; therefore, the vast majority of data collected representing each school or group from the surveys were not normally distributed. To that end, two of the most appropriate nonparametric statistics models were used for these data, namely the Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Test (WSRT) and the Friedman test. The WSRT and Friedman test used a ranking process of the data to determine the outcome of the hypothesis test. The WSRT is a nonparametric statistical hypothesis test used to compare two related samples, matched samples, or repeated measurements to assess whether their population mean ranks differ. The WSRT was appropriate in this case to compare the two population groups (administrators and staff) because the survey results were related and not normally distributed. The hypotheses test for WSRT assumes that there are differences between the populations by converting the

data to means and ranks their differences equal to zero; therefore, the outcome of the mean rank testing determines the distribution or behavior of the population. The Friedman test is the nonparametric alternative to the one-way analysis of the variance (three or more groups) with repeated measures. As a nonparametric test, the Friedman test compares three or more matched or paired groups. The Friedman test examines the data for differences in *sum ranks*, whereas the WSRT examines the data for differences in *mean ranks*.

The models were used to scientifically determine if there was a difference between administrator and staff responses to the survey. Both tests assumed that the difference in the data mean ranks (WSRT) and the difference in the data sum ranks (Friedman test) for each group were equal to zero and did not vary statistically from a difference of zero. The two tests looked for differences using a rigorous process that implied no evidence of difference between the two groups (WSRT) and three or more groups (Friedman test).

Since the qualitative research methodology was used, the small samples likely are appropriate. However, the small samples per school can cause less than robust results and decision-making when using inferential statistics. To that end, inferential statistics were used to scientifically measure the difference between administrators and staff within a school and across the four schools in the study. As mentioned above, nonparametric statistics were used to mitigate the small-sample factor as well as the survey data not meeting the threshold of the normality test.

The 95% confidence level was used for all analyses. In other words, were the administrator and staff positive responses closely aligned with each other in overall

responses? The phrase statistically significant means that the survey responses were not aligned among administrators and staff. The phrase statistically insignificant means that the responses are aligned with each other. For example, the combined administrators and staff across the four schools (all correlates) showed statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0001 < 0.05$). This means that the four were not aligned in their responses.

Additionally, when the administrators and staff from the excellent school and the good school were compared, the difference in responses was statistically significant ($p = 0.0006 < 0.05$). This means the responses between the excellent and good schools were not aligned. The difference between the staff of the below average school and unsatisfactory school was statistically significant ($p = 0.018 < 0.05$), which means these two lower performing schools' responses did not align with each other either.

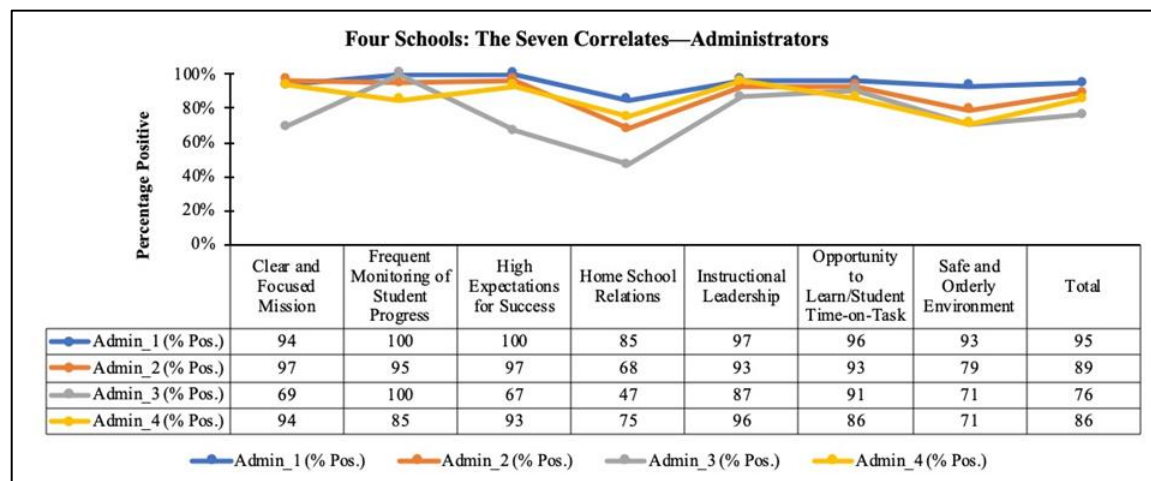
Do these mismatches in alignment suggest a possible paradox? The below average school had only one administrator for its sample size, which is not a statistical sample. The difference between the responses of the excellent and below average school staff was statistically insignificant ($p = 0.128 > 0.05$). Also, the difference between the excellent and unsatisfactory school was statistically insignificant ($p = 0.272 > 0.05$), which means the responses of the excellent school and the two low-performing schools were aligned with each other. These findings suggest that the combination of all administrators and staff across the four schools that were shown to be statistically significant will require looking at each correlate's question, using the tables and graphs provided, to determine which particular questions might differ from the excellent- or good-rated school.

Figure 1 depicts a comparison between the seven correlates for administrators

across all four schools evaluated in the survey. The difference among the responses from administrators is statistically significant ($p = 0.011 < 0.05$). Consequently, the responses are not aligned.

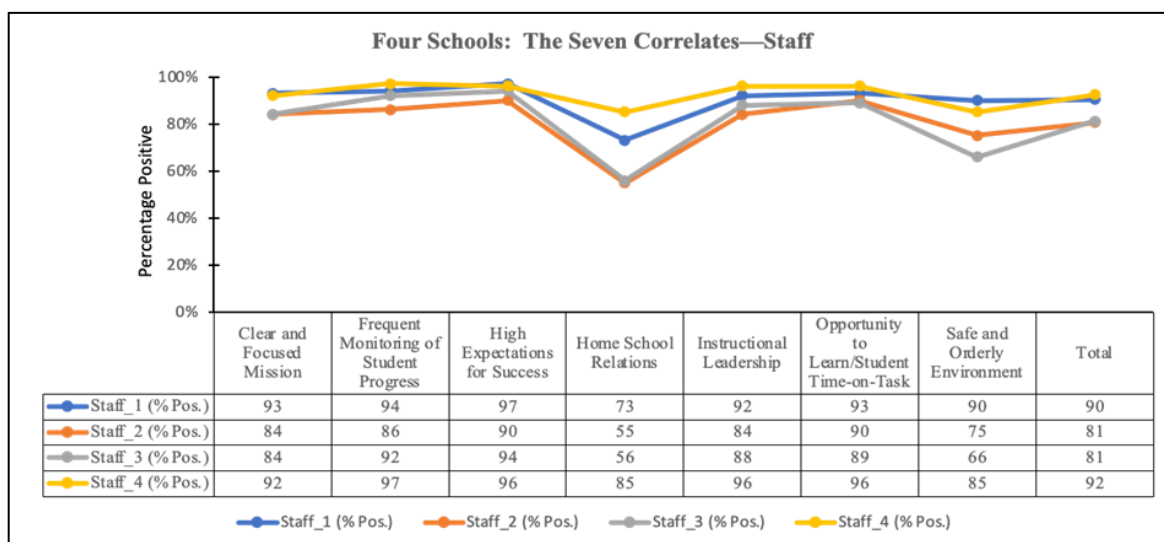
Figure 1

An Analysis of Administrator Responses to the Seven Correlates



Note. The difference is statistically significant ($p = 0.011 < 0.05$). Sample sizes (n = admin, staff): ($n_1 = 2, 16$); ($n_2 = 2, 6$); ($n_3 = 1, 8$); and ($n_4 = 3, 6$).

The graph in Figure 2 depicts a comparison between the seven correlates for teachers across all four schools evaluated in the survey. The difference among the responses from teachers across the four schools is statistically significant ($p = 0.0007 < 0.05$). Consequently, the responses are not aligned.

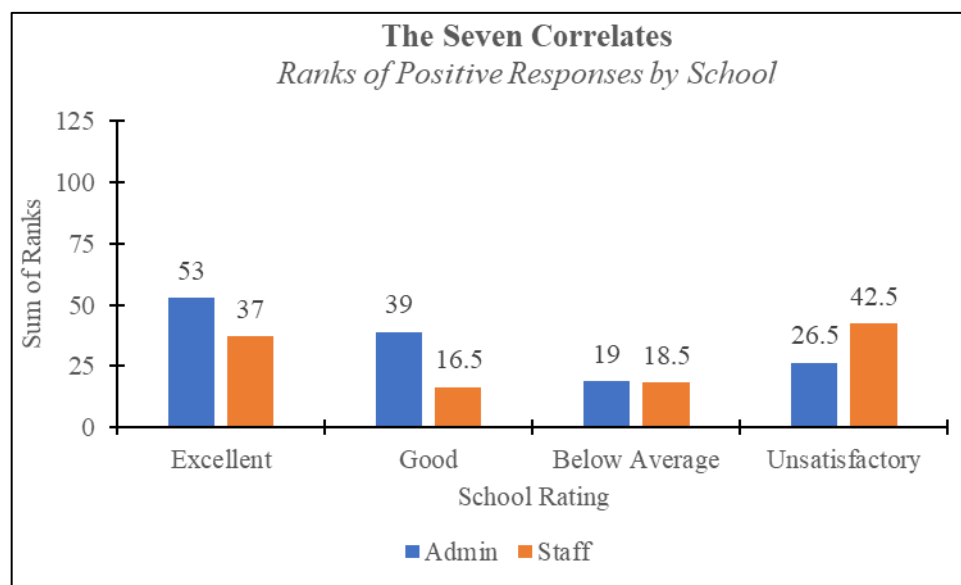
Figure 2*An Analysis of Teacher Responses to the Seven Correlates*

Note. The difference is statistically significant ($p = 0.00007 < 0.05$). Sample sizes (n = admin, staff): ($n_1 = 2, 16$); ($n_2 = 2, 6$); ($n_3 = 1, 8$); and ($n_4 = 3, 6$).

The data in Figure 3 shows the rank of the positive responses from the administrator and staff survey results across all four schools. The ranks shown in Figure 3 mean that the two higher ranking schools had a higher rate of positive response percentages for a given correlate by the administrators. The trend supports findings from the review of literature that leadership in any school is one of the most important aspects regardless of poverty level (Crum, 2013). Consequently, the larger question became, “are there better outcomes from schools where the administrator indicated more positive responses to the seven correlates?” After analyzing the qualitative data of each principal from the interview, the principals from the two schools with the higher ranking provided more evidence for each correlate than the two principals from the schools with the lower rankings.

Figure 3

Ranking of Positive Responses (Friedman test)



Note. This summary depicts the two schools with the highest rankings had a higher number of positive responses by the school administrators than the two schools that had lower rankings.

The data in Figures 4, 5, and 6 provide a summary of aligned and nonaligned entities. The data in Figure 4 displays the results of comparing the administrator and staff responses in each school as they relate to each correlate. There are areas of significant differences each school could examine within its organizations; however, there was not alignment noted where higher performing schools were more aligned to the correlates than lower performing schools.

Figure 4*Comparative Analysis Within Schools*

	Comparative Analysis Within Schools (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test)*			
	Excellent_1	Good_2	Below Average_3	Unsatisfactory_4
Correlates	Difference Admin_1/Staff_1	Difference Admin/_2/Staff_2	Difference Admin_3/Staff_3	Difference Admin_4/Staff_4
Combination of all Seven Correlates	Significant $p = 0.028$ <i>Not aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.201$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.398$ <i>Aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.022$ <i>Not aligned</i>
Clear and Focused Mission	Insignificant $p = 0.856$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.955$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.408$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.679$ <i>Aligned</i>
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Insignificant $p = 0.534$ <i>Aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.023$ <i>Not Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.477$ <i>Aligned</i>	insignificant $p = 0.091$ <i>Aligned</i>
High Expectations for Success	Significant $p = 0.017$ <i>Not aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.078$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.281$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.712$ <i>Aligned</i>
Home-School Relations	Insignificant $p = 0.080$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.227$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.113$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.201$ <i>Aligned</i>
Instructional Leadership	Insignificant $p = 0.132$ <i>Aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.023$ <i>Not aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.023$ <i>Not aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.798$ <i>Aligned</i>
Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task	Insignificant $p = 0.078$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.201$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.110$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.086$ <i>Aligned</i>
Safe and Orderly Environment	Insignificant $p = 0.233$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.530$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant <i>Aligned</i> $p = 0.851$	Insignificant $p = 0.124$ <i>Aligned</i>

Note. The green shaded cells mean any difference between or among entities is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$); hence, the responses are aligned with each other. The red shaded cells mean the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$); hence, the responses are not aligned with each other.

Figure 5 displays the results of a comparison between schools. The combined administrator and staff responses of the school rated “excellent” were compared to the school rated “unsatisfactory.” In addition, the combined administrator and staff responses of the school rated “good” were compared to the school rated “below average.” The results did not yield any significant differences that would suggest an alignment of the higher performing schools to the correlates than the lower performing schools or vice versa.

Figure 5*Comparative Analysis Between Schools*

	Comparative Analysis Between Schools (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test)			
	Excellent_1/ Unsatisfactory_4	Excellent_1/ Unsatisfactory_4	Good_2/Below Average_3	Good_2/Below Average_3
Correlates↓	Difference Admin_1/Admin_4	Difference Staff_1/Staff_4	Difference Admin_3/Admin_3	Difference Staff_3/Staff_4
Combination of all Seven Correlates	Significant $p = 0.022$ <i>Not aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.272$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.208$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.401$ <i>Aligned</i>
Clear and Focused Mission	Insignificant $p = 0.453$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.918$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.438$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.478$ <i>Aligned</i>
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Insignificant $p = 0.168$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.266$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.625$ <i>Aligned</i>	insignificant $p = 0.168$ <i>Aligned</i>
High Expectations for Success	Significant $p = 0.410$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.977$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.118$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.293$ <i>Aligned</i>
Home-School Relations	Insignificant $p = 0.740$ <i>Aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.010$ <i>Not aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.072$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.603$ <i>Aligned</i>
Instructional Leadership	Insignificant $p = 0.670$ <i>Aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.021$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.670$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.233$ <i>Aligned</i>
Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task	Insignificant $p = 0.121$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.061$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.820$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.855$ <i>Aligned</i>
Safe and Orderly Environment	Insignificant $p = 0.109$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.346$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.900$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.414$ <i>Aligned</i>

Note. The green shaded cells mean any difference between or among entities is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$); hence, the responses are aligned with each other. The red shaded cells mean the difference between or among entities is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$); hence, the responses are not aligned with each other.

Figure 6 displays the combined responses of all administrators from all schools, the combined responses of all the staff members from all four schools, and the combined responses of the administrators and staff members of all four schools. An analysis of all

of the responses combined for all seven correlates shows a significant difference in the responses but no alignment. The combined administrator responses do not reveal any significant differences in the correlates. The combined teacher responses showed significant differences with the following correlates: home-school relations and safe and orderly environment. One could conclude that these two areas may be important for teachers. The combined responses of the teachers and administrators showed significant differences with the following correlates: home-school relations, opportunities to learn/time on task, and safe and orderly environment. One could conclude these areas are important to teachers and school administrators. If school leaders are looking to address the seven correlates in schools and are looking for a starting point, these could possibly be areas with which to start.

Figure 6*Combined Responses Across Schools*

	Across All Four Schools (Friedman Test Model)		Across All Four Schools (Friedman Test Model)
Correlates↓	Across All Admin	Across All Staff	Across Admin and Staff Combined
Combination of all Seven Correlates	Significant $p = 0.011$ <i>Not aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.0007$ <i>Not aligned</i>	$p = 0.0001$ Significant
Clear and Focused Mission	Insignificant $p = 0.544$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.183$ <i>Aligned</i>	$p = 0.298$ Insignificant
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Insignificant $p = 0.557$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.670$ <i>Aligned</i>	$p = 0.3533$ Insignificant
High Expectations for Success	Insignificant $P = 0.475$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $P = 0.659$ <i>Aligned</i>	$p = 0.2840$ Insignificant
Home-School Relations	Insignificant $p = 0.103$ <i>Aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.002$ <i>Not aligned</i>	$p = 0.0013$ Significant
Instructional Leadership	Insignificant $p = 0.987$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.062$ <i>Aligned</i>	$p = 0.0569$ Insignificant
Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task	Insignificant $p = 0.987$ <i>Aligned</i>	Insignificant $p = 0.163$ <i>Aligned</i>	$p = 0.0370$ Significant
Safe and Orderly Environment	Insignificant $p = 0.372$ <i>Aligned</i>	Significant $p = 0.006$ <i>Not aligned</i>	$p = 0.0150$ Significant

Note. The green shaded cells mean any difference between or among entities is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$); hence, the responses are aligned with each other. The red shaded cells mean the difference between or among entities is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$); hence, the responses are not aligned with each other.

The data provided mixed statistical distinctions within each school and among the four schools. The statistical analysis of the survey results showed inconclusive evidence

of alignment between higher performing and low-performing schools. To further interpret or find a more definitive alignment of the data to a school's rating will require a closer manual examination of the data which show detailed analysis of questions associated with each correlate.

It was my intention to answer the previously mentioned research question. In addition, strategies were sought to help school administrators be successful in impoverished middle schools. The conclusions, implications of findings, limitations, and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the study's findings and conclusions. Implications of the findings and recommendations for further research are also included. The study adds to the body of research pertaining to providing guidance to school leaders in impoverished schools that may increase academic achievement.

Edmonds's research in this area was conducted during the 1970s (Taylor, 2008). Edmonds's research began in response to the 1966 Coleman Report that concluded economically disadvantaged minority students could not learn as well as their White counterparts because of a lack of cultural capital (Taylor, 2008). Edmonds believed all students, regardless of background, could learn. He determined it was the job of the schools to ensure this goal was reached. He began to study schools with high levels of achievement which were populated by both impoverished and minority students. From that research, the Effective Schools Movement was initiated. The premise behind the movement was that in order for a school to provide effective instruction to all students, it needs to have seven essential elements, referred to by Edmonds as correlates:

1. Clear and Focused School Mission
2. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
3. High Expectations for Student Success
4. Positive Home-School Relations
5. Instructional Leadership
6. Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task
7. Safe and Orderly Environment

The four principals included in this study agreed that the outcomes of student

testing do not completely reflect the quality of instruction, schools, or school leaders. This belief was confirmed by research conducted in New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Iowa, and Michigan (Tienken, 2017). Although the development of Edmonds's seven correlates were in response to the Coleman Report that suggested African-American children did not learn at the same progressive rate as White children, a Stanford University sociologist, Sean F. Reardon, concluded that test score differences or gaps associated with poverty are considered greater than those associated with race; and the gap is widening (Camp, 2018; Tienken, 2017). However, when one considers that children of color are disproportionally impacted by poverty, the implications could be catastrophic for children of color in a school setting (Alexander, 2010).

Research has found that children of poverty, as opposed to children living in higher income households, are not read aloud to as often or exposed to complex languages or large vocabularies, which produces a problem with literacy (Wong, 2003). According to the Journal of Public Health, illiteracy and the problems it generates extend to health care, employment, generational literacy, and crime (Rea, 2020). These facts are very concerning since every school in the study was a rural impoverished school with at least a 70% poverty rate. The rural rate of child poverty is growing and has exceeded that of the urban rate since the 1960s (Hooker, 2013). However, even with the challenges of rural education, poverty, and the challenges associated with the middle school model, at least two of the middle schools in the study were able to overcome these barriers (Supovitz, 2019). The following are the results of the narrative analysis of the four schools in the study focusing on Edmonds's seven correlates of effective schools. This information could provide insight to other school leaders of impoverished middle schools

in South Carolina.

Conclusions

Clear and Focused Mission

Although there were no significant differences found on the analysis of questions for the correlates, a closer look at the questions where there was a lower percentage of positive response rates could provide insight for principals who are looking for guidance and insight into effective leadership. When reviewing the clear and focused mission administrator responses, there were notable differences in the mission/vision statements in the “excellent” and “good” rated schools as compared to the “below average” and “unsatisfactory” rated schools. Principal 1 had a vision for her school to become an AVID demonstration school, which has a very distinct set of measurable standards to work towards (Lyman & Villani, 2004; Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). Much like Principal 1, Principal 2 had a vision for her school to become a model school for South Carolina, which is another measurable goal that has a prescribed set of targets to reach (Lyman & Villani, 2004). Principal 3 had a vision for her school to be a place of excellence, so no child would fall through the cracks. Principal 4 had a vision for his school to be an institution of continuous growth and improvement. All four principals had missions, visions, and goals; but the goals and visions of Principal 1 and Principal 2 were measureable, which research has shown makes them more likely to be accomplished when something can be measured (Houston, 2020).

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

There were no significant differences found in the analysis of questions for this correlate, but a closer look at the questions where there was a lower percentage of

positive response rates could provide insight for principals who are looking for guidance and insight into effective leadership. After conducting the narrative analysis, School 1 had the most measures in place for frequently monitoring student progress including STAR 360, classroom assessments, and Response to Intervention progress monitor checks after leveled literacy interventions, which are taken biweekly (Neill, 2018).

School 2 also noted Response to Intervention progress monitoring checks when asked about the frequent monitoring of student progress, again taken biweekly. School 3 did not have anything that referenced the frequent monitoring of student progress, and School 4 referenced tracking student progress each 9-week grading period, which is not as frequent as progress monitoring and the Measure of Academic Progress assessment which is taken two to three times per year (Neill, 2018). Principals 1 and 2 had the most offerings in this area as compared to Principals 3 and 4 (Taylor, 2008; Tienken, 2017).

High Expectations for Student Success

There were no significant differences found on the analysis of questions for this correlate, but a closer look at the questions where there was a lower percentage of positive response rates could provide insight for principals who are looking for guidance and insight into effective leadership. After conducting the narrative analysis, Principal 1 spoke of the AVID early college program when discussing high expectations for student success. In addition, she referenced bringing in community colleges and universities to better inform not only students but also extended this opportunity to parents (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). Knowing that several of her students would be first generation high school graduates, Principal 1 also invited GED completer program representatives into the school building to enroll families in the program, knowing it would offer an

opportunity to enhance their lives. These actions were in place at School 1 in this area and involved the principal, teachers, parents, and community. In her messaging to teachers, Principal 2 mentioned the expectation that everyone had to be motivated to teach all students; however, unlike Principal 1, there was not an action executed in this area by Principal 2 (Taylor, 2008). Principal 3 did not speak to anything that stood out in the area of high expectations for student success. Finally, Principal 4 mentioned that he inspects what he expects. In addition, the STEM early college was listed in the school report card narrative and addressed high expectations, but the principal with the most evidence in this area again was Principal 1 (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000; Taylor, 2008).

Positive Home-School Relations

There were no significant differences found in the analysis of questions for this correlate, but a closer look at the questions where there was a lower percentage of positive response rates might provide insight for principals who are looking for guidance and insight into effective leadership. After conducting the narrative analysis, Principal 1 stated she receives great support from parents in the area of discipline because parents expect their children to be polite and respectful (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). The area where support was lacking from home for students was with academics and future goal setting. Principal 1 did not let the lack of involvement deter her from developing opportunities for parents to become a part of the fabric of the school. She invited parental input determining Title I funding priorities in purchasing for classroom libraries. She also instituted Daddy Do Day where dads were invited to the campus to fix things or provide things needed. The task normally became a family affair, according to her (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). Principal 2 described this area as a challenge and went on to describe

how she was not accepted by the community. She did feel supported in this area by the district, since they would help alleviate parent complaint calls at the district level.

Principal 3 also described support in the area of academic parental support as lacking; and like Principal 2, Principal 3 did not have any viable solutions to remedy this.

Principal 4 described home-school relations at his school as positive as evidenced by the information the school was able to ascertain from parents about the number of homes without high-speed internet connection. Although described by Principal 4 as evidence of positive home-school relations, this more describes the response to a survey. Edmonds defined home-school relations as parents understanding and supporting the school mission and goals (Taylor, 2008). Principal 1 had the most evidence of positive home-school relations as defined by Edmonds (Taylor, 2008).

Instructional Leadership

There were no significant differences found in the analysis of questions for this correlate, but a closer look at the questions where there was a lower percentage of positive response rates could provide insight for principals who are looking for guidance and insight into effective leadership. After conducting the narrative analysis, Principal 1 ascertained that instructional leadership not only had to be implemented at the school level but also supported at the district level with visits, observations, and feedback (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Her approach to instructional leadership was a collaborative growth model. She ensured that teachers had input into selecting their growth strategy. The teachers could self-select from modules put together by other teachers in the district or by visiting a colleague's classroom that had mastered the area in which the teacher was seeking growth. From there, the teachers would sit down and map out action steps

towards a desired end goal (Crum, 2013). Principal 2 described her approach to instructional leadership as one of growth as well. She felt growing teachers, and not discarding them when an area of weakness was discovered, would allow teachers to flourish. Principal 2 also felt instruction should be student centered, driven by data (Crum, 2013). She felt ongoing professional development and professional learning communities were important aspects of instructional leadership and spoke to this taking place at her school (Crum, 2013). Principal 3 described instructional leadership as a burden of setting the tone for achievement. Strategies for instructional leadership were not expounded upon by Principal 3 (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Principal 4 contended that ensuring the school was growing was a great responsibility for him as the instructional leader; however, there were no details as to how this was to be achieved. Principals 1 and 2 both had collaborative and growth mindsets towards instructional leadership (Crum, 2013). Principal 1's model included an additional level to Principal 2's beyond the leader and teachers to include the district. Principals 3 and 4 had less contributions in this area (Crum, 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2013).

Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task

There were no significant differences found in the analysis of questions for this correlate, but a closer look at the questions where there was a lower percentage of positive response rates could provide insight for principals who are looking for guidance and insight into effective leadership. After conducting the narrative analysis, Principal 1 supported opportunities to learn by purchasing leveled literacy materials to ensure students had a strong literacy background (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). AVID schoolwide was another focus where students learned strategies for writing, inquiry,

collaboration, organization, and reading; an emphasis was even placed on dual credits through the AVID initiative. PLTW and STEM were other initiatives instituted. After using Common Core math for 5 years, Principal 1 noted a rise in student math performance. Principal 2 emphasized the importance of instruction being student centered versus adult centered. This was evidenced through Genius Hour, an opportunity for students to engage in authentic learning while seeking to make the school performance better through project-based learning. Principal 3 provided opportunities to learn through the purchase of supplemental reading materials for science and offered STEM through PLTW and dual credit offerings through the University of South Carolina. Finally, Principal 4 focused on opportunities to learn at school through a system of team leaders identifying and providing interventions for students. He also referenced the STEM early college the school offers to students. All four principals referenced relevant examples in this area; however, Principals 1 and 2 referenced the most examples, while Principals 3 and 4 referenced the least (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

Safe and Orderly Environment

There were no significant differences found in the analysis of questions for this correlate, but a closer look at the questions where there was a lower percentage of positive response rates could provide insight for principals who are looking for guidance and insight into effective leadership. After conducting the narrative analysis, Principal 1 referenced great relationships with teachers and teachers with students multiple times when speaking of the environment in her building (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). She also noted a district visit under previous leadership where the school was complimented for the strong, respectful environment that was conducive to learning. She also referenced

PBIS incentives, character classes, career fairs, and Junior Achievement as offerings that contributed to student positive behaviors (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). Principal 2 described this area as a challenge at her school. She did not think teachers had good relationships with students; and as an example, she referenced how a child's parent had died and the teachers were not aware. She tried to remedy this with the institution of club day, allowing students and teachers to connect over areas of common interest. She also instituted a Care Closet where students were allowed to shop for necessities without having to ask anyone for them, creating a safe haven for them. Principal 3 also felt building relationships was an area the school needed to improve but also instituted PBIS and mentor programs. Students were incentivized with field trips. Principal 4 described his students as having varying levels of maturity that would produce positive results on some days and negative results on others. When comparing the two groups, Principals 1 and 2 had more offerings in this area than Principals 3 and 4 (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000; Taylor, 2008).

Although there was not a direct alignment of the survey questions and the seven correlates with the report card ratings, it was found that the higher the school ranking in its rating, the more positive responses were provided by the school administrators on the More Effective Schools Staff Survey. This trend lends itself to a finding in the review of literature that leadership in any school is one of the most important aspects, regardless of the poverty level (Crum, 2013). The principals of Schools 1 and 2 yielded more information from their interviews that spoke to the seven correlates. Principal 1 had the most information in her interview as well as on the school report card. Principal 2 was second. A narrative analysis comparison of the groups in terms of performing and

nonperforming yielded that in six of the seven correlates, Principals 1 and 2 had more evidence to share about the correlates about which they were questioned. The one correlate where the two groups shared equal evidence was Correlate 7, safe and orderly environment. It is important to note that the makeup of Schools 3 and 4 may need to be examined as a contributing factor to the issue of nonperformance (West & Schwerdt, 2012). School 3 was organized with Grades 6-12. and School 4 only had Grades 7 and 8. In addition, School 4 was the only school that had a makeup of more than 80% African-American students; cultural relevancy in the school may also need to be examined (Akua, 2012).

Finally, Edmonds's original studies found the correlates to be successful in schools with high minority numbers (Taylor, 2008). The inclusion of School 1 in the study that performed well with the correlates in place may add to the body of work that not only are the correlates present in high-performing and high-poverty schools and schools with high numbers of minority students but even in high-performing, high-poverty schools that are rural and where minority students are not the majority (Taylor, 2008).

Recommendations for Leaders

Common themes from all four principals were that accountability is needed in the state, but high stakes testing may not be the answer (Supovitz, 2019). Everyone found flaws with the current South Carolina accountability model. In addition, the four principals did not have any experiences where representatives from the legislature were involved in the day-to-day operations of the schools and questioned if there may be a disconnect with this group from an operational perspective (Amrein & Berlin, n.d.;

Gilreath, 2018). Three of the four principals felt more support was needed from the district level. The one principal who felt he was receiving district-level support was Principal 4; however, it is important to note that the year prior to his start, Principal 4 stated that his predecessor had received an “unsatisfactory” rating and was subsequently relieved of his principalship (Simon & Johnson, 2013).

The four principals concluded the elimination of entire staffs as the Education Bill suggests in South Carolina would not be helpful if schools continue in improvement statuses (Dweck, 2020; Southern Regional Education Board, 2018). Principals 1 and 2 felt a growth model for teachers, schools, and administrators was needed for schools that were not performing successfully. Both principals also spoke at great length about relationships and how important they were. It was important for the teachers to have positive relationships with one another, with students, and with the principal (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000). Although, it was noted that more positive responses were produced by the administrators in the higher ranking schools and these principals were able to speak about more evidence in the six of the seven correlate areas, it does not suggest the principals, schools, teaching staff, and students are inferior to the higher performing schools with the rankings of “below average” and “unsatisfactory” in comparison to “excellent” and “good” (Crum, 2013; Neill, 2018). Although less evidence was provided by Principals 3 and 4 than Principals 1 and 2 and less positive responses were provided on the More Effective Schools Staff Survey by Principals 3 and 4 than Principals 1 and 2, all four principals spoke competently around all topics discussed. With the idea in mind of a growth model for teachers that Principals 1 and 2 mentioned, there may also be a need for a growth model in place for all principals (Dweck, 2020; Simon & Johnson,

2013).

In addition, the school accountability rating system could also be organized in a growth rating system. Instead of schools being categorized as “excellent,” “good,” “average,” “below average,” and “unsatisfactory” they could be categorized as “high performing,” “performing well,” and “growth.” This lends itself to the growth mindset that research has proven to be successful without demoralizing leaders, teachers, students, schools, and communities (Dweck, 2020; Simon & Johnson, 2013). Schools in “growth” status would receive support rather than be discarded as the Education Reform Bill prescribes, and a school mentor or advisor would be assigned (Amrein & Berlin, n.d.). This only provides a solution to the accountability rating flaws, but this body of research also sought to produce a guide/plan that would help new administrators experience success from the onset and not look for solutions when thrust into the difficulties that exist in impoverished middle schools (Crum, 2013; Gran, 2016).

A Plan for Leaders in South Carolina—Emphasis on Rural and Middle School Leaders

1. State colleges and universities with school leadership programs should work with districts in their geographic locations to offer support by providing feedback on district support of schools and school leaders. This would encompass the colleges and universities evaluating the effectiveness of district support rounds (if not in place, the supporting college/university could help the district institute this). The supporting colleges and universities would also use surveys and observations in their evaluations. The colleges and universities could also offer courses/modules for areas of growth found in

schools/districts better informing university preparedness programs (Crum, 2013).

2. Districts provide support to schools by offering support around visits that are nonpunitive and offer true guidance and support to school leaders and schools at least twice per year. If growth plans are devised, school leaders should have input into professional development and a choice of visiting similar schools (Crum, 2013; Dweck, 2020).
3. School leaders should organize their schools around Edmonds's Seven Correlates of Effective Schools which includes strategies that have been found to be successful in other high-performing, impoverished schools. This list is not intended to be something where school leaders chose everything, only things they deem appropriate for their school setting or driven to institute with the support of data (Taylor, 2008).
 - a. Clear and Focused Mission
 - i. Defined by Edmonds as a clearly articulated mission for the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability (Taylor, 2008).
 - ii. From the study: Missions, visions, and goals set the tone of the school culture (Crum 2013).
 - iii. Instructional goals and visions should be measurable (e.g., to become an AVID demonstration school or a South Carolina model school are both measurable; Lyman & Villani, 2004).

- iv. Instructional priorities and assessment procedures as well as other things teachers will be held accountable for should be clearly laid out in an instructional manual to include lesson plan formats and pacing guides (Taylor, 2008).
- v. Parents as partners in the educational process should be explicitly spelled out for parents (Taylor, 2008).
- b. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
 - i. Defined by Edmonds : Feedback on student academic progress is frequently obtained. Multiple assessment methods such as teacher-made tests, samples of student work, mastery skills checklists, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-referenced tests are used. The results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program (Taylor, 2008).
 - ii. Create an assessment plan that includes teacher-made assessments to assess standards taught, progress monitoring assessments that inform if interventions from RTI are working. Use NWEA, STAR 360, or other norm-referenced assessments to inform instruction (Neill, 2018).
 - iii. Provide students and parents with children and parent friendly versions of the state standards that they can monitor and stay informed of as well (Taylor, 2008).
 - iv. Collect student work samples (Taylor, 2008).
- c. High Expectations for Student Success
 - i. Defined by Edmonds: The school displays a climate of expectation in

which the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that they (the staff) have the capability to help students achieve such mastery (Taylor, 2008).

- ii. AVID early college program (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
- iii. STEM early college program (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
- iv. Offer support groups for students led by graduate students, social workers, or licensed counselors addressing needs associated with poverty instead of lowering expectations of students.
- v. Develop comprehensive intervention strategies for “troubled” students.
- vi. Contract with learning centers or institute programs that combat low student achievement such as Sylvan Learning Center, Kaplan Education Center, or Huntington Learning Center (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

d. Positive Home-School Relations

- i. Defined by Edmonds: Parents understand and support the school’s basic mission and are given opportunities to play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission (Taylor, 2008).
- ii. Involve parents in the decisions for the school (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - 1. Seek input for Title I spending.
 - 2. Institute a Daddy Do Day or Family Day where fathers/families come in (following appropriate safety procedures) to fix or build things that are needed for the school.

- iii. Develop positive relationships with parents by implementing great communication plans (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
- iv. Incorporate other activities beyond the traditional parent conference to reach parents (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - 1. Faculty and staff bused to the community to meet local families throughout the community.
 - 2. Host conferences at the school, virtually and at local community centers.
- e. Instructional Leadership
 - i. Defined by Edmonds: The principal acts as the instructional leader who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents, and students and who understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program at the school (Taylor, 2008).
 - ii. Develop a plan to build relationships with the leadership team, teachers, students, staff, parents, and the community (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - iii. Utilize a collaborative growth approach using the 4.0 Teacher Evaluation System (Crum, 2013).
 - iv. Allow teachers to select professional development for growth or/and allow them to observe another teacher they can collaborate with and together develop an action plan/steps to address growth (Crum, 2013).
 - v. Place teachers in areas where they thrive and flourish (Crum, 2013).

- vi. Use data to drive student-centered instruction and utilize personal learning communities (Crum, 2013).
 - vii. Plan ongoing professional development around district/school focuses (Crum, 2013).
- f. Opportunities to Learn and Time on Task
- i. Defined by Edmonds: Teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in basic skills areas. For a high percentage of that allocated time, students are engaged in planned learning activities directly related to the identified objectives (Taylor, 2008).
 - ii. Shared planning time for teachers is needed (Crum, 2013).
 - iii. Use integrated units (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - iv. Collaboration between vocational and academic teachers has been found to increase engagement.
 - v. Use interdisciplinary instruction (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - vi. Allow students to experience learning tasks (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - vii. Hire certified teachers or instructional assistants to provide interventions to low-performing students and utilize leveled literacy materials (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - viii. Add additional instructional time during the school day (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - 1. Pull-out model where students are pulled from other classes in

small groups for remediation.

2. An adjusted schedule once or twice per week that creates an additional period during the day for academic remediation/enrichment.
 3. Reading or math assistance classes can be offered as elective classes.
- ix. Institute smaller class sizes or cohort sizes (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 1. Utilize Title I or compensatory funds to reduce class sizes of core academic classes such as reading and math.
 - x. Institute mentor programs that could enhance literacy and writing skills with paired letter exchanges (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - xi. Extracurricular activities have been found to increase attendance rates and self-esteem, increasing time on task for students (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - xii. Offer academic counseling (e.g., AVID; Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - xiii. Offer community service projects where students can explore careers in the community as well as connect with potential future employers (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - xiv. Institute schoolwide instructional strategies such as AVID, STEM, Project-Based Learning, and PLTW (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
 - xv. Offer dual credit options (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).

g. Safe and Orderly Environment

- i. Defined by Edmonds: There is an orderly, purposeful atmosphere that is free from the threat of physical harm for both students and staff; however, the atmosphere is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning (Taylor, 2008).
- ii. Examine the school model if the current middle school model is not yielding desired outcomes. Would K-8 work better versus middle? Examine the cohort sizes. Should they be reduced (West & Schwerdt, 2012)?
- iii. Offer alternative school options.
- iv. Offer learning communities (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
- v. Offer support services to students to include
 1. On-site health and human services:
 - a. Social Services Center.
 - b. Immunization.
 - c. Physical exams.
 - d. Medical care for poor eyesight, hearing, diabetes, asthma, and other health impairments.
 - e. Family planning and pregnancy testing.
 - f. Diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.
- vi. Institute PBIS.
- vii. Institute character development classes.
- viii. Offer career fairs.

- ix. Offer mentor programs.
 - x. Offer cultural exposure field trips.
 - xi. Offer a culturally relevant curriculum and include culturally relevant strategies (Rubenstein & Wodatch, 2000).
4. Each year should end with the administration of More Effective Schools Staff Surveys that are administered to district leaders, school leaders, teachers, parents, staff members, and students. These data should be analyzed each year and guide the strategic planning process that will include all stakeholders (Taylor, 2008).
 5. Three times per year, state legislature officials will visit a school in each of the performance areas of “high performing,” “performing well,” and “growth” to better understand the experiences of the stakeholders at each level before writing and enacting legislation.

Recommendation for Further Study

Since it was found that the higher the ranking of the school, the more positive responses there were by the administrators on the More Effective Schools Staff Survey, it may be beneficial to survey schools across the state of South Carolina to determine if the same results would be produced across multiple schools with “excellent” and “good” report card ratings as compared to schools without those ratings (Crum, 2013). An expanded study, with a larger sample size, could provide a basis for the use of Edmonds’s seven correlates in schools as a potential success model (Taylor, 2008). In addition, this study only surveyed teachers and school leaders, however, it may be interesting to compare how aligned the survey responses are from all stakeholders to Edmonds’s seven

correlates by also including parents and students into the research study. Finally, the state of South Carolina was criticized for not using subgroups in the new accountability rating system. Further examination of the presence of the Edmonds's seven correlates in South Carolina schools with a focus on subgroup performance and achievement gaps would be an interesting addition to this body of work. Critiques of the new accountability model contended achievement gaps would be overlooked using the new accountability model (Bellwether Education Partners, 2018; Taylor, 2008). This would be important in South Carolina where 60% of the middle schools have a poverty rate of 60% or more. In addition, the U.S. News and World Report ranked South Carolina last in educational state rankings where more than half of the students in Grades 3-8 failed to meet the state's reading standards in 2017, and one of five Black eighth graders passed the state reading and math tests (half of Whites passed; Gilreath, 2018). Remedies are needed for many school leaders who feel unsupported and whose impact on a school is tremendous, while tackling the challenges of poverty in underperforming schools daily (Crum, 2013).

Limitations

The sample size for this study was an extremely obvious limitation. Some of the sample sizes were not large enough for true statistical analysis. In order to gain insight into the true correlation of school report card rankings and the seven correlates, a larger sample size is required.

There are several limitations surrounding qualitative research. Qualitative research has the potential to be influenced by the researcher bias if any exists. I was a school administrator who worked in an impoverished middle school. The potential for bias did exist. Although, quantitative data were included in this study and are permitted in

qualitative researcher, qualitative studies in general may not be as accepted within research communities as quantitative research. Moreover, my presence during data gathering of qualitative research could have affected the subjects' responses along with the issues surrounding anonymity of the principals being the only persons from the participating district being interviewed.

A final limitation to the study was the National Pandemic of COVID-19 that eliminated the possibility of visiting the staff in person to explain the study and recruit participants. The school visits also had to be canceled. All correspondence took place electronically, via Zoom, email, or the United States mail service.

Conclusions from Study

New legislation in South Carolina enacted a new accountability rating system that utilizes high stakes testing and other measures to evaluate schools, school leaders, and teachers. The legislation includes major penalties for schools that are not performing well to include removal of the entire staff. Many principals and districts did not feel prepared for the shift. This study examined four impoverished middle schools in South Carolina and found that these impoverished schools, and possibly others like them, may have experienced even more difficulties due to the challenges that exist with the middle school model and the onset of poverty.

After reviewing other studies that included impoverished schools that were succeeding despite their makeup and poverty levels, such as the schools included in Edmonds's studies, an analysis was conducted to determine if the seven correlates he discovered in high-performing, high-poverty, and high minority schools were also present in the successful schools in South Carolina; and if they were, to what degree? The hope

of this study was to provide a guide to leaders and districts in South Carolina, to better replicate success despite challenges that may exist.

Although there was not a statistical correlation found to the seven correlates and the practices of the four impoverished middle schools in the study, it was discovered that the higher the ranking of the school, the more positive responses were yielded by the school administrators on the More Effective Schools Staff Survey, supporting the claim that the biggest impact on the success of a school is the school's leadership. Three of the four leaders in this study did not feel supported. The guide included in this document provides a starting point for school leaders to experience success with or without the support of the district; but several suggestions for support are not only included for the district but also for state universities, colleges, and the legislature. If improvements are to be made to the educational system in South Carolina, collaboration among all stakeholders is necessary.

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Appendix A

More Effective Schools Staff Survey



"Setting the Course
for Learning by All"

Questions on this survey come from a body of educational research describing the culture of schools where all students learn to high levels. They were developed by Fred A. Cardella and S. Louise Sprecher, Spencerport Central Schools, Robert E. Sudlow, Spencerport, New York and H.W. Meyers, University of Vermont. Survey © 2000 Cardella & Sudlow.

The purpose of this survey is to find out what you think of your school this year. To ensure confidentiality, only a summary of the data is reported. Please take the time to respond to the following statements as honestly as you can.

More Effective Schools Staff Survey

Marking Directions

- Write the name of your district and school in the space provided.
- Do not write your name on this survey. Your answers are meant to be anonymous.
- Read each question carefully and answer in terms of what has occurred in your school *this year* – *not* in terms of what occurred in previous years.
- While you may not be sure about a question, answer in terms of your own perceptions, opinions or experiences.
- Decide if you Strongly Disagree with the item, Disagree with the item, Agree with the item, Strongly Agree with the item or just Don't Know. Fill in the appropriate oval on the answer sheet.
- This is not a timed survey, but it should be completed in one sitting. Answer all questions.
- All survey answers will be summarized and reported back to the school for use in developing a plan for improving your school.
- PLEASE USE A NO. 2 PENCIL OR BLUE OR BLACK INK PEN.

School Name: _____ District: _____

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. All students are encouraged to develop responsibility for completing assigned work in a timely manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The principal is highly visible throughout the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Seat work activities are productive through careful preparation, active supervision, and provision of assistance to students in such a way that others are not disturbed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Parent and community volunteers play an active role in the school's program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The community provides parent representation to the school improvement team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Resolution of discipline issues involves administrators, teachers, students and parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Student assessment and evaluation are based on mastery of defined objectives of the curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Parent involvement in the school benefits student learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Students are taught how to evaluate their own performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Most discipline issues are handled by classroom teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Students are given the time, help and encouragement necessary to achieve desired performance levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Staff members are encouraged to share ideas and to work together to improve the instructional program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Student learning objectives are developed cooperatively by the staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. The school gives recognition to students who demonstrate positive behaviors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. There is a high level of school and home cooperation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Grouping practices provide for teacher directed instruction for the whole class as well as for small group instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Teachers are trained to work with parents to help children learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Emphasis is placed on learning as a result of instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Teachers place emphasis on learning content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA



74132

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. Teachers place an emphasis on learning skills and strategies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. The focus of the school is learning by all .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. The principal promotes parent involvement in the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Mission statements, slogans, mottoes and displays promote the school's academic goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. The principal is a resource person to the staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Teachers make certain that high expectations are communicated to all students, regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status or other personal characteristics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Parents support the school's instructional efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. The school's homework policy is communicated effectively to parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. The principal is a strong instructional leader.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Both students and staff respect individual differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. One goal of this school is to provide an education that emphasizes basic skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. There are clearly stated school rules defining expectations of student behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. The faculty takes collective responsibility for academic achievement regardless of family background.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. Conferences with appropriate personnel are held to resolve lack of student progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Parents have opportunities to learn how to help their children be successful in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. This school has a mission.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. The accomplishments of students, staff and the school as a whole are communicated to the parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. Special programs are thoughtfully coordinated with the regular school programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Teachers appropriately praise students for adequate and outstanding performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Available resources are utilized to maximize student learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. Consistent discipline is applied equitably to all students by all staff members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Staff, students and the community know the scope of the curriculum and the priorities within it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. All students are given sufficient time to practice and consolidate new instructional skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. The whole school emphasizes the reduction of interruptions during instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. The building principal supports his/her teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. The building homework policy is implemented.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46. Students work together to help each other learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. The faculty is committed to the task of helping all students master important learning objectives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. The school has two-way communication with parents and community leaders.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. Loudspeaker announcements and other administrative intrusions are kept to a minimum and scheduled so as not to interfere with basic skills instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. Teachers keep non-instructional time to a minimum by managing classrooms so as to minimize disruptive behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. Teachers and building administrators demonstrate collaborative behaviors in their professional working relationships.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. The mission for this school serves as the basis for important actions and decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. Student behavior contributes to a safe and orderly environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
54. Teachers keep non-instructional time to a minimum by beginning and ending lessons on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55. The staff collects and reviews performance data to ensure early identification and treatment of children with learning difficulties.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. The school provides additional time needed for students to reach mastery.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57. The school provides enriching and stimulating activities in which all students participate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58. Teachers hold all students accountable for completing assignments, turning in work, and participating in classroom discussions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59. Teachers select materials based upon student's instructional needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60. The principal communicates the school mission effectively to teachers, students, parents and support staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
61. Everyone believes that school is a safe place for learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
62. Students understand that the consequences of their misbehaviors are justified.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
63. There is ongoing monitoring of the student rate of learning to ensure that progress occurs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
64. The principal observes classroom instruction and provides appropriate feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
65. Teachers frequently use a variety of methods to evaluate student progress and performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
66. There is a high commitment to achieve the mission of the school in spite of the frustrations and obstacles encountered.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
67. To assure that time is used productively, learning activities are presented at a level that is neither too easy nor too difficult for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
68. There is a building-wide homework policy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
69. Prompt attention is given to needed repairs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
70. Student learning considerations are the most important criteria used in making decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
71. At-risk students are given additional learning time for priority objectives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72. The school prioritizes the content to be learned by all students at each grade level.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
73. Standardized tests (either criterion referenced or norm referenced tests) that match the learning objectives with what has been taught are used.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
74. Leadership is distributed among many staff members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
75. The staff involves parents in selecting, evaluating and revising school activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
76. Students have the opportunity to relate learning across subjects through interdisciplinary learning experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
77. Teachers use strategies such as reteaching and regrouping to assure mastery for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
78. This school uses outside resources to support school goals and programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
79. Hallways and classrooms are attractively decorated with student academic work, posters and seasonal artwork.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
80. Teachers learn and employ strategies that are effective for diverse learning styles and student needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
81. One goal of this school is to develop multicultural understanding among staff and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
82. This school promotes an academic learning climate by establishing high expectations for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
83. Successful school practices which have been evaluated are presented to the staff for their consideration.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
84. The school's mission is clearly focused on desired student learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
85. The principal protects teachers from external forces that threaten to reduce their commitment and limit their effectiveness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
86. Careful frequent monitoring practices keep teachers aware of students having academic difficulty; problems are noted and needed help is provided.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
87. Appropriate time schedules to meet learning objectives are determined by the staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
88. This school provides an environment in which students can develop self-esteem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
89. Interactive learning activities with teachers, aides, peer tutors, or remedial specialists are provided for at-risk students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
90. Discipline procedures followed are clearly linked to a student's inappropriate behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
91. Each year all students are expected to learn what is needed in order to be successful at the next level of education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
92. Teachers are involved in decisions about the scheduling of pupils and teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
93. This school has a workable plan for helping low achieving students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
94. Physical facilities are kept clean.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
95. The principal is viewed as an effective communicator.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
96. This school seeks and provides multiple methods to ensure learning success for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
97. The principal is a facilitator or coordinator of change.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
98. Student participation in special programs is communicated to parents of students involved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
99. When taking disciplinary action, teachers focus on the inappropriate behavior, not the student's personality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
100. Teachers are provided with a wide variety of instructional materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
101. Teachers use effective instructional techniques such as positive reinforcement, lesson sequencing and "wait time."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
102. Students can earn recognition and rewards for appropriate behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
103. School leaders work with parents to establish procedures that guide parent involvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
104. Teachers keep non-instructional time to a minimum by keeping transition times short.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
105. The school systematically and publicly recognizes students who improve academically and succeed academically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
106. Analysis and discussion of test content are part of periodic curricular reviews.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
107. The principal discusses instructional matters with teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
108. The principal and all staff members hold high expectations for themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
109. The staff works with parents to build a respectful climate where all can feel ownership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
110. This school is a safe and secure place to work and learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
111. Students demonstrate respect for each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Association for Effective Schools, Inc.

"Setting the Course for Learning by All"

This survey is provided by the Association for Effective Schools, Inc., a not-for-profit organization located in Stuyvesant, New York. Our More Effective Schools Surveys and other research-based products and services help to develop and support the leadership and local capacity of schools, better enabling them to improve the achievement of all students. For information about More Effective Schools, please contact us. (800)-AES-9684 • <http://www.mes.org> • e-mail: aes@mes.org

Ben A. Birdsell, President

SI# 210 8/02



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Appendix B

Principal Face-to-Face Interview Questions

1. Do you think standardized testing results reflect the quality of instruction, schools, teachers and leaders? Why or why not?
2. Do you think the current accountability rating system in SC is a fair one? Why or why not?
3. What were the districts' responses to the report card rating?
4. What is your knowledge of the current education reform bill? (If none I informed them and asked them for their thoughts.)
5. As the principal, how are you held singularly responsible for your school's success?
6. Does your school receive Title I money?
7. If so, how did you spend those allocations?
8. What are the demographics of your school?
9. What are the demographics of your staff?
10. What are some challenges that exists in your opinion that are specific to middle school?
11. What other settings besides middle school have you served?
12. What extracurricular activities are offered?
13. Do you offer academic counseling?
14. Do you offer community service projects?
15. What is your vision for your school? How are you achieving your vision?
16. Seventy percent or more of students live in poverty in your school, what are some of the challenges they face?
17. How do those challenges impact them at school?

Appendix C

Superintendent's Permission to Study

Sheka Houston
XXXXXX

March 24, 2020

Dr. XXXXX
XXXXXX

Dear Dr. XXXX,

My name is Sheka Houston, and I am the principal of XXXX Middle School in XXXX County School District located in XXXX, South Carolina. I am honored to have been a graduate of the district that I currently work and even more proud of the many accomplishments I have witnessed here. I am most proud of the students I am allowed to see accomplish great things as a result of the education they receive in XXXX County Schools.

As I enter into the last year as a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University, I am required to complete a dissertation study. The topic of my study is *Impoverished Schools that are Performing Successfully in South Carolina. How do they differ from Impoverished Schools that are Underperforming?* The hope is to provide other school administrators, like myself, help as we try to improve our scores and obtain better ratings. XXXX Middle School in your district received an "Excellent" rating and has a poverty index of at least 70%. Your district has some similarities to my own and that's why I think researching XXXX Middle School will be beneficial to my research and to me as a middle level principal.

With your permission, I would like to survey the administrators and teachers at XXXX Middle School who are willing to participate. The survey will determine how aligned the school practices are to the 7 Correlates of Effective Schools. One additional part of the study requires a face-to-face interview with the principal allowing him/her time to reflect on the data received as well as a tour of the school. The tour and interview could take an hour to an hour and a half. The principal or his or her designee would head the tour. I will look for evidence related to the 7 Correlates of Effective Schools and take note of anything the tour guide points out. Neither the participants nor the school will be named in reporting the results. The confidentiality of all participants will be protected. In light of COVID-19, if a Zoom interview and a virtual tour of the school is more appropriate I completely understand.

Participation will be voluntary and I will protect against breach of confidentiality by using a password protected computer to handle participant data. The participants will have the option to decline participation in the study at any time. Approval to conduct research at Gardner-Webb University requires approval from the Institutional Review Board. There are no known risks to participants and no identifiers of the participants will be collected. The principal and teachers will be required to complete an Informed

Consent form before participating in the study, but I wanted to secure your approval before actively beginning this process. If you have any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me by email or by phone at XXXXX. I appreciate you very much and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Researcher

I agree for Mrs. Sheka Houston to conduct research through XXXX Middle School with my district. I agree that she may administer surveys by following appropriate guidelines and procedures.

Superintendent Date

I agree for Mrs. Sheka Houston to tour XXXX Middle School (in-person or virtually) with my district and conduct a face-to-face or Zoom interview with the principal.

Superintendent Date

Appendix D

Administrator and Teacher Consent to Study

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study Impoverished Schools that are Performing Successfully in South Carolina.
How do They Differ from Impoverished Schools that are Underperforming?

Researcher Sheka Houston, Doctoral Candidate/School of Education

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is... This study will examine four impoverished middle schools in South Carolina to identify the factors prevalent in successfully performing impoverished middle schools and what sets them apart from underperforming, impoverished middle schools. The four different schools have a rating of either "Excellent", "Good", "Below Average" or "Unsatisfactory". The objective is to provide principals working in similar impoverished settings an understanding of the factors worth replicating to improve school achievement.

Procedure

What you will do in the study: I will explain the purpose of the study by phone and by email to you and email a copy of the required survey and consent form to be forwarded to all building administrators asking that the consent form be completed and I will pick them up when I visit the school in order to protect the confidentiality of the administrators. Administrators and teachers will be informed that it is permissible to turn in a blank survey if they decide not to participate. I would ask you to allow me to attend a faculty meeting in-person to request that teachers participate in the required survey. I will explain the purpose of the survey to teachers in person and collect the surveys and consent forms and place them in separate envelopes (keeping the teacher and administrator surveys separate). After the survey results are analyzed by the Association for Effective Schools, Incorporated, you will be sent the results in advance to provide time for review and reflection. I will set up a future date for a tour and a recorded, one-on-one interview with you. The timeframe for these events will begin in February and end in February/March and end in April/May.

Time Required

It is anticipated that the study will require about 20 minutes of your time. My explanation of the study will take approximately 5 minutes. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes. The amount of time for each administrator school tour and

interview could vary based on the size of the schools and the amount of time taken to answer the questions. The time frame is one hour to one hour and thirty minutes.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any survey or interview question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality

The subject's confidentiality of results will be protected because no identifiers will be collected from teachers or administrators and won't be shared with anyone besides the researcher. When the surveys are collected at each location by the researcher, the researcher will place the surveys in envelopes labeled teachers/school 1 and administrators/school 1 etc. in order to keep the data separated for the data to be accurately analyzed and compared. The data, will be stored in the labeled envelopes without listing names. The principal interviews will be labeled school 1, school 2 etc. The principals won't be named in order to protect his or her confidentiality. The administrators' surveys will be placed in a separate envelope from teachers in order for the administrator survey results to be compared to the teacher survey results. There are fewer administrators than teachers at all schools, but no attempt will be made for the identity of any administrator to be revealed. The school names, districts, or names of individuals will not be utilized in order to protect confidentiality. The recordings of the researcher and principal interviews will be stored on the researchers password protected cell phone. The recordings will be transcribed. The audio recordings and the transcriptions will be stored at the researchers' home and destroyed after 3 years. The list of linking schools to the survey results and hard copies of the surveys will be stored and secured at the researchers home and all destroyed in three years.

Data Linked with Identifying Information

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your name, school or personal information will not be utilized. Audio recordings of the participants being interviewed will be destroyed three years from the completion date of the study. There will be a list that links the school name to the code used such as school 1. This list will be stored at the researchers home in a locked filing cabinet.

Anonymous Data

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your data will be anonymous which means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data.

Confidentiality Cannot be Guaranteed

Because of the nature of the data, I cannot guarantee the principal data will be confidential and it may be possible that others may speculate what you have reported. However, individual names or schools will not be utilized in the reporting data.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks in this study for teacher participants. There is a slight risk for the administrator participants because their survey results are being compared to the teacher results. It may be possible for someone to link the responses to the school and the administrators, since one school is chosen from each category of “Excellent”, “Good”, “Below Average”, and “Unsatisfactory”.

Benefits

The study may help middle school principals and other interested parties identify successful strategies being used to render positive academic achievement in impoverished settings. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

Payment

You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw From the Study

There are no risks to teacher subjects as a result of participating in the study. The principal will not know who did or did not participate in the survey because identifiers won't be collected on the surveys. Everyone will be given a form. The principal will not know who consented to participate and who did not. If all of the administrators decide to participate in the survey and there is more than one administrator in the building, it will be difficult to identify one administrator's survey answers compared to another. There will not be any identifiers on the survey for anyone's identity to be revealed. Although there are fewer administrators completing the surveys in one building compared to the number of teachers completing a survey, it may be possible to determine the identity of an individual in administration, but no attempt to do so will be made and names will not be included in the final report to include names of individuals, schools or districts. Teachers and administrators will be informed that it is permissible to turn in a blank survey if they choose not to participate. As the researcher is collecting surveys from both groups, the researcher will place surveys in envelopes marked teachers/school 1 and administrators/school 1 etc. in order to keep the surveys separated for the proper analysis.

How to Withdraw From the Study

It is impossible for teacher and administrator participants to withdraw from the study once the surveys have been mailed, because they are anonymous and there is no way to identify the identity of the survey participant.

Principal participants can withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the researcher and relaying that you are no longer interested in participating in the study. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study. If you would like to withdraw after the materials have been submitted please contact Sheka Houston at 803-417-57762.

If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals.

Researcher's Name: Sheka Houston
 Department: School of Education
 Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 Researcher Telephone Number: XXXXXX
 Researcher Email Address: XXXXX

Faculty Advisor Name: Philip Rapp
 Department: School of Education
 Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 Faculty Advisor Telephone Number: XXXXXX
 Faculty Advisor Email Address: prapp@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Sydney K. Brown
 IRB Institutional Administrator
 Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 Telephone: 704-406-3019
 Email: skbrown@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me. I agree to participate in this study.

 Participant Printed Name

 Participant Signature

Date: _____

Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.