Perceptions of principals and teachers of their roles and other variables in school culture in improving their school's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) letter grade by two grade levels

Tracey D. Tedder

University of South Florida
Perceptions of Principals and Teachers of Their Roles and Other Variables in School Culture in Improving Their School’s Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Letter Grade by Two Grade Levels

by

Tracey D. Tedder

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

Co-Major Professor, Arthur Shapiro, Ph.D.
Co-Major Professor, Steve Permuth, Ed.D.
William Benjamin, Ph.D.
Bruce Hall, Ph.D.

Date of Approval: October 17, 2006

Key Words: Achievement, Accountability, Leadership, Qualitative, Performance

© Copyright 2006, Tracey D. Tedder
Table of Contents

Abstract iv

Chapter 1 Introduction 1
    Problem of the Study 1
    Research Questions 5
    Limitations of the Study 6
    Definitions 7
    Summary 11

Chapter 2 Literature Review 12
    Accountability and Assessments 13
    Highly Qualified Staff and Teacher Retention 28
    Mentoring 30
    School Leadership and Style 32
    Parental and Community Involvement 35
    Continuous Improvement 38
    School Culture and Climate 43
    School Size 45
    Socioeconomic Level of Students 49
    Summary 50

Chapter 3 Methods 51
    Data Collection 53
    Reliability and Validity of Interview 59
    Reliability and Validity 62
    Additional Steps 62
    Coding 64
    Validating Interview Data 66
    School Profiles 67
    Summary 72

Chapter 4 Findings 73
    Disclaimer 73
    Four Main Themes Regarding Perceptions 73
    Administrators’ Perceptions – Four Main Themes 74
        Administrators’ Perceptions of Optimizing School Success 74
        Administrators’ Perceptions of Instructional Roles 79
        Administrators’ Perceptions of School Climate 81
        Administrators’ Perceptions of Curriculum 83
Perceptions of Principals and Teachers of Their Roles and Other Variables in School Culture in Improving Their School’s Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Letter Grade by Two Grade Levels

Tracey D. Tedder

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on perceptions of principals, assistant principals and teachers of their impact on student achievement scores in improving their school’s Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test letter grade scores. This information is of importance because we do not have information on how school reference groups (principals, teachers) perceive the grading of schools as defined by the Florida A+ Plan. Specifically, this study investigated perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school year. This qualitative case study analyzes perceptions of factors and behaviors that have made a positive difference in two Polk County, Florida public elementary schools’ FCAT. Data collection included interviews of teachers, assistant principals and principals. Study implications include the impact upon students, teachers, administrators and parents, particularly pressures upon all involved at the school level to improve student test scores and therefore, to improve their letter grade on the Florida A+ Plan. Another implication may be the possibility of improving results by decentralizing into small learning communities (SLC’s). Conclusions including administrators and teachers perceiving emotional, professional, instructional, and climate support as key factors, but no clear conclusive perception by a majority of respondents was evident regarding improved scores.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Problem of the Study:

The problem addressed in the study is that we do not know how principals and teachers perceive their role in improving their school's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) letter grade by two grade levels, from a grade C to a grade A, in one 9-month school year. This dissertation aims at gathering the perceptions of the impact of principals, assistant principals and teachers on student achievement scores. This information is of importance because we do not have information on how school reference groups (principals, teachers) perceive the grading of schools as defined by the Florida A+ Plan. The study focuses on the grading of schools as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and factors relating to the grading system, as well as, the effects upon the schools. Some of the factors include issues of school morale and retention for teachers and administrators of the schools. It examines FCAT grade improvements over a one-year period with two schools and their principals and teachers and attempts to gauge their perceptions regarding what caused their scores to improve.

It is hard to determine the factors that influence a grade improvement on the FCAT because there are so many variables about what helps or does not help improving scores. Since the early 1800’s, reform efforts have been a part of American education
Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school year. A case study was developed that analyzes perceptions of factors and behaviors that have made a positive difference in two Polk County, Florida public elementary schools as measured by FCAT. The study was conducted in two schools that have improved their FCAT school grades by two grades from a grade C to an A or D to a B in one 9-month school year. It analyzed perceptions of the factors impacting the schools’ achievement.

Literature suggests that some examples of factors contributing to school improvement could be the following:

1. teacher retention

2. administrative involvement in the performance of the faculty by exercising supervisory functions (observation of teacher instruction; analysis of test scores; shape mission and vision of school, nurture others, lead and support school improvement and change, etc…)

3. teacher participation in district-wide mentoring programs
   (http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.1eb2de47d)
4. instructional and noninstructional staff professional development opportunities, and participation of those staff members in professional development opportunities (http://www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/standards.htm)

5. socioeconomic level of students (http://www.basrc.org/about_basrc/mission.html)

6. leadership style of the principal (http://www.ncsl.org.uk/media/F7B/52/kpool-evidence-hopkins.pdf)

7. Highly Qualified Teachers: to be deemed highly qualified, teachers having: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach (http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html)

8. school climate (http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html)

9. parental/community involvement (http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/files/goodschool.pdf)

10. school reform models: Is the school implementing any type of school wide reform through curriculum or learning styles expected to be used with executed in the classroom (differentiating instruction)? (http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.3adeebc6736780dddeb3ffdb62108a0e/) www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog/modellist.asp
11. size of school (http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html)

12. school wide assessments and state testing

(http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/testingforresults.html)

These examples include research from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) which states that a quality school has 6 qualities that sets it apart from others:

- strong and professional administrators and teachers
- broad curriculum available to all students
- a philosophy believing that children can learn if taught, coupled with high expectations for all students
- a school climate that is conducive to learning, as well as, safe, clean, caring and well organized
- an ongoing assessment system that supports good instruction
- a high level of parent and community involvement and support (Mitchell 2004)

Additional literature supporting these suggestions include information from the United States Department of Education stating annual testing helps teachers by clarifying areas in which they may need professional development if they saw poor performance by their students in certain areas, as well as gaining a great deal of information about the performance of individual students that enables them to meet the particular needs of every child (http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/testing-faq.html).
Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school year. The research questions are as follows:

1. What have been the teachers’ perceptions of the school’s principal role in optimizing success over the one-year period?
2. What are the principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
3. What have been the teachers’ perceptions of the school’s assistant principal in optimizing success over the one-year period?
4. What are the assistant principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
5. What have been the principal’s and assistant principal’s perceptions of the role of the school’s teachers in optimizing success over the one-year period?
6. What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding what their roles have been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
7. What are the principal’s, assistant principal’s and teacher’s perceptions of how school climate impacts school achievement?
8. What are the perceptions of principals and teachers of how curriculum impacts school achievement?
Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study include accessibility to both Polk County Public Schools. School A is located in Fort Meade, Florida and School B is located in Lake Wales, Florida. The researcher is located in Lakeland, Florida and having access to the individuals during their regular contracted schools hours could be a limitation due to the distance of locations. Fort Meade, Florida is approximately 18 miles from Lakeland and Lake Wales is approximately 30 miles from Lakeland.

Other limitations could include participant personalities and their willingness to partake in the study, as well as, time. Time to interview participants including principals, parents and teacher can be consuming during their daily schedules. Due to this constraint, the researcher had to be aware of any time taken of these individuals.

Using only one indicator of achievement, FCAT, for the study is an additional limitation. There are many other indicators of achievement; however, FCAT was used because it is the indicator the State of Florida uses for the Florida A+ Plan that grades the public schools.

Final limitations include the limited population targeted for the study. Since there are only two schools in the study, the number of individuals participating is in limited number. Additionally, it is not certain that the criterion for school grading was stable for the two years when grading was determined. It is also assumed that each participant responded honestly during the interview process.
Definitions

The following are terms used in the study followed by their definitions as relevant to the study.

- **Perception**: the term perception refers to interpretation of what we take in through our senses ([http://allpsych.com/psychology101/perception.html](http://allpsych.com/psychology101/perception.html)). Perceptions vary from person to person and different people perceive different things about the same situation ([www.newciv.org/worldtrans/TP/TP1/TP1-9.html](http://www.newciv.org/worldtrans/TP/TP1/TP1-9.html)). Additionally, we assign different meanings to what we perceive ([www.newciv.org/worldtrans/TP/TP1/TP1-9.html](http://www.newciv.org/worldtrans/TP/TP1/TP1-9.html)). This study collects and examines the perceptions of school achievement and what makes a good school.

- **Data Collection Techniques**: include interviews and surveys of the school principal, teachers and parents.

- **Highly qualified teacher**: is defined by the United States Department of Education as a teacher having: a bachelor's degree, full state certification or licensure, and proof that they know each subject they teach ([http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html](http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html)).

- **School culture**: Shapiro, Benjamin and Hunt (1995) define school culture as people living together in any society or group that develop common understandings and expectations, as well as shared feeling, perceptions and values. A culture may also be considered as commonly accepted and expected ideas, values, attitudes and habits which individuals learn in social living (1995).

- **Florida A+ Plan**: assigns school grades to Florida public schools that are based on how well students have mastered the Sunshine State Standards; the skills
determined that Florida public school students learn at each grade level, which are measured by the FCAT (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk). Student scores are classified into five achievement levels, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk). Schools earn points based on three things: how well students are doing, how much progress they are making (learning gains) and how much progress struggling readers are making (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk).

- No Child Left Behind: a federal law that requires each student subgroup (all ethnic groups, students with disabilities, students learning English and economically disadvantaged students) in schools, districts, and the state as a whole to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading, mathematics, writing and graduation rate (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk). Schools that do not make enough progress for two years in a row are in need of improvement and must provide alternatives to parents, such as transferring to another school or participating in a different program within the school (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk). Schools that need improvement two years in
a row (do not make AYP for three consecutive years) must provide tutoring (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk).

- Title I is used describe School A and B in chapter three. The following is a brief history of Title I and its origin:
  - Title I is the largest program of federal funding in education, signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson who recognized the extremely difficult problem that children throughout the country were having with their reading and mathematics (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/).
  - In an effort to help them catch up, extra attention, materials, and teachers were provided by the Elementary Secondary Education Act, Title 1 (ESEA) (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/).
  - In 1981, President Ronald Reagan formed the Education Consolidation Improvement Act, Chapter 1 Basic (ECIA) (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/).
  - In 1988, the ECIA, Chapter 1 Basic program became the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act of 1988 (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/).
  - In 1994, Congress passed a series of educational legislation, submitted by President Bill Clinton, strengthening the parent-school-community partnerships (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/).
On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It redefines the federal role in K-12 education and is based on four basic principles:

1. Stronger accountability for results
2. Increased flexibility and local control
3. Expanded options for parents
4. Emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/).

The purpose of Title I is to assist schools in improving student achievement, staff development, and parental involvement. This title was created in order to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. Title 1 also works closely with the Hearth Project, providing assistance for homeless children (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/).

School funds are used to:

1. add highly qualified staff
2. support parent and community involvement efforts
3. improve staff development
4. purchase additional instructional materials and supplies
5. add technology and needed equipment (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/)
Summary

In this chapter was stated the problem of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, study limitations and definitions of terms. The problem addressed in the study is that we do not know how principals and teachers perceive their role in improving their school's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) letter grade by two grade levels, from a grade C to a grade A, in one 9-month school year. This dissertation focuses on perceptions of the impact of principals, assistant principals and teachers on student achievement scores. The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school.

This case study analyzes perceptions of factors and behaviors that have made a positive difference in two Polk County Public Schools as measured by FCAT. The schools selected are located in Fort Meade, Florida and Lake Wales, Florida. These schools were selected for the study due to their improved scores on FCAT; improving their school grades by two grades from a grade C to an A in one 9-month school year.

In summary, there are 8 research questions involved in the study. Questions regard perceptions of the schools’ principal and teachers; as to the literature and what it suggests might be the cause of grade improvements, which, factors are responsible for their schools’ successes in raising their school grades.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

Assessing school achievement and what people perceive makes or does not make a good school is well connected with the call for higher learning standards and more accountability in schools, reform efforts such as statewide testing which has become the norm. Parents consider one of their primary responsibilities to provide for the education of their children and they look at the school’s average test scores, assuming that the highest average scores always mean the best schools (http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/06-03/0603opinions.htm). The research shows that good schools provide a broad service base and focus on the entire school team and the whole student including: a safe school environment; a full service school team comprised of qualified teachers, administrators, educational assistants, secretaries, custodians and professional student support staff who work together to provide a program to meet the needs of all students; sound, inclusive curriculum and assessment of student progress; support services and delivery through career education, identifying students who need help and providing appropriate action, monitoring students' progress individually and in groups and personal counseling; extracurricular programs; community links pursuing high levels of parent involvement; and ongoing, high quality professional development for all staff (www.osstf.on.ca/www/abosstf/ampa01/goodschools/whatmakesgoodschools.html).
Accountability and Assessments

Throughout the nation there are many accountability assessments administered including: Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), Texas’s Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), Arkansas’ Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) and Illinois’ Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), Prairie State Achievement Examination and Florida’s Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) (http://www.emanuelsoftware.com/htm/alignment.htm#arizona).

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which is designed to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers, as well as, change the culture of America's schools so that they define their success in terms of student achievement and invest in the achievement of every child (http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/testingforresults.html).

Assessment is a characteristic CRESST identifies that a quality school offers, as well (http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/files/goodschool.pdf). It says good schools are very concerned about the overall achievement of their students and make testing and assessment an integral part of their programs including: establishing clear goals as to what students are expected to learn, instituting a curriculum guided by carefully constructed instructional goals with texts, resource materials and experiences orchestrated to promote success, implementing a variety of types of tests and assessments to meet their needs that may be developed by commercial publishers, state departments of
education and districts, as well as, those constructed by teachers to use in their classrooms (http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/files/goodschool.pdf).

AIMS is Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards that provides information regarding the progress of Arizona's students toward mastering the state’s reading, writing and mathematics standards in grades 10-12 (http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/aims/).

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills was administered beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, measuring statewide curriculum in reading at grades 3-9, writing in grades 4 and 7, English Language Arts at grades 10 and 11, mathematics at grades 3-11, science at grades 5, 10 and 11; and science at grades 8, 10, and 11 (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/about/overview.html). Texas administers the Spanish TAKS at grades 3 through 6 (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/about/overview.html).

The Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) encompasses a Kindergarten through grade 4 Smart Start Initiative, grades 5-8 Smart Step Initiative and end of course exams in high school (http://arkedu.state.ar.us/astaap/index.htm). Current law and the Arkansas State Board of Education regulations require the administration of criterion-references tests (CRTs) and norm-references tests (NRTs) to all students in Arkansas public schools (http://arkedu.state.ar.us/actaap/student_assessment/student_assessment_p1.htm). The criterion-referenced tests include Math and English Language Arts benchmark exams at grades 3-8 and end of course exams in Algebra I, Geometry, and Literacy (http://arkedu.state.ar.us/actaap/student_assessment/student_assessment_p1.htm). Norm-
referenced testing includes the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in grades Kindergarten through 9 in reading comprehension and math problem solving (http://arkedu.state.ar.us/actaap/student_assessment/student_assessment_p1.htm).

The Alpine School District in American Fork, Utah states that curriculum is another school success factor and must identify the content considered essential for all students versus that considered supplemental (http://alpineschooldistrict.net/District%20Office/Strategic%20Plan/Final%20Report%20-%20Guaranteed%20and%20Viable%20Curriculum_jan2004.htm). The School District will complete this measure by convening a District Curriculum Committee and formulating a list of essential standards at each grade level, encouraging full teacher input at each stage of development (http://alpineschooldistrict.net/District%20Office/Strategic%20Plan/Final%20Report%20-%20Guaranteed%20and%20Viable%20Curriculum_jan2004.htm).

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test and Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) measure individual student achievement and show how well students and schools are performing relative to the Illinois Learning Standards (http://electron-net.extest.eppg.com/ISBE/). In 2004, students in grades 3, 5 and 8 took the ISAT in reading, writing and mathematics (http://isbe.net/assessment/isat.htm). Students in grades 4 and 7 took the ISAT in science and social science and school districts voluntarily administered tests in physical development and health and fine arts to students in grades 9 and or 10 (http://isbe.net/assessment/isat.htm). Due to legislative changes in the area of assessment, ISBE is barred from assessing students beyond the
subject areas required under the No Child Left Behind Act; therefore, the 2005 state assessments will not include the writing, social science, physical development/health or fine arts assessments (http://isbe.net/assessment/isat.htm). Additionally in Illinois beginning in spring 2005, the Prairie State Achievement Exam will measure the achievement of grade 11 students relative to the Illinois Learning Standards for reading, mathematics and science (http://www.isbe.net/assessment/psae.htm).

In Florida, the FCAT is the statewide assessment administered to all public school students in grades 3-10 including the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind and university laboratory schools http://firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat.htm). It is part of Florida’s effort to improve teaching and learning of higher educational standards and assess the high order cognitive skills represented in the Sunshine State Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science (http://firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat.htm). Florida schools are required to implement instruction of the Florida Sunshine State Standards and are rewarded for improving their school grade. Improving two grades seems to demonstrate, in accountability, strong positive school progress:

- Florida’s focus on educational accountability began well before 1998 and the first administration of the FCAT (http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/pdf/fcataabb/pdf).

The following is a brief chronology of describing the origins of the student assessment and school accountability system, including the origin of the Sunshine State Standards and the development, administration, scoring and reporting of the
State legislation, Section 229.551, F.S., instructed the Department of Education (DOE) to improve educational effectiveness.

The Legislature appropriated an annual sum for sponsoring an educational research and development program in the DOE.

The Legislature enacted Chapters 70-339, Laws of Florida, which authorized the Commissioner of Education to develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs.

The Educational Accountability Act was enacted (Section 229.57, F.S.) to implement the Commissioner’s plan for educational assessment in Florida, called the Statewide Assessment Program. Local educators reviewed and evaluated the objectives to be assessed, and in September 1971, the State Board of Education adopted the objectives. The first statewide assessment in Florida collected educational data on students in Grades 2 and 4.

The Educational Accountability Act of 1971 was amended to require Reading, Writing, and Mathematics assessments by 1976.

The Educational Accountability Act of 1976 expanded the provisions of the 1971 and 1974 state legislation. Changes included developing
assessments for students in Grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. In addition, this legislation authorized the nation’s first high school graduation test by requiring students in the graduating class of 1978-79 to pass a state-administered functional literacy test before receiving a high school diploma.

1978 In October, approximately 435,000 students in Grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 were tested. Since the graduating class of 1979 was the first to be required to pass the test, twelfth graders and adults who had failed one or both sections of the 1977 Functional Literacy Test were retested. Approximately 35,000 twelfth graders and 4,400 adults were retested.

1981 The SSAT II was first administered to tenth graders.

1984 Beginning with a March assessment, tenth graders took a new version of the SSAT-II that raised standards to encourage students and teachers to reach higher achievement. The name of the test was the High School Competency Test (HSCT).

1991 The 1991 School Improvement and Accountability legislation, commonly referred to as Blueprint 2000, established the Florida Commission of Education Reform and Accountability and called for sweeping changes in schools.
1992 The Florida Writing Assessment Program was administered for the first time to fourth graders in 1992

1995 State Board of Education established student achievement criteria and identified critically low schools based on these criteria. In November, there were 158 critically low performing schools or 7% of the total number of schools reported

1996 Florida’s curriculum framework (content standards) were adopted by the State Board of Education for seven subject areas and new legislation recognized the Standards as the academic standards for Florida students and authorized the FCAT

1997 Schools not meeting the accountability criteria were identified and reported for the third year and in February, the FCAT was field tested in Grades 4, 5, 8, and 10

1998 The FCAT was administered for the first time in January to students in grades 4 (reading), grade 5 (math) and grades 8 and 10 (reading and math). Although the FCAT results were not used for accountability purposes in 1998, school results were reported.

1999 The A+ Plan for Education legislation was enacted, increasing standards and accountability for students, schools and educators. The
addition of a science assessment for students in grades 5, 8 and 10, a
norm referenced test at grades 3 through 10 and the use of FCAT for
graduation, as well as, the development of a system for calculating the
academic growth of each student over a year’s time. Additionally, the
Board of Education identified five school performance levels as letter
grades and the 1999 FCAT results were used to assign school grades.
Seventy-eight schools were designated as F schools and
approximately thirty million dollars was disbursed to 319 schools for
meeting the school recognition criteria.

2000

FCAT results for grades 4, 5, 8 and 10 were again used for assigning
school grades. All seventy-eight F schools from the previous year
moved up at least one grade level. Four schools were issued F
performance grades for the first time in 2000.

2001

In the third year of issuing school grades, the number of A and B
schools increased from 21% in 1999 to 41% in 2001. In the same
time period, D and F schools decreased from 28% to 12% and there
were no repeat or new F schools in 2001. In addition, 842 schools
received school recognition awards for A grades or improving by at
least one letter grade.

In August, the State Board of Education established the FCAT passing
scores that students had to earn as one of their requirements for
receiving a regular high school diploma. In December, achievement level standards for reading and math were established by the State Board and five levels of achievement were identified for FCAT scores in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 to complement the achievement levels established in 1998 for grades 4, 5, 8 and 10.

2002 During the 2002 special legislative session, Section 1008.25 (5) (b), Florida Statute was amended to require the retention of third grade students who failed to achieve above a level one in reading. Also, for the first time it was possible to report annual growth scores for FCAT Reading and Mathematics by using a developmental scale. This scale score provided parents and educators with a measure of student learning gains over a year’s time.

The use of this growth score was included as part of the A+ Plan where 64 schools received F grades and 1,311 schools earned school recognition awards for earning an A.

FCAT Science was added to the battery of tests.

2003 The sixth administration of the FCAT tests of the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in reading and math for tenth graders occurred in 2003 and the graduating class of 2003 (ninth graders in 1999-2000)
were required to attain passing scores on FCAT as one of the requirements for high school graduation.

Other aspects of statewide testing according to the literature include the climate, attrition rate for school administrators and teachers and other measures taken during high stakes testing. There are even differing opinions concerning the benefits of testing. There are differing opinions about how to achieve the national goal of No Child Left Behind (http://www.public.asu.edu/~rdstrom/Entitlementtheory.html). Concerns involve relevance and fairness of tests students must pass, merits and drawbacks of retention policies, access to tutoring, qualifications of teachers, and sufficient funding (http://www.public.asu.edu/~rdstrom/Entitlementtheory.html).

The following is a summary of arguments in support of high stakes testing:

• students and teachers need high-stakes tests to know what is important to learn and to teach;
• teachers need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teach better, particularly to push the laziest ones to work harder;
• students work harder and learn more when they have to take high-stakes tests;
• students will be motivated to do their best and score well on high-stakes tests; and
• scoring well on the test will lead to feelings of success, while doing poorly on such tests will lead to increased effort to learn (http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n18/).
Supporters of high-stakes testing also assume that the tests:

- are good measures of the curricula that is taught to students in our schools;
- provide a kind of level playing field, an equal opportunity for all students to demonstrate their knowledge; and that
- are good measures of an individual's performance, little affected by differences in students' motivation, emotionality, language, and social status (http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n18/).

Finally, the supporters believe that:

- teachers use test results to help provide better instruction for individual students;
- administrators use the test results to improve student learning and design better professional development for teachers; and that
- parents understand high-stakes tests and how to interpret their children's scores (http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n18/).

There are differing opinions, as well. Some say during testing, the stakes are so high that many schools take desperate measures to have students show up for the exam and pass the FCAT since exam attendance is also counted in the final grade for the school (http://7-12educators.about.com/library/weekly/aa052401a.htm). Schools spend the first seven months of the year in an all-out push to succeed on the FCAT including FCAT practice tests, FCAT posters and slogans, even FCAT pep rallies (http://www.sptimes.com/2005/04/11/Tampabay/Schools_strive_for_ze.shtml). Principals lavish attention on lower performing students, knowing their scores can bring
down the school's grade and FCAT vocabulary words are part of every class, even P.E. (http://www.sptimes.com/2005/04/11/Tampabay/Schools_strive_for_ze.shtml). Many parents, educators and students across the country are finding that these high stakes tests are having unforeseen and devastating consequences (http://cnnstudentnews.cnn.com/2005/fyi/05/05/cnnpce.high.stakes/).

The federal government has taken additional measures concerning testing. At a March 20, 2001 Congressional briefing on educational testing, sponsored by United States Representative Bobby Scott, Virginia, where critics expressed concern that high-stakes tests, if designed or implemented inappropriately, may draw an inaccurate picture of student achievement and unfairly jeopardize students or schools that are making genuine efforts to improve (http://www.apa.org/monitor/may01/edtesting.html). Others worry that over reliance on testing might paradoxically compromise educational quality by leading teachers to teach to the test, focusing their classes on narrow test-taking strategies rather than on broader, conceptual material (http://www.apa.org/monitor/may01/edtesting.html).

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics stated this rationale concerning testing: “High-stakes tests are tests that are used to make significant educational decisions about children, teachers, schools, or school districts. To use a single objective test in the determination of such things as graduation, course credit, grade placement, promotion to the next grade, or placement in special groups is a serious misuse of such tests. This misuse of tests is unacceptable. The movement toward high-stakes testing marks a major retreat from fairness, accuracy, and educational equity. When test use is
inappropriate, especially in making high-stakes decisions about a child’s future, it undermines the quality of education and equality of opportunity” (http://www.nctm.org/about/position_statements/highstakes.htm). The losers in high-stakes testing schemes always have been children of the poor, the working class and undereducated. And the winners always have been children of the privileged, well educated and the affluent (http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2000_12/sacks.htm).

Everyone in the schoolhouse is feeling the stress (http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2000_12/domenech.htm). A principal of a well to do elementary school in Montgomery County, Maryland, resigned after allegations that students in her school were encouraged to change their wrong responses on the state test (http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2000_12/domenech.htm). In Fairfax County, Virginia, two teachers resigned after testing irregularities were uncovered and in both cases, the teachers had prepared their students prior to the state tests with questions that closely paralleled those on the test itself (http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2000_12/domenech.htm).

In Oswego City Schools in upstate New York, there was an allegation that a school principal made copies of a state test the district had been chosen to pilot and distributed them to staff members prior to the test (http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2000_12/harrington-lueker.htm). For Oswego's Superintendent, the incident was wrenching as he tried to balance the principal's right to due process with the public's need for accountability (http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2000_12/harrington-lueker.htm). Oswego’s Superintendent is not the only school administrator to wrestle with the issue of cheating
In the last year, as states have continued their push to adopt high-stakes assessments, the number of cheating incidents among educators has risen dramatically, critics of standardized tests charge. Some say cheating is an inevitable result of an accountability system that ties jobs, bonuses, and school accreditation to test scores.

The St. Petersburg Times talked with 50 public school teachers around the state of Florida about FCAT and some hate it, joking that FCAT is the newest four-letter word that starts with F. Others think the test is great, saying it's about time the state got serious about holding kids to standards.

In a recent Eyewitness News 9 WFTV.com discussion asking what viewers if they think FCAT testing should be the one factor to decide whether a child moves on and what are your thoughts and feelings about the test; one viewer replied "FCAT testing is not productive. If we want to increase the standard in Florida we can't have schools which have to teach FCAT half the year. The actual curriculum is what we should focus on. The standardized test is taking over day-to-day operations at public schools. Everybody suffers. TEACH CURRICULUM - NOT FCAT!!! Nobody wins but the schools. Don't be fooled for a second into believing that this is for the kids. It's all about CASH for
schools”

Other impacts of testing even include real estate. Families now make important
decisions, such as where to live, based on the scores from these tests
(http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n18/). This occurs because real estate agents use school test
scores to rate neighborhood quality and this affects property values and test scores have
been shown to affect housing prices, resulting in a difference of about $9,000 between
homes in grade "A" or grade "B" neighborhoods (http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n18/).

According to the literature, teacher attrition is another effect of high stakes
testing: United States schools, which currently employ more than 2.9 million teachers,
will need to hire more than 2 million teachers during the next 10 years to accommodate
record-breaking increases in student enrollment, retiring baby boom-generation teachers,
and high rates of attrition among new teachers due to public education systems that are
asking teachers to take on a dizzying array of new challenges, including:

- helping students meet unprecedented academic standards,
- being held accountable for student test scores
  (http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedletter/v13n02/1.html).

For educators around the country, the high-stakes testing and other accountability
systems already in place heighten the sense of urgency around teacher quality issues
(http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedletter/v13n02/1.html). Some say that because of the reform
movement, pressure has never been greater and teacher morale has never been lower
In California teachers are constantly being told to work harder and stretch just a little bit more. Teachers respond by saying “I don't have to take this and don't need to be here; I can do something else with my life.” That's why we have a high attrition rate in the profession. When things don't make sense in one profession, people tend to find another profession. Unrealistic demands and expectations have taken a toll on administrators, too. Many school districts report difficulty in finding qualified administrators, especially high school principals and superintendents.

**Highly Qualified Staff and Teacher Retention**

Another factor identified in assessing school achievement is the ability to attract and retain highly qualified staff. No Child Left Behind requires local school districts to ensure that all teachers hired to teach core academic subjects in Title I programs after the first day of the 2002-03 school year are highly qualified, meaning a highly qualified teacher is one with full certification, a bachelor's degree and demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching.
Attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers is one education initiative goal which has been implemented throughout the state of Virginia (http://www.governor.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Ed4Life/TeacherRetention.htm). Virginia Governor Mark Warner believes well-prepared teachers are the most valuable resource a community can provide its young people and through his Education for a Lifetime initiative he is striving to provide reforms aimed at recruiting and retaining quality teachers, as well as, attract and retain the best teachers for students (http://www.governor.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Ed4Life/TeacherRetention.htm).

Additionally, this concern for retaining teachers has been addressed in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), North Carolina. Each year between 15% and 20% of the teachers in CMS leave and the percentage is even higher for teachers who have less than three years of experience (http://www.advocatesfored.org/principalstudy.htm). These high teacher turnover rates result in: deficit of quality teachers for every classroom and thus lower quality of instruction; loss of continuity within the school; difficulty to achieve sustained and shared commitment by school staff; time, attention and funds being devoted to attracting new teachers and not to the classrooms; estimation of $11,500 per each teacher turnover (http://www.advocatesfored.org/principalstudy.htm).

Employing highly qualified teachers is one factor many say adds to the quality of a school. Educational Leadership asks “Who is more highly qualified to teach?” (May 2005). As more veteran teachers move into retirement, principals know that hiring the right new teachers, the ones with the content knowledge and the teaching skills, the ideals and the resilience, will make all the difference (May 2005).
Mentoring

Mentoring new teachers is a tool related to the recruitment and retention of new teachers and the success of the school. One strategy the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, a member of the Regional Educational Laboratory Network and dedicated to providing high-quality research based resources to educators and policymakers in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, states that effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies in the Midwest include the implementation of programs that support new teachers (http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/html/strategy/section1.htm). Recruiting new teachers suggests the following reasons for implementing an induction program: staunch the hemorrhage of new teacher attrition, particularly in urban schools; eliminate unfit individuals and retain only those who have been deemed competent; extend the preparation period of novice teachers through their crucial first few years upon the job so that they continue to develop as proficient, knowledgeable, and successful teachers of our nation’s children; improve the climate for teaching and learning, and build community between new and veteran teachers (http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/html/strategy/section1.htm).

Ingersoll and Kralik report in The Impact of Mentoring on Teacher Retention: What the Research Says, that studies do provide empirical support for the claim that assistance for new teachers and, in particular, mentoring programs have a positive impact on teachers and their retention (http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/50/36/5036.htm). The usefulness of mentoring is observed through an example in the National Education Association Foundation for Improvement of Education (NFIE).
Mentoring has a close relationship with the school administrator, who plays a key role in the relationship in the newcomer's professional life. The initial relationship of a beginning teacher with his or her principal greatly impacts the decision to remain in teaching. In successful teacher mentoring programs, building principals participate in mentor selection, facilitate assignment of new teachers to mentors, support and champion mentoring as integral to the school's professional development planning to other teachers and parents, assist with scheduling for program activities, and assist in the design of the mentoring program, among other activities.
School Leadership and Style

Principal leadership was a key component for increasing teacher retention in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (http://www.advoctesfored.org/principalstudy.htm). CMS’ observations and implications regarding the relationship between principals and teacher retention include: principals who have characteristics of successful entrepreneurs; understand the value of people; value teachers as individuals and sincerely want them to succeed and grow; and give direct assistance to teachers (http://www.advoctesfored.org/principalstudy.htm). According to “Preparing School Principals: A Perspective on Policy and Program Innovations” says leadership is important for public schools (September 2003). The call for today is to have adept instructional leaders, not mere building managers (September 2003).

Schools of the 21st century require a new kind of principal, one who fulfills a variety of leadership roles including: instructional leader, one focused on strengthening teaching and learning, professional development, data driven decision making and accountability; community leader, one who is imbued with a big picture awareness of the school’s role in society, shared leadership among educators, community partners and residents, close relations with parents and others; visionary leader, one who has a demonstrated commitment to the conviction that all children can learn at high levels (September 2003).

The Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) states that there is a difference between school success and failure, based several identifiable qualities that set successful schools apart from the rest (http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/files/goodschool.pdf). One of the
qualities is having a strong administrator who leads instruction at the school and knows in
depth the school’s curriculum and instruction provided in each grade level, helps teachers
develop instructional strategies and techniques and encourages teamwork, makes time for
in-service training and seminars for the school’s entire staff, marshals resources and
distributes them to benefit the greatest number of students, communicates with parents
and provides sufficient time for such dialogues, establishes goals for the school and
articulates those goals with clarity, conviction and understanding, maintains a well
balanced staff with multiple skills and competencies, knows the staff’s strengths and
special capabilities, works to maintain high morale which contributes to great stability
and limited teacher turnover, strives to keep class sizes appropriate for the subject and
grade being taught and within state guidelines

A strong school administrator is one, as studies show, that plays a crucial role in
improving teaching and learning and must today serve as leaders for student learning
(http://web.ask.com/web?q=what+is+a+strong+school+principal&qsrc=0&o=0).

In Worcester County Public Schools, Maryland Superintendent Jon M. Andes
says of Stephen Decatur Middle School and its school success, “This school is successful
because the principal has a vision, a delivery system in place to implement the vision
(interdisciplinary teams), and a catalyst (instructional administrator) to make it happen”

Additionally, the educational leader promotes the success of all students and staff
by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program
conducive to student learning and staff professional growth

(http://www.iun.edu/~ncatenw.ADVANCED/IV/D/Schoolculturerrubric.DOC). He/she:

- demonstrates a clear understanding of what school culture is and how improvement of instruction is correlated to student performance
- delineates the difference between climate and culture and utilizes steps to create both a climate and a culture of academic excellence
- develops a program of staff development correlated with the school vision and the academic needs of students and staff.
- models behaviors and manages resources to assure that all students have the knowledge, skills and values to be successful.
- utilizes a variety of information, including research data, to make curricular and other decisions.
- monitors and evaluates regularly the school’s climate, culture and the academic performance of staff and students

(http://www.iun.edu/~ncatenw.ADVANCED/IV/D/Schoolculturerrubric.DOC)

Finally, Roland Barth sees a good school as one in which I would like to teach or be a principal and one the principal occupies a more important position of leadership as the head learner, engaging in, displaying, and modeling the behaviors we want teachers and students to adopt

(http://www.enc.org/professional/learn/change/resources/readings/document.html).
Parental and Community Involvement

Another factor in a school’s success is found in parental and community involvement, according to research from the Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center (http://www.acrnetwork.org/parents/schoolsuccess.htm#1). Research reveals many benefits when parents are involved in their child's education, including: higher grades and test scores; better attitudes and behavior; better school attendance; more homework completed; less chance of placement in special education; greater likelihood of graduating from high school; and better chance of enrolling in postsecondary education (http://www.acrnetwork.org/parents/schoolsuccess.htm#1).

Policy makers at all levels are increasingly aware of the pivotal role that families and the community play in the education of our children and the success of the school (http://www.mi-accountability.org/stakeholder.html#understanding). “So All Succeed,” a group of individuals from the Michigan School Accountability Task Force states there should specific policies in place at the school level that include community-based organizations (CBO's), teachers, administrators, business, families, students, and other key stakeholders containing the following: opportunities for all parents/families to become involved in decision-making about how the family involvement programs will be designed, implemented, assessed and strengthened; outreach to encourage participation of families who might have low-level literacy skills and/or for whom English is not their primary language; regular information for families about the objectives of educational programs, and on their child's participation and progress in those programs; professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness with families; linkages
with special service agencies and community groups to address key family and community issues; involvement of families of children at all ages and grade levels; opportunities for families to share in decision-making regarding school policies and procedures affecting their children (http://www.mi-accountability.org/stakeholder.html#understanding).

Other methods of providing opportunities for parental and community involvement include posting school news and homework assignments on school or district web sites and by easing communication with teachers by providing e-mail or voice mail access to families, as well as, increasing the availability of computers to all students by working with community organizations such as libraries and churches (http://www.nsdc.org/standards/family.cfm). President George W. Bush included his desire for involving parents and community in schools by introducing a plan that calls for all Americans parents, educators, and community leaders to work together to make sure that no child is left behind in a failing school (http://www.ed.gov/inits/backtoschool/index.html).

Nonprofit organizations have been formed around the country addressing the need for community involvement. The George Lucas Educational Foundation located in Nicasio, California, was established as a tax-exempt, charitable organization in 1991 based on the filmmaker's belief that education is the most important investment we can make to secure the future of our democracy with a vision of learning where students are challenged and engaged, have access to interactive technologies, and are supported by inspired teachers and involved parents and communities.
Since 1991, the staff of the Foundation has been visiting successful schools throughout the country, talking to thousands of teachers, parents, and community leaders about their efforts to create schools where all students can grow and thrive and observing the powerful changes that can happen when an entire community comes together to support children and schools.

Another organization is the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE), dedicated to developing effective family/school partnerships in schools throughout America. Their mission is simple: to advocate the involvement of parents and families in their children's education and to foster relationships between home, school, and community that can enhance the education of all our nation's young people.

Finally, the National Council for Parental Involvement says the evidence is in regarding community and parent involvement: when schools and families work together, everyone benefits. They specify that through this involvement parents become empowered, teacher morale improves, schools get better, and communities grow stronger.

Even mentoring new teachers is seen as community involvement. The induction of teachers needs to be seen as the work and responsibility of the entire school community.
Continuous Improvement

Seeking continuous improvement is another element in a successful school. Continuous improvement, a mantra in the domain of education, simply means an unwavering commitment to progress (http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.chapter/menuitem.b71d101a2f7c208cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/?chapterMgmtId=49dcfa36dfcaff00VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD).

When continuous improvement becomes embedded in a system's culture, it functions as the guiding force that keeps the schools on target in an uncompromising quest for quality at every corner of the campus (http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.chapter/menuitem.b71d101a2f7c208cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/?chapterMgmtId=49dcfa36dfcaff00VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD).

There are six steps including:

1. Identify and clarify the core beliefs that define the school's culture.
2. Create a shared vision by explicitly defining what these core beliefs will look like in practice.
3. Collect accurate, detailed data and use analysis of the data to define where the school is now and to determine the gaps between the current reality and the shared vision.
4. Identify the innovation(s) that will most likely close the gaps between the current reality and the shared vision.
5. Develop and implement an action plan that supports teachers through the change process and integrates the innovation within each classroom and throughout the school.

6. Embrace collective autonomy as the only way to close the gaps between the current reality and the shared vision, and embrace collective accountability in establishing responsibility for closing the gaps.

Deming devoted his time and energy to the people principle, one of six principles of continuous quality improvement (www.resources.sai-iowa.org/si/desiredfuture/joy.html). His research has fourteen points on creating a more efficient workplace including:

- Create and communicate to all employees a statement of the aims and purposes of the company.
- Adapt to the new philosophy of the day; industries and economics are always changing.
- Build quality into a product throughout production.
- End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag alone; instead, try a long-term relationship based on established loyalty and trust.
- Work to constantly improve quality and productivity.
- Institute on the job training.
- Teach and institute leadership to improve all job functions.
- Drive out fear; create trust.
- Strive to reduce intradepartmental conflicts.
• Eliminate exhortations for the work force; instead, focus on the system and morale.

• (a) Eliminate work standard quotas for production. Substitute leadership methods for improvement.

(b) Eliminate MBO. Avoid numerical goals. Alternatively, learn the capabilities of processes, and how to improve them.

• Remove barriers that rob people of pride of workmanship

• Educate with self-improvement programs.

• Include everyone in the company to accomplish the transformation (www.resources.sai-iowa.org/si/desiredfuture/joy.html).

Deming’s six areas of continuous improvement include:

1. customer focus
2. systems thinking
3. change by design
4. people
5. variation
6. knowledge (www.resources.sai-iowa.org/si/desiredfuture/joy.html)

The Superintendent of Rochester Community Schools in Rochester, Indiana was seeking a model of school improvement and learned of Deming's concepts (http://www.helpforschools.com/sikb/tips/PoffenbargerB.shtml). This led to two realizations for him and school district: the importance of using data to make good decisions and the role that motivation and de-motivation play in continuous improvement (http://www.helpforschools.com/sikb/tips/PoffenbargerB.shtml). Having learned about
Deming's principles he had a passionate desire to chart a course for a Kindergarten-12 improvement effort and as a result, the school district began a journey of continuous improvement with Deming's quality principles as a guide.

(\texttt{http://www.helpforschools.com/sikb/tips/PoffenbargerB.shtml}).

Another school district implementing Deming’s continuous improvement is found at Mount Edgecumbe High School, Sitka, Alaska where they have modified Deming’s points for Continuous Improvement of Education:

1. Create and maintain a constancy of purpose toward improvement of students and service. Aim to create the best quality students capable of improving all forms of processes and entering meaningful positions in society.

2. Adopt the new philosophy. Educational management must awaken to the challenge, must learn their responsibilities, and take on leadership for change.

3. Work to abolish grading and the harmful effects of rating people. Focus on the learning process, not the rating process.

4. Cease dependence on testing to achieve quality. Eliminate the need for inspections on a mass basis (standardized achievement test, minimum graduation exams, etc.) by providing learning experiences that create quality performance; learning experiences that encourage creativity and experimentation.

5. Working with the educational institutions from which students come. Minimize total cost of education by improving the relationship with student sources and helping to improve the quality of students coming into your system. A single source of students coming into system such as junior high students moving into a
high school is an opportunity to build long-term relationships of loyalty and trust for the benefit of students.

6. Improve constantly and forever the system of student improvement and service to improve quality and productivity in personal life and community.

7. Institute continuous training on the job for students, teachers, classified staff and administrators; for all people connected to the human organization or community.

8. Institute leadership. The aim of supervision should be to help people use machines, gadgets and materials to do a better job and set the pace driving human creativity.

9. Drive out fear, so that everyone may work effectively for the school system. Create an environment that encourages people to speak freely and take risks.

10. Break down barriers between departments. People in teaching, special education, accounting, food service, administration, curriculum development and research etc. must work as a team. Develop strategies for increasing the cooperation among groups and individual people. Planning time will facilitate this dynamic.

11. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for teachers and students asking for perfect performance and new levels of productivity. Exhortations create adversarial relationships. The bulk of the causes of low quality and low productivity belong to the system and thus lie beyond the control of teachers and students.

12. Eliminate work standards (quotas) on teachers and students, (e.g. raise test scores by 10% and lower dropouts by 15%).) Substitute leadership and the eternal drive for quality and joy of learning.
13. Remove barriers that rob the students, teachers and management (principals, superintendents and central office support staff) of their right to pride and joy of workmanship. This means abolition of the annual or merit rating and of management by objective. The responsibility of all educational managers must be changed from quantity to quality.

14. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone. Put everybody in the school to work to accomplish the transformation. The transformation is everybody's job

(http://www.mehs.educ.state.ak.us/quality.html).

**School Culture and Climate**

Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that build up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools (Deal and Peterson, 1998)

(http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/jsd/peterson202.cfm). In some schools, the culture inspires educators to learn and grow, to take risks, work collegially, feel supported when they want to assume leadership roles, reflect on practice and do other work to improve their teaching

(http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/jsd/peterson202.cfm). Collegial collaboration found in school cultures is, of course, a central strategy of the Effective Schools model, based on research that shows that unusually effective schools are marked by productive
communication and joint work among staff members (http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Reform/pt2d.html).

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) discusses the importance of school culture and need to transcend the status quo of isolation found in many schools and move to a competent system requiring a continuous improvement plan composed of six steps essential for purposeful, systemic staff development:

1. Identify and clarify the core beliefs that define the school's culture.

2. Create a shared vision by explicitly defining what these core beliefs will look like in practice.

3. Collect accurate, detailed data, and use analysis of the data to define where the school is now and to determine the gaps between the current reality and the shared vision.

4. Identify the innovation(s) that will most likely close the gaps between the current reality and the shared vision.

5. Develop and implement an action plan that supports teachers through the change process and integrates the innovation within each classroom and throughout the school.

6. Embrace collective autonomy as the only way to close the gaps between the current reality and the shared vision, and embrace collective accountability in establishing responsibility for closing the gap (http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.chapter/menuitem.b71d101a2f7c20)
Principal leadership is regarded as a key factor in promoting positive school culture, too. Principal leadership remains key to school success, with many factors assisting in making schools successful: good curriculum, quality teaching, a strong professional culture (http://ccvi.wceruw.org/ccvi/pub/ReformTalk/Year_1999/Mar_1999_Reform_Talk_3.html).

**School Size**

Large schools are a fact of life in the United States, and although the issue of school size and its link to academic achievement and social and emotional well-being has been debated continually in the current wave of school reform, the arguments are taking place in an education landscape of big schools that is unlikely to change soon (http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/ed_topics/el200202_allen.htm). More than 70 percent of United States (U.S.) high school students attend schools of more than 1,000 students, according to the U.S. Department of Education (http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/ed_topics/el200202_allen.htm). In today's urban and suburban settings, high school enrollments of 2,000 and 3,000 are commonplace, and New York City has many schools with enrollments nearing 5,000 (http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html). In many cases these size increases occur incrementally as schools fill and are repeatedly replaced.
by new ones with slightly larger capacity. In other cases, the increases are the result of school consolidation (http://pixel.cs.vt.edu/edu/size.html).

The difference between large and small schools, according to much of the research, lies not in the schools' concern for student safety but in their ability to implement effective strategies that produce desired outcomes; whereas large schools rely much more on external measures for controlling student behavior (metal detectors and security guards) smaller schools stress engagement of the faculty, school community, and students; in short, relationships (http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/ed_topics/el200202_klonsky.html). Also, small schools promote a culture where teachers can work collaboratively in a professional community, engage in reflective teaching practices and look at student work as part of interdisciplinary teams (http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/ed_topics/el200202_klonsky.html).

Shapiro, Benjamin and Hunt (1995) conclude that large size has a much greater impact on effectiveness and efficiency than heretofore recognized and it is negative. Effective schools’ effectiveness is greatly reduced by large size (1995). The big school has a negative impact on virtually all factors and indicators: achievement/test scores, dropout rate, attendance, even cost escalates, participation, sense of belonging, self-esteem for most, sense of community, involvement, recognition, morality/social controls/socialization, responsibility, opportunity to take responsible posts, overall climate, little sense of expectation/people can hide, principal as instructional leader/principal is perceived as bureaucrat, learning how to use and understand freedom,
providing support for learning to make wise decisions, learning to make wise use of time, learning to be respected and to respect (1995). The small school can work but requires thoughtful questioning of our assumptions that bigger is wonderful (1995). Also, considerably closer community involvement and support is typical in most small schools (1995). Finally, as a consequence of this, the small school usually provides greater educational, emotional and social support and thus, can be considerably more effective than large schools (1995).

“In order to be successful, the school needs to be small, not just the classes," said Alisa Berger, at 30, one of the youngest principals in New York City (http://www.jrn.columbia.edu/studentwork/cns/2003-06-22/337.asp). "I want to be able to walk through the hallways and see a student, and know that that student didn't do his math homework (http://www.jrn.columbia.edu/studentwork/cns/2003-06-22/337.asp). Research has repeatedly found small schools to be superior to large schools on most measures (http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html).

In 2002, Florida voters addressed the issue of school size as it relates to the classroom and passed a Class Size Amendment to the state constitution that limits the number of public school students assigned to each teacher (http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/size.cfm). The Constitutional Amendment on class size amended Article IX, Section 1 of the Florida Constitution by adding the following: to assure that children attending public schools obtain a high quality education, the legislature shall make adequate provisions to ensure that, by the beginning of the 2010 school year, there are a sufficient number of classrooms so that:
1. the maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher who is teaching in public school classrooms for pre-kindergarten through grade 3 does not exceed 18 students

2. the maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher who is teaching in public school classrooms for grades 4 through 8 does not exceed 22 students, and

3. the maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher who is teaching in public school classrooms for grades 9 through 12 does not exceed 25 students (http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/size.cfm).

Shapiro, Benjamin and Hunt (1995) conclude that large size has a much greater impact on effectiveness and efficiency than heretofore recognized and it is negative. Effective schools’ effectiveness is greatly reduced by large size. The big school has a negative impact on virtually all factors and indicators: achievement/test scores, dropout rate, attendance, even cost escalates, participation, sense of belonging, self-esteem for most, sense of community, involvement, re'cognition, morality/social controls/socialization, responsibility, opportunity to take responsible posts, overall climate, little sense of expectation: people can hide, principal as instructional leader (principal is seen as bureaucrat), learning how to use and understand freedom, providing support for learning to make wise decisions, learning to make wise use of time, learning to make wise use of time, and learning to be respected and to respect (1995). They also state that considerably closer community involvement and support is typical in most small schools (1995). As a consequence of this, the small school usually provides greater educational, emotional and social support (1995).
Additional research also shows that socioeconomic deprivation has a strong negative influence regarding school achievement but in schools with fewer than 301 students that influence is significantly reduced (http://www.bgfl.org/uploaded_documents/schlsize.pdf).

**Socioeconomic Level of Students**

Another factor in improving education and our schools is to give every child the chance to attend a good, middle-class public school, and that the best way to accomplish this is by socioeconomic integration (Kahlenberg, 2004). One of the common features of high-performing schools with high-poverty student populations is that principals and teachers build instruction around the standards and believe that all students, regardless of socioeconomic level, can meet the standards and high expectations (http://www.pacificresearch.org/pub/sab/educat/2005/PRI_RAND_041605.pdf).

An independent review of what makes a good school also noted that research has shown a direct correlation between the performance of a school and the poverty factor, how low the socioeconomic status level of the students might be (http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/edlaw/goodschool.pdf). Research shows that good schools are those with high expectations for learning, a demanding curriculum, involved parents, good teachers and strong discipline (http://www.faithworks.com/archives/sorting_noise.htm).

Federal Way County Schools in Washington believe socioeconomics impact test scores (http://www.fwps.org/dept/nutrition/about.html). One method of addressing the poverty issue in Federal Way is through the National School Lunch Program by specifically connecting the link between nutrition and learning.
An ideal school deals with cultural diversity and the range of socioeconomic issues through culturally competent teachers and administrators, who address issues of student learning styles and multiple intelligences, and encourage students to maximize their potential.

Summary

Chapter two is a literature review regarding how school districts around the nation are addressing the call for higher learning standards and more accountability in schools, and reform efforts such as statewide testing. Examples are discussed concerning how many states are administering statewide assessment tests, such as the FCAT administered in all Florida public schools. Additionally, a brief chronology describing the origins of Florida’s student assessment and school accountability system, origin of the Sunshine State Standards and the development, administration, scoring and reporting of the FCAT and the Florida A+ Plan are included, as well.

Other qualities, as described in the literature, referencing characteristics of good schools are discussed including: highly qualified staff, retention of administrators and teachers, mentoring, school leadership and style, community involvement, continuous improvement, school culture, school climate, school size, socioeconomic level of students, attrition rate of school administrators in schools with statewide testing and school climates in schools with statewide testing. Also, reported are examples of differing opinions regarding the impact of statewide testing upon our schools.
The problem addressed in the study is that we do not know how principals and teachers perceive their role in improving their school's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) letter grade by two grade levels, from a grade C to a grade A, in one 9-month school year. This dissertation focuses on perceptions of the impact of principals, assistant principals and teachers on student achievement scores. One of the factors addressed in this study was on Florida’s statewide testing program, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and why schools improve or do not improve their scores.

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school year. A case study was developed that analyzes perceptions of factors and behaviors that have made a positive difference in two Polk County Public Elementary Schools, Polk County, Florida as measured by FCAT. The study was conducted in two schools which have improved their FCAT school grades by two grades from a grade A to a grade C in one 9-month school year, the 2004-2005 FCAT grades.
It will analyze perceptions of the principals and teacher regarding their roles in improving their school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school year.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What have been the teachers’ perceptions of the school’s principal role in optimizing success over the one-year period?
2. What are the principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
3. What have been the teachers’ perceptions of the school’s assistant principal in optimizing success over the one-year period?
4. What are the assistant principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
5. What have been the principal’s and assistant principal’s perceptions of the role of the school’s teachers in optimizing success over the one-year period?
6. What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding what their roles have been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
7. What are the principal’s, assistant principal’s and teacher’s perceptions of how school climate impacts school achievement?
8. What are the perceptions of principals and teachers of how curriculum impacts school achievement?
Data Collection

Data collection included interviews conducted with teachers, assistant principals and principals at each school. The interview method was selected due to its reputation of perhaps being the oldest and certainly one of the most respected of tools that an inquirer can use (Dexter, Guba, Lincoln, 1970). Also, interviews were chosen because they are systematically determined and the selected respondents are not in a position to throw away the questions (Frey & Oishi, 1995). The target population, population of interest, consisted of School A and B principals and teachers. All teachers at each school were not selected for the interview. A randomly selected group was targeted. The principal at each school was asked by the researcher to randomly select one teacher from each grade level, kindergarten through grade five, as well as, the guidance counselor, media specialist, one ESE teacher and one special area teacher. Each teacher selected must have taught at the school during the 2004-2005 school year. In the random selection of teachers, the researcher gained a list of all instructional personnel prior to the interview from the clerical staff or via school website and asked the principal to check off each teacher who was employed during the 2004-2005 school year. After the principal indicated those specific teachers, the researcher randomly selected one teacher from each grade level for the interviews. The researcher then reviewed the list orally with the principal and asked if there was a problem in interviewing those random teachers and finally, asked the principal for approval of the list.

Structured interview method was selected for several reasons. First, structured interviews allow the investigator to define the problem and questions (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Another reason for structured interviews was that they are likely to be used in
situations in which representative samples of persons are asked identical questions about something that interests the investigator (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). In this case, the sample population was asked identical questions regarding their perceptions of their school FCAT grade improvement. Finally, structured interviews allow questions to be restated if they were not first understood, as well as, they permit the interviewer to note any nonverbal cues or of how the respondent says what he says (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

Planning and setting up the interview was the next step in data collection. Since respondents had been previously identified, the researcher continued by establishing a personal contact with each school principal through a letter of introduction and then a follow up phone call. The letter contained information regarding the purpose and problem of the study, why the school was selected and methods of data collections. The letter contained information regarding how the researcher will follow-up with a phone call in order to answer any questions or concerns regarding the nature of the study and the intent to schedule an interview with the principal (Appendix E). The same letter was sent to assistant principals, with the change in title stipulated depending upon who is receiving it: assistant principals or the principals. Also before the interview, the researcher sent a brief letter to the respondent, confirming the time and date. The interview took place on a face-to-face basis, without observers or listeners and in a private office when possible (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). A private place for the interview has benefits regarding ensuring confidentiality and in creating an environment where the respondent feels free to respond openly (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). At the time of each interview, each participant (selected teachers, principals and assistant principals) was asked to read and
sign an informed consent. The informed consent template was used as the guide for the official informed consent for each person. There were three informed consent developed: one for principals, one for assistant principals and one for teachers. The principals’ informed consent form can be found in Appendix F. Assistant principals received the informed consent found in Appendix G.

Another important aspect of the interview consisted of the researcher’s listening skills. Guba and Lincoln (1981) state that more important than appropriate settings, more important than correct social and professional carriage, more important than any other tactic or strategy is the skill of listening. In order to ensure the highest possible accuracy and ability to clearly understand what the respondent is saying, the researcher asked for permission to use a tape recorder. If given permission, the researcher asked the respondent to state that permission was given to the researcher and this information will be recorded.

During the interview process, School A and B principals and assistant principals, were interviewed prior to teachers. The researcher collected data at School A first (completing the principal’s interview first, assistant principals next, then meeting with randomly selected instructional personnel and finally meeting with all instructional staff-those that were teachers during the 2004-2005 school year-during a faculty meeting for surveys). Data collection from School B followed the same pattern.

Preparing for the teacher interviews, the researcher prepared an introductory statement that had the main responsibility of building rapport with the respondent (Frey and Oishi, 1995). The letter of introduction also included information pertaining to any important conditions of the interview and study, such as level of confidentiality,
voluntary nature of participation, approximate time of interview and opportunity to ask questions (Frey and Oishi, 1995). Also included was a description of any benefits of participation, such as a certificate of appreciation and permission to work with staff on interviews and surveys. The teachers’ letter of introduction can be found in Appendix H.

The following will regard information concerning question design for the interview of the principal, assistant principal and randomly selected teachers. Interview questions for the assistant principal were similar to questions constructed for the principal interviews. The goal of question writing was to write the questions and organize them into a coherent document with goals that encompass content relevant to the study objectives, using language relevant to the target group and implementing a presentation style that maximizes valid and reliable responses (Frey and Oishi, 1995). The goal of the organization was to create smooth conversational flow for both the respondent and interviewer (Frey and Oishi, 1995).

Questioning techniques was another design element examined by the researcher in question design. The in-person interview made use of a wide range of questioning styles because of the greater opportunity to probe, read nonverbal cues, and use visual aids (Frey and Oishi, 1995).

Nonverbal information may be defined as the exchange of information through nonlinguistic signs (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). It can be intentional or non-intentional on the part of the sender of the communication and either sender or receiver or both may be unconscious of the fact that some form of communication is occurring (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The researcher was aware of three branches of nonverbal communication including kinesics, communication through body movement; proxemics, communication
through spatial relationships or how the individual uses space in relation to other individuals and objects in the environment; and chronemics, use of time (pacing, probing, pausing) to convey meaning in interpersonal relationships (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). A final branch to be aware is paralinguistics, which refers to the extraverbal elements of speech that give added dimension to the meaning of verbal communication (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). During the interview paralinguistic behavior could include volume of voice, quality of voice (tense), accent, inflectional patterns, pauses, errors in speech and rate of speech (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The researcher also kept in mind that nonverbal cues are powerful indicators of cultural values and beliefs (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Guba and Lincoln (1981) conclude that the description, use and explication of nonverbal cues add immeasurably to the later understanding of social contexts.

Visual aids is a questioning technique that was also considered with principals and teachers. Visual aids consisting of FCAT report cards for the 2004-2005 school year were used to help participants recall or draw attention to the grade information discussed. Another questioning technique included aided recall where the respondent is asked to recall a reference point and then guided through time events by the researcher (events in relation to preparation for successful FCAT testing, perceptions of certain times before and after FCAT administration) (Frey and Oishi, 1995).

Frey and Oishi (1995) state that question order is another important design factor. The authors also express that first questions must maintain respondent interest and make responding easy. When the questions flow logically from the introduction, respondents are drawn into the interview rather than being distracted and perhaps annoyed by questions they consider irrelevant (Frey and Oishi, 1995). The first questions were
written to be easy to understand and non-threatening (Frey and Oishi, 1995). Also regarding order, the researcher placed emphasis on the following: place any complex, difficult or sensitive questions after rapport has been established but before respondent fatigue might set in; order questions in a logical way that makes sense to the respondent (Frey and Oishi, 1995).

The researcher conducted the final step in preparing interview questions by pre-testing them to determine if any parts of the interview did not flow well and if there were unclear questions that needed to be rewritten (Frey and Oishi, 1995). Questions were pretested on individuals knowledgeable in the education field and thus, provided an excellent training opportunity for the researcher (Frey and Oishi, 1995). The individuals were those who participated in the Jury of Experts Panel; three University of South Florida Educational Leadership Doctoral Program cohort members.

Once the principal, assistant principal and teacher interviews had taken place, there were several tasks that were completed immediately after (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The tasks were:

- interview notes were completed, including any notes regarding nonverbal cues, behaviors or other items that would not be able to be tape recorded)
- a letter of thanks was sent to the respondent for his/her time and information
- analysis and evaluation of interview data began (Guba and Lincoln, 1981)

Interview analysis consisted of several steps. Principal interviews were analyzed first, assistant principal interviews were analyzed next and teacher interviews were
analyzed last, simply due to the scheduling of principal and assistant principal interviews being conducted before conducting teacher interviews. During the interview, the researcher took notes on shifts in conversation or transitions to new topics on part of the respondent (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The researcher also took into account the length of responses, any ideas or issues omitted, inconsistencies either with what the respondent has already said or with what the interviewer already knew to be true, ambiguities and peculiarities, as well as, changes in tone (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

**Reliability and Validity of Interview**

Determining reliability and validity of interview data was the next step. In making this determination, interviewing has many advantages with respect to data collection and reliability and validity (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Among its strengths is that there is less chance of misunderstanding between the inquirer and the respondent than in other approaches (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Questions were tailored to fit the respondent’s knowledge, degree of involvement and status regarding the study (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). During interviews, the researcher is more likely to receive more accurate responses on sensitive issues, and the interview itself is likely to provide a more complete and in-depth picture than other forms of inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Additionally, the technique provides for continuous assessment and evaluation of information by the inquirer, allowing him to redirect, probe and summarize (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). A second person was asked to validate the analysis. This person was selected from the University of South Florida Educational Leadership Doctoral cohort members. One member was requested to participate who is familiar with these research methods.
The following are several interview questions that were asked to principals at School A and B (additional interview questions are located in Appendix A):

1. What do you perceive your role as school principal has played in optimizing success over the one-year period?
2. What do you perceive your role as school principal has played in optimizing success over the one-year period by teachers?
3. What do you perceive as other factors that have played a significant role in optimizing success over the one-year period?

The following are several interview questions that were asked to assistant principals in School A and B (additional interview questions are located in Appendix B):

1. What do you perceive your role as school principal has played in optimizing success over the one-year period?
2. What do you perceive your role as school principal has played in optimizing success over the one-year period by teachers?
3. What do you perceive as other factors that have played a significant role in optimizing success over the one-year period?

The following are several interview questions that were asked to randomly selected teachers in School A and B (additional interview questions are located in Appendix C):

1. What do you perceive your role as a teacher in School A/B has played in optimizing success over the one-year period?
2. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in optimizing success over the one-year period?
3. What has been your perceived role of other teachers in School A/B in optimizing success over the one-year period?

There were no closed questions during the interview because of their limiting ability for the respondent to explain answers.

When principal and assistant principal interviews were completed, all remarks were transcribed and a copy shared with the each individual. Principals and assistant principals were given the opportunity to review their comments, confirm that the information shared is actually what was spoken, asked to make any clarifications and opportunity to expand any answers. Copies of interview questions were not left after the interview sessions with principals or teachers.

Teacher interviews were conducted identically to principal and assistant principal interviews regarding pre-interview preparation, question design, post interview tasks, analysis and evaluation. The principal was asked for permission to speak to the assistant principal and randomly selected teachers and if the visit might create any weariness among instructional staff. The researcher asked to interview one teacher from each grade level, one from special areas (music, physical education, art, technology), guidance counselor, exceptional student education (ESE) teacher and media specialist (approximately 10-12 teachers from each school). Each teacher must have taught there during the 2004-2005 school year. Each teacher interview was conducted in a private area. Principals were given some idea of the kinds of questions to be asked of assistant principals and teachers in the interview. This was done in an oral manner. Additionally, all teacher remarks were transcribed and shared with each respondent for any clarification or expansion of answers. Each teacher was asked for permission for the interview to be
tape-recorded. Teacher interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. Principal and assistant principal interviews lasted no longer than 40 minutes.

**Reliability and Validity**

Determining reliability and validity of interview data was one of the final steps in data collection. Interviewing has many advantages with respect to data collection and has a great strength in providing a lower chance of misunderstanding between the inquirer and respondent (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Additionally, questions can be tailored to fit the respondent’s knowledge, degree of involvement and status (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). In this study, questions were tailored to fit the respondent’s knowledge and perceptions and degree of involvement in school success. The interviewer is likely to receive more accurate responses on sensitive issues and the interview itself is likely to provide a more complete and in-depth picture than other approaches to data gathering and provides wide latitude within which the respondent’s responses can be explored and fruitful leads exploited (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Interviewing is virtually the only technique that provides access to those with specialized knowledge of the situation and it provides information much more quickly than other types of data collection such as observation (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

**Additional Steps**

Additional steps the researcher took include describing the order of interview data, as well as, summarizing and interpreting the interview data. Ordering interview data included the following steps:

1. all verbatim responses to a particular interview question were grouped under that question (for example: under Appendix C interview question
one, all teacher responses to that question were grouped under that question, making sure each statement recorded is precisely what was said with no paraphrasing

2. all primary (kindergarten through grade 2) teacher verbatim responses were grouped under each question (for example: Question 1—primary teachers’ responses); all intermediate (grades 3-5 teacher verbatim responses were grouped under each question (for example: Question 1—intermediate teachers’ responses); all special area teachers (media specialist, ESE teacher, music, art, technology teachers) and guidance counselor verbatim responses were grouped under each question (for example: Question 1-special area teacher responses). The same was done for principals and assistant principals so that appropriate subcategories were created under each question (for example: Appendix A, Question 1—School A Principal response; Appendix A, Question 1-School B Principal response; Appendix B, Question 1-School A Assistant Principal response; Appendix B, Question 1-School B Assistant Principal response)

3. Grouping principals, assistant principals, primary, intermediate and special area teacher responses to each question was done to look for differences in response patterns between each group, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005).

Procedures for summarizing and interpreting interview data applied to all teacher, principal and assistant principal interviews. After all teacher interview responses were properly categorized and printed, the process of summarizing the data began. In
summarizing verbatim responses, the researcher looked for key words, key phrases, positive and negative remarks, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). This was done one interview question at a time, because the key words and phrases in the responses for Question one were not the same as those in the responses for Question two.

First, the researcher reviewed all teacher responses to a particular question (for example: Question 1). This enabled the researcher to gain a sense of the repetition of certain words and phrases (these are usually key words and phrases) and the frequency of positive or supportive remarks versus negative or non-supportive remarks, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005).

**Coding**

Next, a consistent coding system for Question 1 was determined, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). One was selected that was easy to communicate with others, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). The coding system was used to mark or highlight those words, phrases, positive elements and negative elements that the researcher became conscious of during the earlier review of responses, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). A color coding system was created to highlight reoccurring words and phrases, as well as, positive and negative statements that appear critical to understanding what was being communicated by the respondent, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). Using the coding system, certain key words and words similar to it in meaning, were given the same code/color. Different key words and words similar to it in meaning, were given a different code/color, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). Reoccurring words and phrases were given another code/color, B.W. Hall (personal communication,
July 17, 2005). All positive remarks were given a color and negative remarks received yet another color, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). Additionally, any words or phrases that the researcher thought would be helpful in the task of summarizing accurately what the respondents have communicated received another code/color, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). When the researcher coded all responses for question one, special attention was given to creating the summary of what the teachers said in answering question one, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). Since teacher and principal responses were sub-grouped for each question according to primary teachers, intermediate teachers, special area teachers, principals and assistant principals, the researcher provided three elements in the summary to Question one and the questions that follow, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005). The following is an example for question one:

A. What the teachers said overall
B. What primary teachers said
C. What intermediate teachers said
D. How the three subgroups differed

The above process was repeated for each interview question for each subgroup: primary, intermediate, special area teachers, as well as, principals and assistant principals, B.W. Hall (personal communication, July 17, 2005).
Validating Interview Data

Validating the interview data was accomplished with the assistance of three University of South Florida Educational Leadership Doctoral Cohort members. They reviewed the researcher’s interview transcript responses, along with the researcher’s data results and requested to examine the results for reasonability. The members then provided their opinions in a written form to the researcher that described their thoughts of the reasonability of each response.

The researcher was aware of the interviewing limitations including time, difficulty in replicating since the data collection device is a human being and the technique is also highly vulnerable to interviewer bias (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

Additional information was obtained by the researcher either by school clerical staff or through district office assistance. Information consisted of:

1. student population during the 2004-2005 school year (year of FCAT administration when school grade improved two letter grades)
2. number of students participating in free/reduced breakfast and lunch program
3. number of students achieving a passing score on the 2004-2005 reading FCAT scores (These scores were obtained from students tested in grades 3 through 5 since the FCAT is administered in these grades only at the elementary level.)
4. number of students achieving a passing score in math on the 2004-2005 FCAT scores (These scores were obtained from students tested in
grades 3 through 5 since the FCAT is administered in these grades only at the elementary level.)

5. number of students achieving a passing score in science on the 2004-2005 FCAT (FCAT Science is administered to grade 5 students only in elementary school.)

6. number of fourth grade students received a passing score on the 2004-2005 FCAT writing test (FCAT writing is administered only to grade 4 students at the elementary level.)

7. number of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students who participated in the 2005 FCAT and earned a passing score

8. number of students that did not participate in the 2005 FCAT

9. How many students speak English as a second language and participated in the 2005 FCAT

10. What is the average number of students in each grade level?

11. What is the number of instructional staff members?

12. What is the number of non-instructional staff members?

**School Profiles**

The following information was gleaned from the Florida Department of Education regarding each school’s profile (http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/0405/school_grades.cfm). Additional information was gained through principal interviews and teacher surveys.

School A is a Polk County Public Elementary School located in Lake Wales, Florida. According the 2004-2005 School Accountability Report, Florida Department of Education, School A received a grade C in 2004, including learning gains
In 2005, School A received a grade A, including learning gains; improving two letter grades in one 9 month school year (http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/0405/school_grades.cfm).


School A’s 2005 school grade, A, is calculated by adding points earned from the FCAT in each of the following performance areas: reading, math and writing (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk). In reading according the A+ Plan, the following is describes the percentages of points earned in percentages:

- 72% of students reading at or above grade level
- 67% of students made a year’s worth of progress
- 68% of struggling students making a year’s worth of progress (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=1371&district=53&districtName=Polk).

In math:

- 68% of students scored at or above grade level
• 78% of students made a year’s worth of progress


In writing:

• 82% of students met state standards


According to the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, 100% of the required criteria was satisfied


School A also met all federal adequate yearly progress requirements mandated under No Child Left Behind and indicated that all subgroups met the required criteria for each performance area in all subgroups


Additionally, this school is in the middle third of all elementary schools in the state on percent of students making learning gains


The Florida Annual Report Card for School A indicates that it is in the middle third of all elementary schools in the state on money spend per student
School A is a Title I school (http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/). Please see chapter one definitions for Title I information.

School B’s grade is calculated in the same method as School A, as are all public schools according to the A+ Plan. School B earned the following points from each of the performance areas listed below, beginning with reading:

- 77% of students reading at or above grade level
- 64% of students made a year’s worth of progress
- 63% of struggling students made a year’s worth of progress

In math:

- 69% of students scored at or above grade level
- 65% of students made a year’s worth of progress

In writing:

- 90% of students met state standards

School B satisfied ninety-three percent of criteria under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and made a status of Provisional Annual Yearly Progress (http://web.fldoe.org/NCLB/reportCard/default.cfm?action=report&school=0802&district=53&districtName=Polk). In reading under the NCLB Act, all subgroups met criteria; math indicated that students with disabilities and African American students in the school need improvement in math; writing met the criteria, as well
According the Annual Report Card, School B has met all provisional adequate yearly progress under NCLB.

School B is a Title I school, also. Provisional indicates schools receiving a Provisional acceptance under federal standards because they failed to show annual progress but nevertheless received an "A" or "B" grade by the state.

Other information that was gleaned through an interview with the principal will include:

- percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch
- school population of students, teachers, paraprofessionals and other staff members
- number of teachers per grade level
- student to teacher ratios for each class
- number of classroom teachers
- number of instructional support teachers
- number of paraprofessionals assigned to specific grade levels
- number of teachers with advanced degrees
- number of out of field teachers
- number of certified teachers
- number of years serving as the principal at School A and B
Summary

In this chapter, the problem of the study, purpose of the study and research questions were stated. The study was conducted in two public elementary schools located in Polk County, Florida. Data collection techniques include interviews with each school principal, assistant principal and approximately 10-12 randomly selected teachers from each school.
Chapter 4
Findings

The researcher notes the term success and its usage in chapters four and five. Readers of this study will find that success is narrowly and rigidly defined in this context. The definition of success is derived from the definition from the State of Florida Statutes in regards to school achievement. Many Floridians and other individuals may not typically define success in the same way the researcher has stipulated. Again, the definition of term success used here is strictly for the use of this particular study.

Additionally, all quotes stated in the following two chapters were selected by the researcher as the ones most representative of the study’s findings. All additional quotes can be located in the Appendices.

Four Main Themes Regarding Perceptions

Four broad themes were examined focusing on the perceptions of school-based administrators (Principals and Assistant Principals), primary instructional teachers (Grades K-3), intermediate instructional teachers (Grades 4, 5) and special area teachers (one reading specialist, one physical education teacher and one technology specialist). The four broad themes include: 1) perceptions regarding the role of administrators in optimizing school success; 2) perceptions regarding the role of instructional personnel (primary, intermediate, special area) in optimizing school success; 3) perceptions regarding how school climate optimizes school success and 4) perceptions regarding how
curriculum optimizes school success. Interviewees included four school administrators, seven primary teachers, four intermediate teachers, and three special area teachers. Each of the four themes was analyzed from the administrative perspective as well as the instructional perspective, and combined as an overall group.

During data collection, the researcher experienced few malfunctions. All participants were willing to respond to questions and made the researcher feel welcome. The researcher had no difficulty in gaining permission to record each interview, all participants were located on the school campuses and classroom locations were easily accessible. There was one challenge that occurred at School A, where two participants were absent on the day of the scheduled interviews. The researcher was able to interview the remaining participants who were present, however, another day was scheduled to makeup the absent interviewees.

**Administrators’ Perceptions – Four Main Themes**

**Administrators’ Perceptions of Optimizing School Success**

The school-based administrators stated their role in optimizing success in a variety of ways. Each of the four respondents indicated that emotional support, financial support, data analysis of test scores and curriculum expertise as being most important.

Regarding emotional support, administrators viewed their role as being personally and professionally responsible for providing emotional support to staff members, students and parents. All four viewed themselves as being responsible for keeping up morale, maintaining an open door policy for all, encouraging and supporting teamwork among
staff, as well as encouraging parental and community support for the school. These are their four verbatim quotes:

- “Last year, the morale was pretty low. We had to build relationships, staff relationships first, administration to teacher, teacher to teacher, grade level to grade level, all those different areas, parents to teachers.”
- “We’ve come such a long way, and all I can do now is be an encourager, and say, ‘Keep going. Keep your head up. Keep your chin up. Our kids are doing good.’”
- “Being a cheerleader for the teachers, being here to be able to try to get them anything they need, including if I need to go in and help teach a class, I’ll do that.”
- “We really tried to be a family and to show that we all care about each other.”

As a reminder to the reader, all participant quotes can be reviewed in the Appendices.

All four administrators also indicated that they wanted teachers to know that administration was accessible for any and all reasons, including but not limited to personal issues, teaching concerns, parent issues or problems, student discipline and personal needs, and access to supplemental training and materials.

- “At the beginning of the school year, we were reflecting on last school year where we became an A school, and we asked the teachers what they thought helped us become an A…we have excellent teachers…and they don’t have any
down time. They really utilize the school, 325-minute day, but the teachers felt like it was the positive attitude – we insisted that learning needed to be fun.”

- “I have tried to motivate the teacher to keep a positive attitude. I have been in the classrooms to assist them in every way that they want. I’ve tried not to impose myself on them.”

- “I think the parents that have actually made comments, which we’ve had parents make comments, it’s mainly just ‘Thank you for caring about our kids, for supporting our kids, and for caring about our kids.’”

- “Parents perceive this as a friendly environment and a place they want to come, and one of the comments I got from parents probably the most was that I was approachable, willing to listen to their needs and desires and make changes if we could, and if not, just stated to them exactly why not and give them a reasonable explanation as to what my decision was and why and that’s really all they needed.”

Each of the four administrators indicated their role as one financially responsible for investigating, recommending and purchasing the necessary materials for teachers and staff. Additionally, they felt responsible for exploring training opportunities and offering and providing the training needed to optimize school success.

Two of the four administrators made special effort via teacher surveys and informal interviewing to get feedback about what their (teachers’) needs are and how they (the administrators) could help. These are two verbatim quotes:
• “I am open to suggestions and I am flexible and I have done everything that I
could to get them the materials that they needed, that they felt like would help
them to be successful in the classroom.”

• “I think my support of them [impacted school success], hopefully by being
supportive, being able to spend the funds that I have on anything that they need
for instructional purposes in the classroom, not holding those funds, and making
sure that they have what they need in the classroom.”

Each of the four administrators viewed themselves as being experts in curriculum,
citing numerous specific programs that they implemented in their individual schools to
improve reading and math performance, including diagnostic testing, one-on-one tutoring
programs, computer labs, ability grouping, and motivational speakers such as “being a
cheerleader for the teachers, being here to be able to try to get them anything they need,
including if I need to go in and help teach a class, I’ll do that.” Overall, they described
themselves to be the “go to” persons for curriculum questions and curriculum
development in order to support annual school improvement for instance when one
administrator stated verbatim: “I have tried to motivate the teacher to keep a positive
attitude. I have been in the classrooms to assist them in every way that they want.”
These statements were expressed more by their detailed accounting of all of the various
measures they implemented with the goal of improving test scores and school
performance, rather than explicitly stated. These are three verbatim quotes from the
administrators:
• “I assisted them in adjusting their lesson plans and implementing whatever the county is asking us to do.”
• “I’ve helped them or at least got them training.”
• “All of the [curriculum] and all of the teachers working together, I think that’s what helped.”
• “I think the reading professional development…I think that helped.”

Each of the four administrators commented about their role in analyzing test score data both at the school level, as well as the individual student level, and the importance of communicating scores and interpretation of those scores to the students as well as teachers and parents. These are each of the four administrator’s verbatim quotes regarding test score analysis:

• “We look at data constantly. What can I do to keep it an A?”
• “If you look at our data versus another school’s data, you might be able to eliminate that as an actual factor [supplementary curriculum].”
• “We did a lot of professional development on learning how to do reports and look at data last year which they hadn’t been familiar with. We looked at the FCAT scores and they could really see where the kids were.”
• “I’m meeting with each one of my students individually, telling them where they are at as far as their test scores are, how many points they need to make it to the next level, looking at grades, and I think the greatest thing probably is analyzing the test data.”
Administrators’ Perceptions of Instructional Roles

Two of the four administrators made reference to the role of instructional personnel as one of optimizing success primarily through emotional support and curriculum expertise. They described teachers as the ones who provide emotional and educational support personally to students and parents, as well as other teachers. These are the two administrator’s verbatim quotes regarding their perception of instructional personnel:

- “Our children, not most, but a big majority don’t come from happy places at home, and teachers need to love them. You know there are times when the teacher needs to be stern with children, but I want this place to be happy, and I want it to be a learning environment where they are risk free, able to take risks as children, just like the teachers are able to take risks.”
- “Letting the little one know, making him think he’s the smartest one in the classroom even though he is ESE and all those difficult problems that he may have, but let him think he is great and is going to do a good job.”

While two administrators stated staff emotional support was important, two of the four administrators focused on staff professional skills development as being key to school success. Here are the verbatim quotes from the other two administrators interviewed.
• “I think it’s very important that we get highly qualified staff in our classrooms, because if they haven’t had the background and the necessary knowledge, how are they going to teach the students the things they need for the testing itself, or just learning in general.”

• “Staff development. Our staff development was more on motivation, inspiring the teachers to want to get in that classroom and teach the kids, and we really hit that stuff hard.”

Each of the four administrators also believed the instructional role to include keeping up morale and working together in teams. This teamwork also involved providing for peer mentoring of new and inexperienced teachers with the goal of teacher retention. The following are four verbatim quotes from administrators regarding their perceptions of the role of instructional personnel:

• “I think it’s very important that we get highly qualified staff in our classrooms, because if they haven’t had the background and the necessary knowledge, how are they going to teach the students the things they need for the testing itself, or just learning in general.”

• “It’s important that we retain teachers because they need to love what they’re doing. If they don’t like what they’re doing, if they don’t love it, then they’re not going to be effective in the classroom.”

• “If you were to do a study and researched schools that lose 15 teachers a year on a regular basis, I can almost guarantee you won’t find an “A” school.”

80
• “If we can connect her with a peer teaching, that has got the experience, it’s going to help the beginning teacher’s attitude. She sees this great teacher; she has this person to bounce ideas off. She has that person too when she’s down and out, you know, give her that pep talk and be there for her so she’s not out there all by herself.”

Administrators’ Perceptions of School Climate

Administrators delineated their statements regarding how school climate impacts school achievement, specifically higher morale, increased parental involvement and increased community involvement. Each of the four administrators described higher morale as equaling a better school climate. These are quotes from the four administrators regarding their thoughts on school climate:

• “You better have a positive climate…one where the children are safe, not only safe, but are happy. This is their happy place.”

• “It goes back to the climate of the school. If the climate of the school is good, then your grades are going to go up. If it’s not good, then you’re going to go down. So being able to be there and let the kids know what – that [we] care and that we’re out in those classrooms, I think really helps with student achievement.”

• “When you feel good about where you are, then you’re going to feel good about everything.”

• “School climate definitely increased last year. So did our grade. There’s no doubt in my mind that would coincide.”
Each of the administrators interviewed indicated that school climate could be impacted through increased parental involvement at all socioeconomic levels. These are four verbatim quotes concerning school climate and parental involvement from each of the four administrators interviewed:

- “We’re all in this together, whether it’s a community person or a parent, the students need to know we’re all working together for them to feel successful.”
- “Our parents are very excited about their children. Our parents had a chance to send their children to other schools. They had the vouchers and all these things that they could do, and I think we lost two children.”
- “Definitely parent involvement [has an impact]. We have had three workshops this week at night, different grade levels each night, and I was surprised to see how many kindergarten parents did not show up.”
- “[Parental involvement] has a big impact on the achievement, the working parents who are trying to make a living and having a hard time doing it. It’s hard for them to come to the conferences with the teachers.”

Finally, each of the four administrators stated that increased community involvement with financial support could also impact school achievement. Below are each of the four administrators verbatim quotes regarding this topic:

- “Community involvement is great, too. Right now we’ve got a couple of business partners in our community. They send mentors down, money, if we
need something, so yes, community involvement to support our teachers, and in a small community like ours, community involvement is a good positive image for our school.”

- “We’re all in this together, whether it’s a community person or a parent, the students need to know we’re all working together for them to feel successful.”
- “We need the money constantly and forever and the more support, the more your community feels like they’re a part of you and you’re a part of them, the more they’re going to be willing to support you especially financially.”
- “The parents and the community just kept giving. It was just awesome, and [it] couldn’t help but help their attitudes.”

Administrators’ Perceptions of Curriculum

The fourth theme, curriculum, is described by administrators as a place for new ideas and strategies to improve learning and subsequent school test scores. Each of those interviewed indicated that Title I funding allows for additional curricular resources, including one-on-one tutoring and increased in-service training opportunities for teachers. All four administrators described themselves as those who were responsible for aligning curriculum with FCAT and Sunshine State Standards. They stated that they were always looking for gaps in learning as indicated by test scores and plugging in specialized curriculum.

Each of the four administrators regarded the role of curriculum as important to school success:
• “Do I think that bells and whistles and programs do it? No, the teacher in the classroom does it, but when that teacher has enough computers, when that teacher has enough school supplies, and hands-on science activities, reading libraries, books for the classroom. Does it impact achievement? Sure it does.”
• “Making sure our curriculum does match the Sunshine State standards, knowing what needs to be taught, what you have to teach.”
• “The curriculum now flows from the third grade to the fourth, and fifth grade, so that’s been a big asset.”
• “I think one of the biggest things that helped was the…tutors. We used the Compass lab, we did SRA tutoring. So working with all that and all of the teachers working together, I think that’s what helped.”

Primary Instructional Teachers – Four Main Themes

The primary instructional teachers were more concerned with the stress on the children (due to high stakes testing) and emphasized the basic, foundational skills needed for preparation for the FCAT in grade three. The following are instructional teacher quotes in regards to the four themes: role of administration, role of instructional staff, school climate and curriculum on school achievement.

Primary Teachers’ Perceptions of the Role of Administration

Regarding the role of administration, six of the seven primary teachers responded with phrases concerning emotional support, financial support, and data analysis and curriculum expertise. These five perceived administrators to be responsible for
emotionally supporting staff, students and parents both professionally and personally. Additionally, these five viewed administrators to be accountable for keeping up morale, maintaining an open door policy for all, supporting teamwork, and encouraging parental and community support. Listed below are the five teacher’s quotes regarding role of administrators:

- “If we have a problem, they’ll help us with it.”
- “Our principal has a very upbeat personality…he really tries to be motivating.”
- “Both principal and assistant principals, they know that we want the best for our children. They know that the teachers here are going to do their best to make these children understand and learn.”
- “He was visible at school – he was here, like he was here most of the time and he was in the classrooms, and he was very positive. Always positive.”
- “Support, support, support. She’s there for us…she’s willing to come and work with kids. She helps us in any way, with any needs that we have. Academically, personally, you know, all of them…if we have a problem we go to her, personal, academic, otherwise, whatever, she’s always there for us, supports us, gives us what we need academically.”
- “She has done really well working with us and our needs and the kids, and anything that we need.”

One of the seven primary teachers stated administrators trust the teachers as expressed in this verbatim quote.
“They know that we want the best for our children. They know that the teachers are going to do their best to make these children understand and learn, so they sort of, if we have a problem, they’ll help us with it, but other than that, they just try to leave us alone. We do good that way.”

Four of the seven primary teachers described administrators to be the ones responsible financially for purchasing necessary materials and providing training opportunities. Below are the four primary teacher’s verbatim statements.

• “Being a Title I school, we get more funding and our principals were wonderful about giving us the supplies, the materials, the things we need to help teach.”

• “She has done really well working with us and our needs and the kids and anything that we need.”

• “[She] was very willing to try to get us any materials that we thought would be beneficial to the students in preparation for the FCAT and she went above and beyond the call of duty there in providing us with what we felt like we needed, some extra supplemental materials to prepare us.”

• “[She] was especially helpful with this new program…helping me put it together and whatever I needed, she was there to help, to find it. If she couldn’t find it, she got it.”

However, three of the seven primary teachers indicated that the administration were the ones who coordinated and analyzed test score data in order to improve school
achievement at all levels. Listed below are the three primary teacher’s verbatim quotes.

- “She’s not lenient, she’s a driven principal, but she knows what it takes to get our children [where they need to be]. She…knows we know what to do. So she…lets us come up with what we feel like we need for our children.”
- “He’s very data-driven. Making us look at where we were, weeks-end, and going from there.”
- “She does our testing, which is good. It organizes all that. It goes real smoothly.

Primary Teachers’ Perceptions of the Role of the Instructional Teachers

Each of the seven primary teachers were recorded as describing the role of the instructional group to be that of being emotionally supportive and having teaching expertise. All seven saw value in having expert teachers who were able to modify curriculum as needed in order to meet improvement goals for individual students.

The following are quotes from the seven primary teachers concerning the role of the instructional group on school improvement:

- “…influencing the students in a positive way and making an impact, where they experience things they might not. It’s experience.”
- “I took the students that I have and did the best I could to prepare them for the skills needed and just did what I could with my group as all the other teachers did with their classes.”
- “They [the teachers] go above and beyond in everything, in all they do.”
• They just don’t stop. You know, they keep going and they question, they question. If they’re not getting what they need they’ll ask another colleague. And if they need to go to parents’ houses, you know, they’ll go. They’ll do whatever it takes to get the child here to make sure the child’s motivated, to make sure the child is learning and making the gains that we expect.”

• “We find what the children were the weakest in and that’s what we kind of zero in on for the next year.”

• “We really have a good school staff here, and everyone does what they are supposed to and we all enjoy the kids, and we try to do our best…I always try to make it harder for them. Every year I expect more from them, so my kids are doing a whole lot better this year than they did last year, because I expect a whole lot more from them, so each year it progresses.”

• “The teachers working together as a team, teamwork. It took all of us together. And I think that’s just something that we all wanted to do, is work as a team to do the best that we could…in looking over the scores, the teachers were able to see which areas we needed to really focus on. And in planning our lessons before the FCAT test arrived, we knew exactly what we needed to spend more time on.”

*Primary Teachers’ Perceptions of School Climate*

Each of the seven primary teachers, similarly as administrators, indicated that the third theme, school climate, the same way. They described higher morale to equal better school climate for example as evidenced in this quote: “If people want to come to work,
they want to do a good job.” The following are quotes from the seven primary teachers concerning school climate:

- “If teachers are happy…if students are happy, they’re going to want to be here and they’re going to want to do well.”
- “It makes a whole lot of difference when your administration and your staff are getting along and they work together.”
- “We all decided we wanted to work together as a team to do the best that we could to help the children prepare for the FCAT. We just gave it our all. We just gave it our all.”
- “If you don’t want to come to work, you’re kind of down the whole day.”
- “If you are happy where you teach, it’s easier to put in the long hours and the stressful days.”
- “We are a family.”
- “It was certainly a school of change with a new administration. There were many new teachers on the staff, learning each other and getting used to different procedures and different things that were going on at the school. That’s all I can think of for the climate here. It was…it was enjoyable.”

Each of the seven primary teachers also viewed that increased parental involvement at all socioeconomic levels and increased community involvement with financial support benefits school climate and overall school morale for example as stated in this quote from one of the seven primary teachers stating: “We had community
involvement. We had business partners, and that helped a lot, because they were able to donate money to each grade level, and we could use that money to buy supplies and things that we needed to prepare us for the testing. So that was a very positive impact on our school.”

The remaining six primary teachers stated the following verbatim quotes concerning parental and community involvement:

- “We’re working with their children, trying to do what is best for their children. We have parent nights and we meet with them. We let them know what we’re going, how we’re doing it, and why we’re doing it and I would hope that they would say, you know, that the teachers have a good handle on what is expected and they try to work towards that.”

- “Our parental involvement is not so good, but our community involvement at least [was], and I guess because we’re from a small town, they donate a lot of stuff and field trips around town that we can walk to, and I think they help, and we do have a lot of parents that help a lot, too. We can count on them any time.”

- “…the parental and community involvement that we have here at our school is very high. We have very involved parents, a very involved community. They provide the school with different resources through donations, not only monetary, but also volunteering in the classrooms.”

- “…good parent participation and I think anytime you’ve got parents involved, helping with carnivals and all kinds of extra programs going on, that definitely helps achieve a balance between our staff and the administration and the parents. I
think that gives a strong support. The kids see it and it helps [in] pulling everybody together.”

• [Parental involvement] “helps because we had several parents who donated, you know, they donate time and money. And the money buys us the things we need to, you know, the extra manipulatives, the extra test practice books. The time, you know, is just…it gives the teacher more planning time.”

• “We were very cooperative and we all, the kids and basically my parents, last year, they really worked hard with getting their children to stay on the same level all year.”

Primary Teachers’ Perceptions of Curriculum

All seven of the primary teachers did not put much emphasis on the fourth theme, curriculum. Six of the seven respondents, however, did describe several different supplemental programs that they used with individual students to bring up individual test scores. Additionally, they each expressed appreciation for Title I funding due to additional resources it provided for instance as evidenced in the following quote: “We get a lot of extracurricular tools to help teach the kids.” These are five teacher’s quotes regarding curriculum. Additional quotes from these teachers can be reviewed in the Appendices.

• “In planning our lessons before the FCAT test arrived, we knew exactly what we need to spend more time on.”

• “We get a lot of extracurricular tools to help teach the kids.”
• “When we got the results, I didn’t know I was going to be in kindergarten, and so we were already looking at changing the curriculum. I don’t know if you’d call it the scope and sequence of how we taught math because we weren’t teaching some of the skills that were tested. And so we were going to rearrange the chapters to do that.”

• [Title I] “…provides a lot of extra funding that they get, and so they can get the programs with computers and things like that. And I think that has been a tremendous help. Possibly maybe on the other side of it is that it takes a lot of paper trails and work on the teacher’s part to fulfill all those obligations. But in the long run, I think all the things that they were provided extra was a big help.”

• “I think the Title I funding, we’re able to receive more things and to get more trainings, more materials because we have that funding. We’re able to purchase things from our classroom and bring in speakers, or are able to apply to go to different conferences where sometimes other school[s] that are not Title I don’t get the extra materials or the extra chances to do things that Title I’s get to do. So I think it’s a good thing.”
Intermediate Instructional Perceptions – Four Main Themes

Intermediate Instructor’s Perceptions of the Role of Administration

The intermediate instructors as a whole viewed administration as playing a supportive role. These teachers seemed to take ownership of test scores and accountability. They strive for continuous improvement.

Regarding theme one, each of the four intermediate level respondents described the role of administrators to be emotionally supportive both personally and professionally for staff, students and parents. They viewed them as ones to keep up morale, maintain an open door policy for all, encourage teamwork and parental and community support as evidenced in one intermediate teacher’s quote: “He really did a lot to try to get our teachers motivated. He worked very hard to get the morale of the teachers up.” Listed below are additional verbatim quotes of the intermediate teacher’s responses regarding the role of administrators.

- “She (administrator) will get anything that we need to try to do our job better.”
- “(Our principal) was a motivator. To motivate the students. She’s been a positive role…she’s always striving to bring new ideas into the classroom, to help us, to keep us motivated.”
- “Everything she does as far as helping you with leads in the classroom and coming into the classroom, or model, or supply issues, or student issues or parent issues.”
As a reminder to the reader, all participant quotes can be viewed in the Appendices.

The intermediate level instructors also made reference to administration as the ones who provided financial support by purchasing the necessary materials and training opportunities as stated in this intermediate teacher’s quote: “She will get anything that we need to try to do our job better.”

Each of the four intermediate level instructors commented on this theme. Below are four quotes regarding financial support from each of the four intermediate teachers:

- “She has worked to put some programs together and to get some things a little bit more on track.”

- “She’s always striving to bring new ideas into the classroom to help us to keep us motivated…a lot of positive feedback, going in the classroom, seeing what they’re [the students] are doing, seeing how things can be done better. As far as different methods, just basically being a part of it.”

- “Everything that she’s done as far as helping you with leads in the classroom and coming into the classroom or model or supply issues or student issues or parent issues.”

- “I think that the fact that we had the new principal on board and his enthusiasm and vigor and trying to get the teachers to be the best that they could be, really helped to have us focus on the real reason we’re here, and that is for the children, and to teach them to the best of our ability.”
Two of the four intermediate level instructors viewed administrators as ones who analyzed test score data to guide improvement at the school level. The two teacher’s quotes are as follows:

- “She helps us read reports and tries to figure out areas where we’re weak that we need to do better.”
- “He did implement school-wide testing which I think that certainly helped.”

One of the intermediate level instructors made no mention of analyzing test data as an administrative responsibility. The fourth intermediate level instructor commented that administration implemented school-wide testing, and “has worked to put some programs together and to get some things a little bit more on track.” as illustrated in this verbatim quote.

Unlike the primary grades teachers, each of the four intermediate teachers did not view administrators as curriculum experts. Rather they saw themselves as the curriculum and instructional experts, whereas administration played more of a support role. Additionally, this group viewed themselves as the one’s with the critical skills in analyzing individual and grade level score data and aligning instructional needs with testing as stated in this intermediate teacher’s quote: “If my students are low in this area, that’s where my focus needs to be.” These responses do align with the administrator’s perceptions of this theme with the exception of the increased or decreased emphasis on responsibility for data analysis of scores. Administrators were more responsible for driving score improvement at the school level, whereas instructors were responsible for
the individual student and grade level improvement. Below are four verbatim statements each from one of the intermediate teachers:

- “We certainly are always looking to use practice material to better prepare our children for the FCAT, to use their vocabulary from the FCAT, and certainly looking at their test scores, finding their weak areas, and the scores that they’re weak in, and trying to teach that to mastery.”
- “I knew where my baseline was, in what areas I need to focus on.”
- “We worked very, very hard to try to get the students prepared mainly for the FCAT testing, and I think that the math portion is what we concentrated most on.”
- “You learn from your mistakes. You look at the test data, and you analyze it.”

Intermediate Teachers’ Perceptions on the Role of Instructional Staff

Intermediate teachers indicated the role of instructional staff as excellent, motivated teachers, first. Next, they described instructional staff as providers of emotional support both personally and professionally for students and parents. They viewed instructors as ones charged with keeping up morale for increased school improvement and working as a team, including peer mentoring. Additionally, they believed that teachers should be experts at interpreting test scores. They highly regarded their ability to analyze student level score data, identify gaps in student learning, and revise or supplant curriculum to guide continuous learning improvement. These teachers took ownership of interpreting test scores.
Each of the four intermediate level respondents viewed the role of instructors as being teaching experts. They saw them as those who modify curriculum as needed in order to meet annual improvement goals for individual students when appropriate. They viewed instructional staff as those with the ability to analyze student test score data, identify gaps in learning and revise or supplant curriculum in order to guide continuous learning improvement as supported in this statement from one of the teachers: “If my students are low in this area, that’s where my focus needs to be.”

The following are additional quotes from the intermediate teachers regarding the instructional role:

- “We, as a grade level, sit down with the results and we look at the individual scores and see what areas the majority of students did poorly in and tried to do better in that particular area the next year.”
- “You can always learn from the previous year.”
- “You learn from your mistakes. You look at the test data, and you analyze it.”

Intermediate Teachers’ Perceptions of School Climate

Each of the four intermediate teachers interviewed regarded the third theme, school climate, as higher morale equaling a better school climate, the need for increased parental involvement at all socioeconomic levels, and increased community involvement with financial support. These align with the administrators’ and primary instructional perceptions.

The following are quotes from all four of the intermediate teachers concerning school climate:
• “We’re a “go getter” school, a lot of high impact energy, just a very energetic school.”

• “When we’re pumped up or other things are positive, the teachers, administrators, everyone around it gets the kids in a positive atmosphere towards the testing.”

• “Everyone just proceeded with what they knew and what they had learned to do and what we did best and that’s why we had a successful year.”

• “They’re very dedicated teachers. They work very hard. Many teachers are here on the weekends and late after school, and they make a difference because they work together as a team and they work hard to reach all of the students.”

Three of the four intermediate level instructors commented on parental and community involvement and the impact on school achievement.

• “I think that [parental involvement] has a great deal to do with the school’s achievement. We have parents here who are wonderful as far as coming in and helping with motivational activities that we’ve had, fun activities…because they make it fun, they give support; they’ll come in and do anything that we want. That helps the whole school environment, just the overall climate, because the parents and the community can come in and give of their time.”

• “I think we have a lot of community support; however, parental, I’ve found that in fourth grade, the involvement of parents is not what I think it should be.”
• “We have pretty big community involvement and have a lot of volunteers in our school, the parents; and certainly that played a part in making it a little bit easier for teachers to be successful in the classroom.”

The fourth intermediate level instructor made no comments regarding parental support.

*Intermediate Teachers’ Perceptions of Curriculum*

The four intermediate teachers put an increased emphasis on the fourth theme, curriculum. All four expressed appreciation for Title I funding as it helps provide additional resources. They also tended to focus more on aligning the curriculum with testing gaps.

These are three of their quotes:

• “We’re also looking at how we can bring those children that are struggling in math up to grade level, so we had a lot of tutoring put in place last year, a lot of extra curriculum put in place to meet the needs of these children.”

• “You continue to work as hard as you possibly can, and every year is a new year, and every group of students is a new group of students, and they all have different learning styles, and you have to pinpoint those learning styles, and you have to work as hard as you need to for the success of the students.”

• “I think the high stakes testing is good to a certain extent and it does impact the school achievement, but I also feel that is takes over in the classroom as far as
creativity because we’re very limited on what we can be creative with since we are, you know, constantly implementing test-taking strategies and how best to get our students to pass the test.”

**Special Area Instructional Teachers – Four Main Themes**

The special area teachers as a whole viewed themselves as a supportive, facilitative group, which enhances curriculum and skills for the students.

**Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions of the Role of Administration**

All three described the role of administration to be that of emotional support for staff, students and parents, both professionally and personally. Each one saw administrators as responsible for keeping up morale, maintaining an open door policy for all, encouraging teamwork and parental and community support. Below is a quote from each of the three:

- “She’s an excellent leader, an excellent role model. She will assist us in any way she can and backs us up with any problems.”
- “It’s getting the right teachers in the classroom, small class sizes, keeping discipline in the classroom. That has a lot to do with the teachers also [not just administration].
- “She guides us to where we need to be going, and shows us…. she’s excellent and provide[s] any materials we need…she’s open to suggestions.”

All three indicated the administrative role as being financially supportive by purchasing necessary materials and providing training opportunities. Each viewed administrators as being responsible for analyzing test score data in order to guide improvement at the school level and as curriculum experts. They each described administrators as the ones to go to for curriculum questions and development to support
improvement at the school, annually. However, the three special area teachers viewed themselves as the curriculum content experts and the individuals with the ability to help students identify specific learning skills and knowledge to improve test performance from year to year. These responses align with the administrator’s and primary teacher’s responses, and with the intermediate instructional responses, respectively.

Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions of Instructional Staff

All three special area teachers described the role of instructional staff as providing emotional support both personally and professionally for students and parents. They each saw themselves as individuals responsible for keeping up morale and encouraging teamwork, including peer mentoring. They all viewed the role of instructors as being teaching experts. They saw themselves as those who modify curriculum as needed in order to meet annual improvement goals for individual students when appropriate. They all viewed instructional staff as those with the ability to analyze student test score data, identify gaps in learning and revise or supplant curriculum in order to guide continuous learning improvement. Only one person out of three felt accountable or took ownership of being responsible for having expertise in test score interpretation (reading teacher).

These teachers focused more on longevity of older, more experienced staff as evidenced in the following quote: “It’s a pretty old staff, good staff.” This may be due to the small sample size and professional teaching career longevity of the teachers interviewed.

The following are three of their quotes:

101
• “[We} make sure we all follow the Sunshine State Standards and really have a goal and our goal was to be an A school. All of us worked very hard, spent many hours after 3:30, preparing the curriculum...for the children.”

• “Old, good teaching.”

• “We gained some of the older staff from the charter schools...raised our teacher ratio as far as years of experience...I think it’s better...older teachers are better teachers.”

Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions of School Climate

All three special area teachers made reference to school climate with discussions describing higher morale equaling better school climate; a need for increased parental involvement at all socioeconomic levels; and a need for increased community involvement with financial support. These responses were aligned with the administrators’, intermediate and primary teachers’ perceptions.

These are three of their quotes concerning school climate:

• “We don’t get all of them (parents), but wanting them to be here, telling them that you need them.”

• “There was a good atmosphere with the students in getting them ready and I know they were worn out by the time the test came, just keeping their mood up and keeping them excited about taking testing stress free.”

• “The students learn better if you’re happy.”
Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions of Curriculum

Regarding the fourth theme, special area teachers did not put an increased emphasis on curriculum. However, one expressed appreciation for Title I funding as it helps provide additional resources. The special area teacher (reading) also tended to focus more on aligning the curriculum with testing gaps.

There is a quote from one of the special area teachers:

- “Being a Title I school, we get extra funding, so we’re able to get the materials that we need.”

Summary of Themes Common Across All Interviewees/Participants

Several themes emerged and were common across all interviewed. The first theme revolves around emotional support for students, parents, families, school staff, teachers and administration. During the time of this research, three named hurricanes impacted the school district. This anomaly created a great deal of stress within each of the individual schools that participated in this study. One school was severely negatively impacted, with many students temporarily displaced due to destroyed local housing (within walking distance to the school). School structures and facilities also suffered damage that took time to repair. Students missed on average 14 school days due to power outages and the concurrent declared states of emergency. Therefore, the most recurrent theme throughout the transcripts is emotional support. This may be due to the high level of emotional,
personal and professional stress teachers and administrators were faced with during the back-to-back storms that hit the district.

Not only was this a time of high personal stress, the majority of those interviewed, particularly in the primary grade levels, indicated that high stakes testing causes a great deal of stress in the school environment. Most commented on the school staffs’ and administrators’ ability to recognize this as a stressful event and openly communicate positive reinforcement for each other, as well as the students and parents affected.

Aside from the storm-related stress, each school, as expressed by the staff and administration, made a conscious choice to tackle school success and improve overall school scores, despite the hurricane obstacles. Nearly all of those interviewed commented on the high level of professional and personal support they felt were necessary in order to create and nurture a positive school climate. Professional support included in-service training opportunities, one-on-one analysis of test scores (student to teacher, teacher to teacher, teacher team to administrator) and peer-mentoring among teachers, particularly pairing of new teachers with more experienced teaching staff. The majority of respondents commented on the importance of being happy where one works, as happier workers are more dedicated and willing to go the extra mile, more willing to take on additional responsibilities, and emotionally vested in their school.

Not only was emotional support stressed amongst all, but also professional support, training, and materials necessary to improve student learning, were made available. Each of the schools also received Title I funding that assisted financially for curricular tools and individual tutoring for students. Title I resources did provide a revenue stream that allowed each of the schools to offer one-on-one tutoring for at-risk
students, as well as purchase computer-assisted learning tools, and supplemental reading and math curricula. The majority of those interviewed commented on the Title I resources, however, it was not emphasized as a major factor in improving school success.
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

Problem of the Study

The problem addressed in the study is that we do not know how principals and teachers perceive their role in improving their school's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) letter grade by two grade levels, from a grade C to a grade A, in one 9-month school year. This dissertation focuses on perceptions of the impact of principals, assistant principals and teachers on student achievement scores. This information is of importance because we do not have information on how school reference groups (principals, teachers) perceive the grading of schools as defined by the Florida A+ Plan. The study focuses on the grading of schools as measured by the FCAT and factors relating to the grading system, as well as the effects upon the schools. Some of the factors included issues of school morale and retention for teachers and administrators of the schools. It examined FCAT grade improvements over a one-year period with two schools and their principal and teachers and tried to determine their perceptions regarding what caused their scores to improve.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school year. A case study was developed that analyzed perceptions of factors and behaviors that have made a positive difference in two
Polk County, Florida, public elementary schools as measured by FCAT. The study was being conducted in two schools that improved their FCAT school grades by two grades from a grade C to an A or D to a B in one 9-month school year.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9-month school year. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the school’s principal role in optimizing success over the one-year period?
2. What are the principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
3. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the school’s assistant principal in optimizing success over the one-year period?
4. What are the assistant principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
5. What are the principals’ and assistant principals’ perceptions of the role of the school’s teachers in optimizing success over the one-year period?
6. What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding what their roles have been in optimizing success over the one-year period?
7. What are the principals’, assistant principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of how school climate impacts school achievement?
8. What are the perceptions of principals and teachers of how curriculum impacts school achievement?

**Population and Data Collection**

The type of data collection included interviews conducted with teachers, assistant principals and principals at two Polk County Public elementary schools. The target population, population of interest, consisted of School A and B principals and teachers. Randomly selected teachers were targeted at each school. Each teacher selected must have taught at the school during the 2004-2005 school year.

Structured interviews were the type of specific method selected for several reasons. First, structured interviews allowed the investigator to define the problem and questions (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Another reason for structured interviews is they were likely to be used in situations in which representative samples of persons are asked identical questions about something that interests the investigator (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). In this case, the sample population was asked identical questions regarding their perceptions of their school FCAT grade improvement.

Planning and setting up the interviews were the next step in data collection. Since respondents had been previously identified, the researcher established a personal contact with each school principal through a letter of introduction and then a follow up e-mail.

At the time of each interview, each participant (selected teachers, principals and assistant principals) was asked to read and sign an informed consent. There were three informed consents developed: one for principals, one for assistant principals and one for teachers.
In order to ensure the highest possible accuracy and ability to clearly understand what the respondent was saying, the researcher asked the participant for permission to use a tape recorder during all interviews. The researcher was given permission by each participant. During the interview process, School A and B principals and assistant principals, were interviewed prior to teachers. The researcher collected data at School A first (the principal’s interview was completed first, assistant principals next and then interviews with randomly selected instructional personnel). Data collection from School B followed the same pattern.

Once the principal, assistant principal and teacher interviews had taken place, there were several tasks that were completed immediately after (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The tasks were:

- interview notes were transcribed
- an e-mail was sent to each participant thanking them for his/her time and information, and
- an analysis and evaluation of interview data began, including coding, creating a code book and summarizing four main themes regarding perceptions of the administrators and teachers regarding the information shared.

When principal and assistant principal interviews were completed, all remarks were transcribed and a copy shared with each individual. An e-mail was sent to each participant thanking them for participation in the study as well as, explaining to each participant to let me know if any one of them were interested in reviewing the transcripts of their interviews. The e-mail contained Thursday, March 9, 2006 as the deadline to respond with a request for a copy for review. The e-mail also contained a deadline for
any transcript revisions from the participant. This email is located in the Appendices. In response to this e-mail, the researcher received one request for a copy of a transcript. The transcript was e-mailed to the participants and no revisions were ever received by the researcher.

**Summary of Findings/Conclusions**

**Summary of Administrator Findings**

The following is a brief summary of the findings from the four school-based administrators regarding their perceptions regarding their role in optimizing success. Each of the four respondents indicated that emotional support, financial support, data analysis of test scores and curriculum expertise as being most important. Regarding emotional support, administrators perceived their role as being personally and professionally responsible for providing emotional support to staff members, students and parents. All four viewed themselves as being responsible for keeping up morale, maintaining an open door policy for all, encouraging and supporting teamwork among staff, as well as encouraging parental and community support for the school.

**Summary of Primary Instructional Teachers Findings**

This summary regards findings from the primary instructional teachers. These teachers were more concerned with the stress on the children (due to high stakes testing) and emphasized the basic, foundational skills needed for preparation for the FCAT in grade three.

**Summary of Intermediate Instructional Teachers Findings**

This summary regards findings from the intermediate instructors. As a whole, intermediate teachers viewed administration as playing a supportive role. These teachers
seemed to take ownership of test scores and accountability. They strive for continuous improvement.

**Summary of Special Area Teacher Findings**

Finally, this summary regards findings from the special area teachers. Special area teachers as a whole viewed themselves as a supportive, facilitative group, which enhances curriculum and skills for the students. All three perceived the role of administration to be that of emotional support for staff, students and parents, both professionally and personally. Each one saw administrators as responsible for keeping up morale, maintaining an open door policy for all, encouraging teamwork and parental and community support.

**Summary of Overall Findings/Conclusions**

Several themes emerged and were common across all groups. The first theme revolves around emotional support for students, parents, families, school staff, teachers and administration. During the time of this research, three named hurricanes impacted the school district. This anomaly created a great deal of stress within each of the individual schools that participated in this study. One school was severely negatively impacted, with many students temporarily displaced due to destroyed local housing (within walking distance to the school). School structures and facilities also suffered damage that took time to repair. Students missed on average 14 school days due to power outages and the concurrent declared states of emergency. Therefore, the most recurrent theme throughout the transcripts is emotional support. This may be due to the high level of emotional, personal and professional stress teachers and administrators were faced with during the back-to-back storms that hit the district. Not only was this a time of high personal stress,
the majority of those interviewed, particularly in the primary grade levels, indicated that high stakes testing causes a great deal of stress in the school environment. Most commented on the school staffs’ and administrators’ ability to recognize this as a stressful event and openly communicate positive reinforcement for each other, as well as the students and parents affected.

The researcher expected emotional support and stress to be mentioned frequently from teachers and principals. The 2004-2005 school year was one like no other due to the disastrous weather conditions and environmental and financial conditions facing these school families.

Aside from the storm-related stress, each school, as expressed by the staff and administration, made a conscious choice to tackle school success and to improve overall school scores, despite the hurricane obstacles. Nearly all of those interviewed commented on the high level of professional and personal support they felt were necessary in order to create and nurture a positive school climate. Professional support included in-service training opportunities, one-on-one analysis of test scores (student to teacher, teacher to teacher, teacher team to administrator) and peer-mentoring among teachers, particularly pairing of new teachers with more experienced teaching staff. The majority of respondents commented on the importance of being happy where one works, as happier teachers are more dedicated and willing to go the extra mile, more willing to take on additional responsibilities, and are emotionally vested in their school.

Not only was emotional support stressed amongst all, but also professional support, training, and materials necessary to improve student learning, were made available. Each of the schools also received Title I funding that assisted financially for
curricular tools and individual tutoring for students. Title I resources did provide a revenue stream that allowed each of the schools to offer one-on-one tutoring for at-risk students, as well as purchase computer-assisted learning tools, and supplemental reading and math curricula. The majority of those interviewed commented on the Title I resources; however, it was not emphasized as a major factor in improving school success.

The researcher was not surprised by responses concerning in-service training, peer mentoring, need for materials and appreciation of the assistance from Title I funding. As a former public school teacher, assistant principal and interim principal, these are crucial areas impacting school improvement. Many schools focus school improvement based on the funding received for professional development opportunities and extra funding received through Title I to supplement the learning materials designed to fill-in gaps in curriculum. The school administrator’s and teacher’s perceptions of how school climate impacts school achievement was viewed as higher morale equaling a better school climate and a need for increased community involvement with financial support. These responses show a pattern aligned with administrators, intermediate and primary teachers’ perceptions.

Conclusions to Research Questions

The following are the researcher’s conclusions based on the study’s findings to the research question.

Question one asks: what has been the perceived role of the school’s principal in optimizing success over the one year period by teachers? The perceived role of the school’s principal in optimizing success over the one year period by teachers concludes that five of the seven total primary instructors and three of the four intermediate teachers
and all of the special area teachers perceived administrators to be responsible for emotionally supporting staff members both professionally and personally, and students and parents as well. Intermediate teachers viewed administration as playing a supportive role, as well. The primary, intermediate special area teachers perceived them to be accountable for keeping up morale, maintaining an open door police for all, supporting teamwork and encouraging parental and community support.

Research question two asks: what are the principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one year period?

The principals perceived their role in optimizing success as providing emotional support, professional and teaching support, financial support, data analysis of test scores and curriculum as being most important.

Research question three asks: what has been the perceived role of the school’s assistant principal in optimizing success over the one year period?

The perceived role of the school’s assistant principals in optimizing school success was perceived by teachers in the same way as school principals were perceived in research question one.

Research question four asks: what are the assistant principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role as been in optimizing success over the one year period?

The assistant principal’s perceptions as to what his or her role has been in optimizing success over the one year period can be answered the same as principal perceptions stated in question two. Additionally, professional teaching support was important here because the assistant principals stated they wanted to provide the teachers
with whatever they feel they need, including going into the classroom. The teachers acknowledged this, and responded they provide us with whatever we need.

Research question **five** asks: what has been the perceived role of the school’s teachers in optimizing success over the one year by the principal? In answering this question, two of the four administrators perceived the role of instructional teachers in regards to optimizing success primarily through emotional support and curriculum expertise. They perceived teachers as the ones who provide emotional and educational support personally to students, parents and other teachers. Each of the four administrators also believed the instructional role to include keeping up morale and working in teams, including providing for peer mentoring with the goal of teacher retention.

Research question **six** asks: what are the teachers’ perceptions regarding what their roles have been in optimizing success over the one year period? Each of the seven primary teachers saw value in having expert teachers who were able to modify curriculum as needed in order to meet improvement goals for individual students. Each primary teacher also perceived the instructional group to be emotionally supportive. Intermediate teachers and special area teachers felt the same regarding providing emotional support. Additionally, intermediate teachers perceived the role of instructional staff as excellent, motivated teachers, first. Intermediate and special area teachers viewed instructors as the ones charged with keeping up morale for increased school improvement and working as and encouraging teamwork.

Research question **seven** asks: What are the school administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions of how school climate impacts school achievement? The school
administrator’s and teacher’s perceptions of how school climate impacts school achievement was viewed as higher morale equaling a better school climate and a need for increased community involvement with financial support. These responses show a pattern aligned with administrators, intermediate and primary teachers’ perceptions.

Research question eight asks: What are the perceptions of principals and teachers of how curriculum impacts school achievement? Principals perceived curriculum as one where they are always seeking new ideas and strategies to improve learning and school test scores. Principals indicated that Title I funding allowed for additional curricular resources. Primary teachers did not put much emphasis on curriculum as being a key factor in overall improvement on FCAT scores. Rather they focused on their (the teacher’s) ability to find gaps in student learning and provide one-on-one tutoring or curricular tools to improve student learning. Six of the seven respondents did describe several different supplemental programs they used with individual students to bring up individual test scores. Each of the seven primary teachers and all four intermediate teachers expressed appreciation for Title I funding, as well. Intermediate teachers, however, tended to focus more on aligning the curriculum with testing gaps.

**Connections of Findings to Literature Review**

Connecting the research findings in this study to the literature review can be viewed in the following areas: aspects of high stakes testing, highly qualified staff and teacher retention, teacher mentoring, parental and community involvement.

First, there is the connection of high stakes testing found in the literature to the concerns of stress in students as previously stated in each of the primary teacher interviews. The literature states that many parents, educators and students across the
country are finding that these high stakes tests are having unforeseen and devastating consequences (http://cnnstudentnews.cnn.com/2005/fyi/05/05/cnnpce.high.stakes/). This reflects upon what each of the primary teachers mentioned as being more concerned with the stress high stakes testing places upon the children.

Next according to the literature, teacher attrition is another effect of high stakes testing (http://www.sedl.org/pubs.sedletter.v13n02/1.html). For educators around the country, the high stakes testing and other accountability systems already in place heighten the sense of urgency around teacher quality issues (http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedletter/v13n02/1.html). This literature supports the findings that principals stated regarding their perception of optimizing school success as teachers having curriculum expertise. Primary teachers also saw the value of having expert teachers who were able to modify curriculum as needed in order to meet improvement goals for individual students. Nearly all of those interviewed felt that peer mentoring among teachers and particularly the pairing of new teachers with more experienced teachers was essential.

This leads to the next area of literature that coincides with findings including teacher mentoring. Inersoll and Kralik report in The Impact of Mentoring on Teacher Retention: What the Research Says; that studies do provide empirical support for the claim that assistance for new teachers and in particular, mentoring programs have a positive impact on teachers and their retention (http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/50/36/5036.htm).

Parental and community involvement are two additional areas found in the study’s findings and literature. According to research from the Indiana Career and
Postsecondary Advancement Center, another factor in a school’s success is found in parental and community involvement (http://www.acrnetwork.org/parents/schoolsuccess.htm). Research reveals many benefits when parents are involved in their child’s education, including: higher grades and test scores; better attitudes and behavior; better school attendance; more homework completed; less chance of placement in special education; greater likelihood of graduating from high school; and better chance of enrolling in postsecondary education (http://www.acrnetwork.org/parents/schoolsuccess.htm). The study’s findings reveal comments reflecting that of the literature from one school principal as stating: “We’re all in this together, whether it’s a community person or a parent, the student needs to know we’re all working together for them to feel successful.” Another comment made by one of the school principals stated: “Parental involvement has a big impact on the achievement, the working parents who are trying to make a living and having a hard time doing it.” Another principal comment stated: “Definitely parent involvement has an impact. We have had three workshops this week at night, different grade levels each night and I was surprised to see how many kindergarten parents did not show up.”

Implications

A number of implications stemmed from this study. First, was an impact upon students, teachers, administrators and parents from the FCAT. There are many pressures placed upon the school, including all involved at the school level, to improve student test scores. Improving test scores also means schools are pressured to improve their letter grade on the Florida A Plus Plan. The two schools participating in the study were able to improve their school grade by two letter grades during one nine month school year;
however, the expectation is to continue improving by meeting increased expectations created by revised FCAT test questions on a yearly basis. Additionally, this creates a pressure upon teachers to enhance their curriculum to meet expectations of new FCAT test items and scoring criteria.

Another implication involves the stress of the hurricanes during the 2004-2005 school year. Students missed a total of 14 school days due to the storms, yet still expected to maintain attention, acquire and demonstrate skills in preparation for the test. There were no less expectations for these students than there were for other students who did not experience the same conditions.

There are also implications related to governmental policy. At this time, the state of Florida requires that all public schools administer the FCAT. This policy could change with different policymakers. Depending upon the leadership of the governor and Florida Legislature, the policies of FCAT could change. These changes could be considerable. Currently, two major candidates for Florida’s governor have stated that they do not prefer to follow the policies of the FCAT and A Plus Plan. If either of those individuals are elected and actually do not think these policies are beneficial, schools could be faced with different expectations in regards to testing, curriculum, teacher and student preparation.

Additionally, another aspect of decentralization relating to implications could be putting these schools into small learning communities (SLCs). Small learning communities could consist of grouping and examining test scores by grade level and determining the progress of a grade level or part of a level. Another model could consist
of creating vertical primary and intermediate learning communities. Principals and teachers could then focus on smaller groups of students and their progress.

Finally, there is a strong implication that principals and teachers did not actually have an answer as why their schools improved by two grade levels during the 2004-2005 school year. Many stated reasons why they thought curriculum and school climate impacted school achievement, however, there was no one conclusive answer that all or even a majority of participants stated.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Recommendations for further research could include the following: developing strategies for continued school improvement, curriculum alignment in regards to FCAT expectations, examining the impact of class size, and exploring school leadership styles and leader gender.

Since both schools must determine their school improvements plans for each year, further research could focus on developing strategies for continued school improvement. Schools could concentrate on how to improve upon areas where scores were weaker than others and develop methods through professional development in order to assist teachers in the delivery and implementation of curriculum. They would also need to develop strategies for maintaining areas of strength.

Aligning curriculum to FCAT expectations is another recommendation. There have been many years in which the FCAT expectations have changed. These changes have included areas of curriculum that are not covered thoroughly by textbooks used in the public schools. School districts do not purchase new textbooks each year based upon the changes of the FCAT. Schools would then need to be aware of these test question
revisions and additions and enhance curriculum accordingly. Future research may want to examine the trends of test reforms and review the current curriculum adopted by the Florida schools district to determine gaps found between the two entities.

Class size is another vital area that could be examined. Future research could identify the role class size plays in test preparation, test taking, and test score improvement. One could research the possibilities of test scores in smaller classes in primary grades and intermediate grades versus test scores in larger classes in primary and intermediate grades.

Leadership styles of school administrators are another area for further research, as well as, leader gender. Determining the leadership style of each school administrator including the principal and assistant principal would be an area that could greatly impact school achievement. Determining the styles and comparing to leader gender is another area, as well.

Replicating this study on a larger scale is another recommendation. This study identified two elementary schools in one Florida school district that improved their test scores by two grade levels in one school year. Further research could include other schools that achieved the same result could be included. In that study, the researcher could also identify and include teacher gender, length of service for teachers and school administrators and teaching styles implemented by teachers.

Finally, adding a comparison study is concluding recommendation. Adding this type of study including non-centralized and decentralized schools could impact the results. During this type of study, school achievement could focus upon schools
organized into learning communities. This would include smaller learning communities (SLC’s), overall.
Bibliography


California Los Angeles, The Center for Research on Evaluation Standards and Student Testing (CRESST), Research Unit of the UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies Web site: 
http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/files/goodschool.pdf


http://cnnstudentnews.cnn.com/2005/fyi/05/05/cnpce.high.stakes/


124


Hall, B.W. (personal communication, July 17, 2005)


Peterson, K. (1999). Time use flows from school culture: River of values and traditions can nurture or poison staff development hours [Electronic Journal]. *Journal of Staff Development, volume 20, number 2.*

Polk County Public Schools, Title One. (n.d.). *Welcome to tile one programs...for the learning time of your life.* Retrieved June 16, 2005, from http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/


Appendices
Appendix A

Principal Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a principal at School A/B?
2. What areas did you teach before becoming a school administrator?
3. Could you explain what you enjoy most about being a school administrator and what you find most challenging?

The researcher will alert the respondent that questions 4-9 deal with different subgroups of the school including parents, teachers, other principals and the District Office regarding what he/she thinks would be their perceptions of the school’s success and the principal’s influence on that success.

4. As the school principal, what do you think you have done in optimizing the school’s success?
5. What do you think teachers would say you have done regarding the school’s success?
6. Can you think of any other factors that have influenced the school’s success during that one year period?
7. What do you think District Office Administrators would say about your influence on the school’s success?
8. How do you think other principals, those who have not improved their grade, would say about your influence and the success of the school?
9. What do you think District Office Administrators would say about your influence on the school’s success?

The researcher will alert the respondent that the following questions deal with his/her perceptions of different school elements impact school success including school climate, high stakes testing, professional development and others.

10. How do you think school climate impacts school achievement?
11. What are your perceptions of how the socioeconomic level of students impacts school achievement?
12. Do you perceive that being a Title One school impacts school achievement? Why?
13. What are your perceptions of how high stakes testing impacts school achievement?
14. Do you believe highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacts school achievement? Please explain.
15. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impact school achievement?
16. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impact school achievement?
17. What are your perceptions of how professional development/continuous improvement impact school achievement?
18. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts school achievement?
19. What do you perceive your role as school principal can do to maintain a grade A for the upcoming school year?
20. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?
Appendix B

Assistant Principal Interview Questions
The following questions are similar to Appendix A.
1. How long have you been a principal at School A/B?
2. What areas did you teach before becoming a school administrator?
3. Could you explain what you enjoy most about being a school administrator and what you find most challenging?

The researcher will alert the respondent that questions 4-9 deal with different subgroups of the school including parents, teachers, other principals and the District Office regarding what he/she thinks would be their perceptions of the school’s success and the principal’s influence on that success.

4. As the school principal, what do you think you have done in optimizing the school’s success?
5. What do you think teachers would say you have done regarding the school’s success?
6. Can you think of any other factors that have influenced the school’s success during that one year period?
7. What do you think District Office Administrators would say about your influence on the school’s success?
8. How do you think other principals, those who have not improved their grade, would say about your influence and the success of the school?
9. What do you think parents would say about your impact on the school’s success?

The researcher will alert the respondent that the following questions deal with his/her perceptions of different school elements impact school success including school climate, high stakes testing, professional development and others.
10. How do you think school climate impacts school achievement?
11. What are your perceptions of how the socioeconomic level of students impact school achievement?
12. Do you perceive that being a Title One school impacts school achievement? Why?
13. What are your perceptions of how high stakes testing impact school achievement?
14. Do you believe highly qualified staff and teacher retention impact school achievement? Please explain.
15. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impact school achievement?
16. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impact school achievement?
17. What are your perceptions of how professional development impacted the school’s achievement?
18. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts school achievement?
19. What do you perceive your role as school principal can do to maintain a grade A for the upcoming school year?
20. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?
Appendix C

Teacher Interview Questions
1. What grade level did you teach during the 2004-2005 FCAT?
2. How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
3. Explain what you enjoy most about teaching?
4. What do you think your role as a teacher in School A/B played in the school’s success last year?
5. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?
6. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
7. How do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
8. Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?
9. If yes, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for the FCAT?
10. What do you think your student’s parents would say impacted the school’s success last year?
11. How would you explain your school’s climate last year?
12. How do you think school climate impacted the school’s achievement?
13. What are your perceptions of how student socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?
14. What are your perceptions of how being a Title One school impacts school achievement?
15. What are your thoughts of how high stakes testing impacts school achievement?
16. How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement?
17. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted school achievement?
18. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?
19. Do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?
20. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?
21. What do you perceive your role as a teacher/guidance counselor/media specialist is for maintaining a grade A for the upcoming school year?
22. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?
Appendix D
Principal/Assistant Principal Letter of Confirmation

Date

Dear:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I greatly enjoyed speaking with you and look forward to working with you and your staff.

As we discussed earlier, the amount of involvement in the study includes interviews with both administrators, interviews with randomly selected teachers who were teaching the 2004-2005 school year and one survey completed with all teachers teaching during the 2004-2005 year. All respondents will be given the opportunity after the interviews to clarify any answers.

All information gained is completely confidential and participant names are kept anonymous. The amount of risk is minimal; however, benefits include the change to increase our overall knowledge of what can help improve our schools’ FCAT grades.

This letter is to confirm our meeting/interview date scheduled for (day) and (time). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 863/682-1962 or email traceytedder@tampabay.rr.com

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tracey Duff Tedder
Appendix E

Informed Consent for Principals

Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of South Florida

Information for People Who Take Part in Research Studies

The following information is being presented to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in a minimal risk research study. Please read this carefully. If you do not understand anything, ask the person in charge of the study.

Title of Study: Perceptions of Principals and Teachers of Their Roles in Improving Their School’s Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Letter Grade by Two Grade Levels

Principal Investigator: Tracey D. Tedder

Study Location(s): Polk County Public Elementary Schools

You are being asked to participate because the study is designed to gain your thoughts as a school principal/assistant principal regarding your role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels last year from a grade C to grade A.

General Information about the Research Study

The purpose of this research study is to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9 month school year.

Plan of Study

Principals and Assistant Principals will be asked to voluntarily participate in one interview that will last no longer than 40 minutes. The participant will be given a copy of interview questions to be used during the interview and then collected at completion. All responses will be verbal and the researcher will seek permission from the participant to tape record responses.

All response information will be anonymous. Data will be kept by the researcher for three years after the study is complete and then shredded.

Payment for Participation

There will be no compensation for participation.

Benefits of Being a Part of this Research Study

By taking part in this research study, you may increase our overall knowledge of what can help improve our schools’ FCAT grades.

Risks of Being a Part of this Research Study

There are minimal risks in participating in the study due to the nature of the activities: survey completion and interviews.
Appendix E (Continued)

Confidentiality of Your Records

Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board may inspect the records from this research project.

The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from others in the publication. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way.

The informed consent documents will be stored in a secure location at the researcher’s home. Data will be kept until the study is complete and upon completion, documents will be shredded by the researcher. Data will be kept for three years after study completion.

Volunteering to Be Part of this Research Study

Your decision to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to participate in this research study or to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive, if you stop taking part in the study. There are absolutely no penalties or consequences to be removed from the study.

Questions and Contacts

• If you have any questions about this research study, contact Tracey Tedder, 863/682-1962.

• If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in This Research Study

By signing this form I agree that:

• I have fully read or have had read and explained to me this informed consent form describing this research project.

• I have had the opportunity to question one of the persons in charge of this research and have received satisfactory answers.

• I understand that I am being asked to participate in research. I understand the risks and benefits, and I freely give my consent to participate in the research project outlined in this form, under the conditions indicated in it.

• I have been given a signed copy of this informed consent form, which is mine to keep.
### Investigator Statement

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above research study. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the subject signing this consent form understands the nature, demands, risks, and benefits involved in participating in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Investigator</th>
<th>Printed Name of Investigator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_________________________</td>
<td>____________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Or authorized research investigator designated by the Principal Investigator
Appendix F

Informed Consent for Assistant Principals
Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of South Florida

Information for People Who Take Part in Research Studies

The following information is being presented to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in a minimal risk research study. Please read this carefully. If you do not understand anything, ask the person in charge of the study.

Title of Study: Perceptions of Principals and Teachers of Their Roles in Improving Their School’s Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Letter Grade by Two Grade Levels

Principal Investigator: Tracey D. Tedder
Study Location(s): Polk County Public Elementary Schools

You are being asked to participate because the study is designed to gain your thoughts as a school principal/assistant principal regarding your role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels last year from a grade C to grade A.

General Information about the Research Study

The purpose of this research study is to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9 month school year.

Plan of Study

Principals and Assistant Principals will be asked to voluntarily participate in one interview that will last no longer than 40 minutes. The participant will be given a copy of interview questions to be used during the interview and then collected at completion. All responses will be verbal and the researcher will seek permission from the participant to tape record responses.

All response information will be anonymous. Data will be kept by the researcher for three years after the study is complete and then shredded.

Payment for Participation

There will be no compensation for participation.

Benefits of Being a Part of this Research Study

By taking part in this research study, you may increase our overall knowledge of what can help improve our schools’ FCAT grades.

Risks of Being a Part of this Research Study

There are minimal risks in participating in the study due to the nature of the activities: survey completion and interviews.
Confidentiality of Your Records

Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board may inspect the records from this research project.

The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from others in the publication. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way.

The informed consent documents will be stored in a secure location at the researcher’s home. Data will be kept until the study is complete and upon completion, documents will be shredded by the researcher. Data will be kept for three years after study completion.

Volunteering to Be Part of this Research Study

Your decision to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to participate in this research study or to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive, if you stop taking part in the study. There are absolutely no penalties or consequences to be removed from the study.

Questions and Contacts

- If you have any questions about this research study, contact Tracey Tedder, 863/682-1962.
- If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in This Research Study

By signing this form I agree that:

- I have fully read or have had read and explained to me this informed consent form describing this research project.
- I have had the opportunity to question one of the persons in charge of this research and have received satisfactory answers.
- I understand that I am being asked to participate in research. I understand the risks and benefits, and I freely give my consent to participate in the research project outlined in this form, under the conditions indicated in it.
- I have been given a signed copy of this informed consent form, which is mine to keep.
Appendix F (Continued)

Signature of Participant    Printed Name of Participant    Date

**Investigator Statement**

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above research study. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the subject signing this consent form understands the nature, demands, risks, and benefits involved in participating in this study.

Signature of Investigator    Printed Name of Investigator

Date

Or authorized research investigator designated by the Principal Investigator
Appendix G

Informed Consent for Teachers
Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of South Florida

Information for People Who Take Part in Research Studies

The following information is being presented to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in a minimal risk research study. Please read this carefully. If you do not understand anything, ask the person in charge of the study.

Title of Study: Perceptions of Principals and Teachers of Their Roles in Improving Their School’s Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Letter Grade by Two Grade Levels

Principal Investigator: Tracey D. Tedder

Study Location(s):
You are being asked to participate because the study is designed to gain your thoughts as a teacher regarding your role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels last year from a grade C to grade A.

General Information about the Research Study
The purpose of this research study is to investigate perceptions of school principals, assistant principals and teachers on their role in improving the school’s FCAT letter grade by two grade levels in a 9 month school year.

Plan of Study
The plan of study includes acquiring information from teachers who worked at the school year through a survey and/or interview. All teachers will be asked to voluntarily complete a survey that will require 10-20 minutes for completion. Participants will respond to statements by indicating they strongly agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree or strongly disagree. All instructional staff will be asked to voluntarily participate in the survey.

In addition to the survey, a random group of teachers will be asked to voluntarily participate in an interview. Teacher interview questions will last approximately 20-30 minutes with the researcher asking questions to one teacher at a time, recording the information and then providing time to the review the responses for accuracy. At that time, the participants will be able to clarify any answers.

All survey and response information will be anonymous. Data will be kept by the researcher for three years after the study is complete and then shredded.

Payment for Participation
There will be no compensation for participation.
Benefits of Being a Part of this Research Study
By taking part in this research study, you may increase our overall knowledge of what can help improve our schools’ FCAT grades.

Confidentiality of Your Records
Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board may inspect the records from this research project.

The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from others in the publication. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way.

Volunteering to Be Part of this Research Study
Your decision to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to participate in this research study or to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive, if you stop taking part in the study.

Questions and Contacts
• If you have any questions about this research study, contact Tracey Tedder, 863/682-1962.
• If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in This Research Study
By signing this form I agree that:
• I have fully read or have had read and explained to me this informed consent form describing this research project.
• I have had the opportunity to question one of the persons in charge of this research and have received satisfactory answers.
• I understand that I am being asked to participate in research. I understand the risks and benefits, and I freely give my consent to participate in the research project outlined in this form, under the conditions indicated in it.
• I have been given a signed copy of this informed consent form, which is mine to keep.

Signature of Participant __________________________ Printed Name of Participant __________________________ Date ________________
Appendix G (Continued)

Investigator Statement

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above research study. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the subject signing this consent form understands the nature, demands, risks, and benefits involved in participating in this study.

Signature of Investigator or authorized research investigator designated by the Principal Investigator

Printed Name of Investigator

Date
Appendix H

Teachers’ Letter of Introduction

Date

Dear : 

Thank you for participating in my study. I am a student at the University of South Florida, College of Education, seeking a doctorate in Educational Leadership. I am a professor at Southeastern University, as well as the Director of Student Interns. Formerly, I was employed with Polk County Public Schools as an elementary and secondary classroom teacher, guidance counselor and elementary assistant principal.

My dissertation is titled “Perceptions of Principals and Teachers of Their Roles in Improving Their School’s Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Letter Grade by Two Grade Levels.” Your school was selected due to its grade improvement from a C to a grade A during the 2004-2005 school year.

The purpose of the study is to gain information on how teachers and principals think the grade improvement occurred. Time involved is minimal and should only be limited to a possible interview and survey. Additionally, there is no risk involved participation; however, benefits include that your participation could increase our overall knowledge of what can help improve our schools’ FCAT grades across the district. All participant information is confidential and names are anonymous.

Again, thank you for your time and information. I look forward to working with you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 863/682-1962 or email traceytedder@tampabay.rr.com

Sincerely,

Tracey Duff Tedder
Appendix I
Interview Transcripts

School A, Interview 1
(Principal)

Interviewer: How long have you been a principal at your school?
Interviewee: This has been my eleventh year on just the ____campus, seven years, and then both campuses combined four years for a total of -- well, that would be twelve, wouldn’t it? Twelve.

Interviewer: What areas did you teach before becoming a school administrator?
Interviewee: I’ve taught kindergarten, first grade. I was a reading recovery teacher, early discovery teacher in fourth grade.

Interviewer: Could you explain what you enjoy most about being a school administrator and what you find most challenging?
Interviewee: I think what I enjoy most is helping children, because I’ve been in this thirty-three years, and in watching them grow and watching the improvements and the gains that the children make and helping people. Most challenging, I think, now is all of the NCLB rules and laws, (inaudible) very discouraging, FCAT very discouraging. I think that this may come up later in other questions, but I watch my teachers say we can’t have fun anymore, you know, there is no joy. I’m not saying there is no joy, but you can’t have the same joy that you had in teaching because of (inaudible), and then the challenges, of course, of parents who don’t realize how important their child’s education is.

Interviewer: As a school principal, what do you think you have done in optimizing the school’s success?
Interviewee: I think just making sure that our curriculum does match the Sunshine State standards, know what needs to be taught, what you have to teach, and I think being a cheerleader for the teachers. We were fortunate back when we combined the two schools that finally now the curriculum does flow from the third grade to the fourth and fifth grade, so that’s been a big asset. And I think just being a cheerleader for the teachers, being here to be able to try to get them anything they need, including if I need to go in and help teach a class, I’ll do that.

Interviewer: What do you think teachers would say you’ve done regarding the school’s success?
Interviewee: I think, again, probably my support of them, hopefully, of being supportive, being able and willing to spend the funds that I have on anything that they need for instructional purposes in the classroom, not holding those funds, and making sure that they have what they need in the classroom.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: The following questions deal more specifically with the year, the ‘04 - ‘05 school year, that your school was an A school. Can you think of any other factors that have influenced the school’s success during that one-year period?

Interviewee: That was the year of the hurricanes. Our little school and little county got hit by all three hurricanes. We faced a lot of difficulties during that year. I had a reporter say, “Do you think the hurricanes helped you make an A?” Certainly not, but I guess the teachers -- we have always been focused -- knew that from missing fifteen days of school, we really had to focus, and, like I said, the teachers have always been focused. I think, again, just the (inaudible), the Harcourt series, being comfortable with that because it’s been in place now for three years, and just all those (inaudible) processes that we’ve done helped. But no, not the hurricanes, we did a lot of praying and it was amazing that we did come out as well with missing that many days of school, but I think just really, really focused.

Interviewer: What do you think District Office Administrators would say about your influence on the school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, the new superintendent did come down to check on us (inaudible) the hurricanes, and then invited (inaudible).

Interviewer: How do you think other principals, those who did not improved their grade, would say about your influence on the success of the school?

Interviewee: That’s kind of hard for me to answer. As a principal of the school who has not always been an A, this is the first time. The campus was before I was able to go over too, but it’s so hard. Last year we were a C. This year we’re an A. We might be a C again next year, because of that one-day test, so other principals, I think the others are proud, you know, and pleased and happy for us as I have been for them when they’ve made their As, but just as principals, we know that a one-day test or a couple days is a very short snapshot and it’s a very unfair way to evaluate our schools, but we just hopefully pray each year that again we make these gains. It’s just hard to say about that as far as my influence on the success of the school, I’m sure they -- and they have congratulated me, but it’s not me, it’s (inaudible).

Interviewer: What do you perceive parents would say about your impact on the school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, our parents are very excited about their children. We have, since we didn’t make (inaudible) we were provisional, it’s not good enough, because that means nothing now. (Inaudible) it’s just a word that they use, but our parents had a chance to send their children to other schools. They had a chance to send them to
Appendix I (Continued)

(inaudible), send them to private schools. They had the vouchers and the (inaudible) and all these things that they could do, and I think we lost two children, ones that didn’t come back. So I think the parents are pleased with our score, whether it’s an A or maybe it’s a C, they (inaudible). We haven’t seen any children leaving, maybe one.

Interviewer: How do you think school climate impacts school achievement?
Interviewee: You better have a positive climate, you know, one where the children are safe, not only safe, but are happy. I talk to teachers about this all the time, making sure our children know they’re safe here. This is their happy place, because most of our children, not most, but a big majority don’t come from happy places at home, and teachers need to love them, and we talk about it all the time, how are we doing. It needs to be a happy place and can it be happy all the time? Of course not. You know there are times that the teachers have to be stern with children, but I want this place to be happy, and I want it to be a learning environment where they are risk free, able to take risks as children, just like the teachers are able to take risks, so, yeah, the experience that a school climate is very important for all children.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how the socioeconomic level of students impacts the school’s achievement?
Interviewee: Well, we’re almost, right now, at seventy-eight percent (inaudible), so that does have a big impact. Do I think all children can learn? Of course they can, but I was discussing this with a teacher yesterday who had actually taken a child home and got a real rude awakening. When we expect these children to come back with homework every day, that when you go home and there is no table for them to sit at to do their homework, there is no paper, there are no pencils in the house. That socioeconomic level we have to make sure they have that (inaudible). Another thing, we had a workshop Monday night, was to give socioeconomic impacts. At the workshop, one of our Hispanic parents came, got called out before the workshop, (inaudible) and let us know that she had received a phone call that her husband had been trying to cross the border and had been arrested. I immediately got in touch with that teacher and said that if this child comes in without homework tomorrow, please understand why. So, yes, I think those things we want to meet the needs of our children. I think one of the good things that the hurricane did for us is that we were, different churches from out-of-state, different schools collected money and we put it into a child welfare can. I know after being in this thirty-three years, that if a child is tired or hungry that day, (inaudible)
Appendix I (Continued)

doesn’t mean anything to them, and our teachers know that. So now we have money. I just went to Wal-Mart last week and got more jeans and winter clothes. So I think we’re very focused on that and since we do have such a low socioeconomic level, our teachers know, they are tuned into it. If a child is hungry, immediately send them to the breakfast that morning or in the middle of the day. So it has a big impact on the achievement, as well as the parents, the working parents, who are trying to make a living and having a hard time doing it. It’s hard for them to pay for the truck. It’s hard for them to come to the conferences with the teachers, and, again, our teachers are good about coming at 6:30 in the morning and staying till 7:00 at night. So it does have a big impact.

Interviewer: Do you perceive that being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: One way -- because I’ve been in both non-Title 1 and Title 1 -- until this year when we had such a good funding cut with Title 1 because of these outside tutoring. They are giving the money to that now, but until then, it has to enhance the student achievement just simply because I can purchase anything that I need for the teachers in the classroom. Do I think that bells and whistles and programs do it? No, the teacher in the classroom does it, but when that teacher has enough computers, when that teacher has enough school supplies, and hands-on science (inaudible) and math (inaudible), reading libraries, you know, library books for the children in the classroom. Does it impact achievement? Sure, it does. Sure it does, because as a teacher in a non-Title 1 school, that I had a hundred dollars a year to buy every supply that I needed for my children, and waited for the day that I could have classroom dictionaries, so just simple things. So, yes, I believe that it does have an impact on achievement.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: How much tape do you have? Our achievement has gone up, students are learning. I wonder how much will be retained. We do a lot of hands-on, our math centers are very hands-on, so I know they are going to retain it, but I see children coming to school sick, throwing up during tests. I see teachers threatening to throw up. I see principals who are about to throw up. I think the high-stakes testing is not necessary. Do I believe in accountability? Most certainly, most certainly, but let us use these ongoing assessments that we use throughout the school year, not a one-day high-stakes test, because even the smart child who feels bad that day may not
Appendix I (Continued)

score well. My low child who cruises through and gets lucky, looks really good that day, although we know they’re not. So let’s use the ongoing assessments, the constant assessments that give us the AR reports, the teacher-made tests, just good teacher sense and judgment. That high-stakes, it affects achievement, sure, because we’re all scared to death. Third grade parents are terrified that their children aren’t going to pass. Third grade teachers are terrified that their children aren’t going to pass, as well as I am. They’re learning, but would they be learning without that? Yes, they would. Would they remember it when they get to make Stone Soup and measure the ingredients? Would they would have time for that now? Very little.

Interviewer: Do you believe highly qualified staff and teacher retention impact school achievement?

Interviewee: Highly qualified staff, yes, because the teachers need to know if they are not a kindergarten teacher and have not been trained in that, they need to -- there are people out there who came from business background and are doing a wonderful job. I think just the little test that they’re taking now does not make them qualified, but they really need -- we put them with a peer teacher, and that is what helps them teach kindergarten. As we know, in education classes, the things that you learn in those courses help, but until you get your feet wet in that classroom, you know, it doesn’t -- so, highly qualified, yes. Teacher retention, definitely because the teachers who have been here and many of our teachers have been here, twenty, thirty years. They know the community. They know the students. They know the school fondly, and, yes, they are much more comfortable and able to do. Then a new teacher -- I bet it takes that new teacher awhile to catch on to what’s going on, of course, and get to know the community. So, yeah, I believe it does impact.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impact school achievement?

Interviewee: The mentoring programs that I’m familiar with, of course, are the ones here at the school, where we give them a peer teacher, and we try to put them with the best teacher available in that grade level and it helps, because that new teacher, especially if they’re not highly qualified, they need help. Yeah, I believe those programs at the school level -- they’ve started some new mentoring program this year with beginning teachers -- I don’t know the name of it -- but I’m not so sure. I don’t know enough about it yet, but the ones at the school level where we put them with a peer teacher, yes, definitely for that new teacher to have support is important.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impact school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, definitely parental involvement. We have had three workshops this week at night, different grade levels each night, and I was surprised to see how many kindergarten parents did not show up. In a classroom of twenty children, they were fortunate if they had several parents, and I think, well, this is your child's first experience (inaudible). It picked up a little bit in third grade because, like I said, they want to hear about the test and how they can help their children. It slacks off again in fourth and fifth grade, but, yes, does it impact school achievement? Most definitely. If those parents, the ones that we can get in here, and say (inaudible), here are the things that you can do, if the child is having problems, have parent conferences. Yeah, that parent knows what to they need to do with them. So, yes, if a parent is involved, definitely we preach that constantly and try to always find more ways. Community involvement is great, too. Right now we’ve got a couple business partners in our community. Mosaic is a good business partner. They send mentors down, money, if we need something, so, yes, I think community involvement and community involvement to support our teachers and in a small community like this, you need those positive (inaudible), and so, yes, community involvement (inaudible) is a good positive image for our school.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how professional development or continuous improvement impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Professional development, we’ve always found is from the teachers for training and that they’ve come back in summer. Very seldom do we bring in somebody from outside, because that outsider, although they may be an expert in their field, they don’t know our children. They don’t know what’s going on here at school. I hear great suggestions and ideas may not work for us. Some may. Some may not, but what I’ve found now is I send teachers to the different conferences or to training, and those teachers come back and (inaudible) because they know what they need. They know what’s good for us, and does that have an impact? Oh, yes, definitely it does have an impact on student achievement. For example, I sent teachers to observe Cathy Robinson Math. We did the writing, too, but the math center, third grade (inaudible). They went to some of the training, came back, observed some other classrooms, schools that were doing that, and we implemented that math and our math scores are going
Appendix I (Continued)

up, gone off the wall. But, now, our teachers have taught our teachers. Our students have taught our students whenever the math centers are going on, we bring a whole classroom to a third grade class who is working on it, and the students teach them.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, as a teacher and a principal, as a teacher, I knew the magic number, anything over twenty-four, you were dead in the water. Not really, but it’s just much more difficult with your proofing, with having time to spend individual time with the students, and as a principal, it’s just much easier to have a smaller class. (Inaudible) So I do believe that it affects achievement simply because if you have twenty-eight kids in a class, you are not going to get around to each one of them as quickly as you are if you have eighteen to twenty.

Interviewer: What do you perceive your role as a school principal can do to maintain a Grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: As school principal, I can encourage. Again, I can make sure my teachers have what they need to be (inaudible). We look at data, (inaudible) the data. We know exactly which children, where they are, what they need, who needs to come up. We’re constantly calling children in (inaudible). So we know where kids are. We know what their needs are. We look at data constantly. What can I do to keep it an A? I don’t know other than that, because our fear now (inaudible). This is our third year. We are not a (inaudible). The stakes are going up next year. The FCAT levels are going up. So no matter how close we get to our head being out of the water, more water is dumped in. Teachers are very discouraged because if we don’t make A this year, then it starts and then we’re going to do something to you. We don’t know what. I think the thing I can do now is try to be a positive influence for the teachers, encourage them to stay, forget about (inaudible), do what you can do, but the stakes are going up, yes, we know, which is very defeating for me. We’ve made an A. We’re on top of the mountain. And I think it’s very discouraging too, for teachers to know that by the year 2014 that a hundred percent of their children (inaudible). So we’ve come such a long way, and all I can do now is be an encourager, and say, “Keep going. Keep your head up. Keep your chin up. Our kids are doing good. They’re learning better than (inaudible).

Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

151
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: Probably one thing that I don’t think I’ve mentioned is high expectations because we have that. I mean, that’s the thing that I preach all the time is high expectation to these children, because if they don’t think we think they can, they can’t. Letting the little one know, making him think he’s the smartest one in the classroom even though he is ESE and all those difficult problems that he may have, but let him think he is great and is going to do a good job. We’ve have been given the ones that we have targeted. They are the Level Ones that need to come up to Level Twos. We buy the little notepads with an A and whenever they go out, we talk about this is where you are. You are only a few points from being a Level Three, you know, and we give them that A, just that encouragement and say you can do it. So I think high expectations, knowing that our children can make their own way. They all may not learn at the same pace, and they all don’t learn at the same time, but, yes, they can learn and expecting my staff to have (inaudible). So that’s probably one thing that I didn’t talk about. I think that maybe one of the most important things is having high expectations.
Appendix I (Continued)

School A, Interview 2
(Assistant Principal)

Interviewer: How long have you been an assistant principal here?
Interviewee: A year and a half, but before that I was here several years ago as a teacher resource, which is the same thing as assistant principal, just not the title.

Interviewer: What areas did you teach before becoming a school administrator?
Interviewee: My certification is elementary ed. My first year I taught sixth grade, and after that, I taught first grade for about eight, nine years.

Interviewer: Could you explain most about being a school administrator and what you find most challenging?
Interviewee: I think what I enjoy most is being able to help teachers find what they need necessary in order to help the kids learn, and I think the most challenging part is getting some of our unmotivated students motivated. It’s hard to do that, and it’s hard to get those parents of those unmotivated kids involved.

Interviewer: As the school assistant principal, what do you think you have done in optimizing the school’s success?
Interviewee: When I came to ____________, they were already doing some great things as far as raise those test scores, and I think coming in not changing a lot, but just piggybacking on what they were already doing, and one of the things that I think has really, you know, been wonderful for us and what is working is I’m meeting with each one of my students individually, telling where they are at as far as their test scores are, how many points they need to make it to the next level, looking at grades, and I think the greatest thing probably is analyzing the test data.

Interviewer: What do you think teachers would say you have done regarding the school’s success?
Interviewee: Maybe just supporting them, as far as discipline goes and meeting with the kids.

Interviewer: The beginning of Question 6, you will find there are a few questions that refer to during that one-year period, and the one-year period that we are focusing on is the ‘04 - ‘05 school year, when the C to an A occurred. Can you think of any other factors that have influenced the school’s success during that one-year period?
Interviewee: I can’t really think of anything unless maybe everybody thought we would do so poorly because of the hurricanes. Instead, I think that inspired us to work even harder. So if anything, I would
Appendix I (Continued)

probably say the devastation from the hurricanes, because that just encouraged us to work even harder to prove everybody wrong.

Interviewer: What do you think District Office Administrators would say about your influence on the school’s success?

Interviewee: I’m not sure. I hope they would say that we implemented everything that they’ve asked us to do and we’re following the guidelines that they’ve set, but yet we’ve incorporated our own creative ideas where necessary in order to raise it.

Interviewer: How do you think other principals, those who have not improved their grade, would say about your influence in the success of the school?

Interviewee: I’m not really sure. I don’t know how to answer that. I think that maybe they would just maybe not necessarily say anything, but maybe ask a question, “What have you done differently? What are you doing that we’re not doing?”

Interviewer: What do you perceive parents would say about your impact on the school’s success?

Interviewee: I think the parents that have actually made comments, which we’ve had parents make comments, it’s mainly just “thank-you for caring about our kids, for supporting our kids and for caring about our kids.”

Interviewer: How do you think school climate impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think it’s very important to the achievement of the school.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how the socioeconomic level of students impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think the socioeconomic does play into how the students achieve, how much success they have, how successful even they feel, you know, because a lot of times, they have such a hard time at home, they come to school and this is their safe place. So sometimes you’ve got students who are, you know, from different socioeconomic backgrounds to where they don’t perform as well, and then you’ve got others, who this is the only place they are successful because home is so hard.

Interviewer: Do you perceive that being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement and why?

Interviewee: I don’t think it affects us negatively. I think that because of the money that is attached to Title 1, maybe we’re able to buy some extra things for our classrooms and maybe it helps us instead of hurts us in some way. The actual title of Title 1 now, the socioeconomic is still there, which makes us Title 1, so again, that can have a different impact, but the actual Title 1 itself, you know, the good thing is the amount of money we are able to use for the classroom. It even allows us to buy extra staff, whereas that kind
Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think the high-stakes testing, I don’t know that it necessarily impacts on the students’ work because we try to not -- yes, we mentioned FCAT, and yes, we’re working on FCAT, but it doesn’t dominate every thought in our teachers’ classrooms. I just know it puts a lot of pressure on teachers, but not necessarily the achievement.

Interviewer: Do you believe highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Absolutely. I think it’s very important that we get highly qualified staff in our classrooms, because if they haven’t had the background and the necessary knowledge, how are they going to teach the students the things they need for the testing itself, or just learning in general. And I also think it’s important that we retain teachers because they need to love what they’re doing. If they don’t like what they’re doing, if they don’t love it, then they’re not going to be effective in the classroom.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impact school achievement?

Interviewee: I’m not real sure how it impacts school achievement. I think it impacts teacher morale and therefore, the teacher morale would transfer over into school achievement, maybe.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think both of those have a high impact on the school achievement because basically, we’re all in this together, whether it’s a community person or a parent, the students need to know we’re all working together for them to feel successful.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how professional development impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I think the reading professional development that we’ve had last school year, I think that helped. We did a lot with struggling readers, which were actually continuing into this school year. Also, our writing that we’ve reviewed with the Cathy Robinson writing and that kind of things, that had a great deal to do with our school’s achievement.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I mean, just with anything, class size, school size, I think the smaller the school, the better it is because you’ve got more one-on-one attention with the students.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: What do you perceive your role as school assistant principal can do to maintain a Grade A through this school year?

Interviewee: I think one of the things that I mentioned earlier, meeting with the students and letting them see, okay, we got an A last year, but in order to maintain that A this year, you’re going to have to do this in order to get your score. So many of our kids, okay, it’s FCAT, but what does that mean? You know, we say FCAT, FCAT, they work on it all year, but then nobody ever explains their scores to them. They give them a score report, they take it home, but I think the kids need to know this is what it means to have this score. And when I meet with them, I look at them, if you were a level three last year, what do you need to maintain a three this year? How many points have you got to come up for a four? How many points have you got to have to come up to a five? We also look at their grades. When report cards came out, we looked at those and looked at where they’re at this nine weeks, you know, with the midterm, and we said, “Okay, how is this going to affect your rest scores?” So I think we just maintaining what we’re at.

Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: I don’t think so.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and information.
Appendix I (Continued)

School A, Interview 3
(Reading Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the ‘04 - ‘05 FCAT?
Interviewee: I taught first grade.

Interviewer: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: I’ve been a teacher for seven years, this is my seventh year. My first two years of teaching, I taught third grade, and then I went to first grade.

Interviewer: So then you’ve given the FCAT, then, many times.
Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.
Interviewee: I think making a difference in the child’s life and I think my favorite part is to see how they grow, especially in first grade from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, how they’ve blossomed. It’s just exciting to me, most of them are not able to read and then by the end of the year, they’re reading. I don’t know, it’s just very, I don’t think you could explain it to somebody that hasn’t been a teacher, you know. I just tell them it’s rewarding, very rewarding.

Interviewer: What do you think your role as a teacher at _____________ played in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I guess teaching the curriculum that I was supposed to be teaching and making sure that I stayed focus on the central State standards and covering them all, and just guiding the children and doing it on the different levels that they were at.

Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I think her role -- she’s an excellent principal -- and I think she guides us to where we need to be going, and shows us -- she’s excellent and anything we need, providing any materials we need, if we see some material that has been presented to us, like, maybe at a conference or something, and we think it’s great, reading, math, whatever, she’ll purchase it. She will stand behind that, but I think overall, she is an excellent leader in all ways. She shows us, tells us where we need to go and this is how we’re going to do it, and she’s open to suggestions.

Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: I would say the assistant principal, she’s almost just like the principal as far as guiding us. She’s an excellent leader, too, an excellent role model. She will assist us in any way she can and backs us up with any problems, so she’s just as good to me as the principal. I mean, she’s excellent. Both of them are.

Interviewer: How do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?

Interviewee: I think making sure -- I think I’ve said before - just making sure we all follow the Sunshine State standards and really have a goal, and our goal was to be an A school. So I think that all of us worked very hard, spent many hours after 3:30, when you are supposed to leave or can leave, preparing the curriculum and preparing things for the children.

Interviewer: This is a little bit different as a reading coach and as a first grade teacher last year, so I’ll reword it just a little bit.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Were any students that perhaps you had in first grade that have remained here until third grade, that were in third grade last year, are you aware of how any of your students that you had in first grade performed on the FCAT in third grade on an individual basis?

Interviewee: Some of them, yes. Very few, just teacher talk. I’d go check on the students that I have. How did this student do on that?

Interviewer: If yes to Question Number 8, how do you perceive this has impacted your teaching techniques in preparing for the FCAT? And maybe that would be a question better prepared for you to answer speaking as the reading coach, and how you better prepare those students that you work with for the FCAT?

Interviewee: Okay. I guess seeing their needs at the different levels, and now I’m able as a reading coach to really get into the different classrooms and see exactly the curriculum and provide them different techniques in reading.

Interviewer: What do you think -- I’m going to take out the word, “your,” and just leave students’ parents would say impacted the school’s success last year? Now if you can think of any specific parents of your students at that time, that’s fine, but since you’ve probably worked with all of the kids or many of the students, I’ll let you answer that either way.
Interviewee: I guess just being, I guess I’ll think about my families that I had last year. Letting them, informing them of exactly what their child needs to be doing, have parent conferences and really keeping them involved, trying to keep them involved. We don’t get all of them, but wanting them to be there, telling them that you need them. I had to build a relationship with my parents, kind of just laid it out, said this is what we’re doing, this is what we need to be doing at home, please help me, you know, I need you. I need your help. I do need them.

Interviewer: How would you explain your school’s climate last year?

Interviewee: I would say it was a little stressful last year, due to different hurricanes that we had go through here and we were out of school for sixteen days. We kept a positive attitude, the teachers did. We were a little stressed out. We worried about that because of everything that the children had been through. They would come back to school and talk about the trees going through their house, and the windows being broken, and having nothing to eat and drink. So they were real worried, very, very concerned for the children. It was almost like everybody came together and had other businesses provide money and went and purchased clothes and food and drinks for the children, so it was very positive, but very stressful.

Interviewer: How do you think school climate impacted the school’s achievement last year?

Interviewee: It helped. I mean, obviously, how we reacted and responded through the hurricanes and keeping it positive and letting them know it was okay, and let them talk about it. That was one thing that I did in my classroom for weeks. Each morning we would talk about and we would demonstrate things in first grade, we illustrate things that went on during the hurricane and we’d let them share, and if they were scared, it was okay. So just to let them know it was okay, you know, it will be all right. Their family will be all right, that this is a hard time, but it’s okay.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how student socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: We do have a lower socioeconomic (inaudible). We do have a lot of students on (inaudible) lunch, a very high percentage, and I think it’s even more important in a community like this to be very supportive and reach out to the kids because they are coming from all different levels. It’s just important to be able to relate to the kids on their level, and let them know that
Appendix I (Continued)

we’re here. We’re going to learn. Some of them don’t speak English.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Being a Title 1 school, we get extra funding, so therefore, we’re able to, you know, when I was talking about the materials that we need or ask for, it’s ordered and we get it and I think that that helps us. Being a Title 1 school, we get more funds, and so we’re able to purchase more things that we need to provide the students.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think that there is so much emphasis put on the FCAT that it scares parents and children. I think there is too much emphasis on it. The first two years I taught third grade it wasn’t as bad, but it’s almost like you’ve got to teach for the test, and I just feel like there is too much emphasis put on it, but it has to be like that.

Interviewer: How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement? And when I talk about highly qualified staff, the new “No Child Left Behind Act,” it talks about teachers being certified in their areas, specifically, and that makes them highly qualified. So there are a lot of teachers out there that come from out of field and they’d like to really be teachers or not be, but they’re not deemed highly qualified until they get that certificate in that specific area. So there is kind of two parts there to the question. Do you think being highly qualified in your area impacts student achievement, and do you think having those teachers that remain in the same grade level or even just at the same school, year after year after year, do you think that impacts student achievement?

Interviewee: I think that the teacher needs to be highly qualified. I think that is an impact in students’ achievement and I also feel like -- when I was in first grade, each year I learned more and more, and so I think that teacher retention is great because you learn more and more and get more comfortable at what you’re doing.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted school achievement?

Interviewee: I think that is important, too, because if you do have a teacher that is coming from out-of-field, and they’ve never been in a classroom before – I know we did have one last year in kindergarten – and we had our IST, instruction support teacher, stay in there with her for, I know the first couple weeks, to show her the routines that, the
Appendix I (Continued)

curriculum, how things were done and so it’s very important to have a mentor teacher if they’re coming from out-of-field.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Like I said before, it’s very important for the parents to be involved. Some of them will never be, no matter what you do, but they have to back you up at home. They have to reinforce the skills at home, and so it’s important for them to do their job too, as the teacher does. It’s important for them to do their job at home and reinforce the skills at home, and our community involvement, I think, could be a little more. You know, we don’t have as much in the way of community involvement as needed.

Interviewer: Do you think professional development impacted the school’s development, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: Yes, professional development is very important. I know that I went to a math professional development and to the Cathy Robinson (inaudible) and it just really reinforced the Sunshine State standards and the different skills that were being taught. It allowed me to do some different teaching and show them different ways, and so, yes, it’s very important to go to professional development.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success, and you can think of that as the entire population of the school or if you want to narrow it down to the sizes of the classroom and how that might impact the teachers’ ability or --

Interviewee: I think that as far as classroom size and how many students you have in there, if you have less students, you give a lot more (inaudible) and you differentiate what they learn. Weaker students and I guess teach to their needs, but when you have a classroom where teachers feel overwhelmed and just very unsure it’s very hard to reach all of them, so I think that having a small classroom size as far as where the students are needed.

Interviewer: What do you perceive in your role as a reading coach is for maintaining a Grade A for this school year would be?

Interviewee: My role is to go and assist the teachers in different reading strategies, give them different ways of teaching the reading, you know, role model. We did first-grade instruction. I did a (inaudible) on just classrooms libraries, and it’s amazing to me the week before we left, how these teachers (inaudible) baskets, and students are reading books more and they are more interested in the classroom library.

161
Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: No, I think we’ve covered them all, everything that is important, the staff, administration.
Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the 2004-2005 FCAT?
Interviewee: First grade.
Interviewer: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: This will be my fourth year and I’ve always taught first grade.
Interviewer: Explain what you enjoy most about teaching?
Interviewee: Watching the kids learn.
Interviewer: What do you think your role as a teacher in ____________ played in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: Teaching them everything that they needed to do in first grade to help them with the FCAT in the third grade.
Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I’m sorry. I skipped to Number 6. Let’s go back to Number 5. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: She has done really well working with us and our needs and the kids and anything that we need, and stuff like that, especially after we had the hurricanes and stuff last year.
Interviewer: We’ll go back to six now. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: A lot of it is, she does our testing, which is good. It organizes all that. It goes real smoothly and our discipline.
Interviewer: How do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
Interviewee: I just think that we really have a good school staff here, and everyone does what they are supposed to and we all enjoy the kids, and we try to do our best.
Interviewer: Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis? I know you teach first grade, so your kids didn’t take it, but maybe I can rephrase it a little bit. Are you aware of any students that you had in the past and how they progressed and gone on to do on the FCAT beginning in third grade.
Interviewee: Right. They did very well, actually. We don’t have a whole lot that don’t pass the FCAT. I check on them every once in awhile.
Interviewer: If yes, how do you perceive that this has impacted your teaching
techniques, especially last year when you were trying to help
prepare those first graders to move on to second grade, and then
move on to third?

Interviewee: I always try and make it harder for them. Every year I expect more
from them, so my kids are doing a whole lot better this year than
they did last year, because I expect a whole lot more from them, so
each year it progresses.

Interviewer: What do you think your students’ parents would say impacted the
school’s success last year?

Interviewee: I guess they’d say the teachers and our whole administration and
staff, how well they did. We don’t have a whole lot of complaints,
so, I mean, we have some, but I guess how well we work with the
kids and the programs we have here for them.

Interviewer: How would you explain your school’s climate last year?

Interviewee: It was actually better than any other year because of what we went
through, so I think it was one of our best years, and that is
strange, because we went from C to an A (inaudible).

Interviewer: How do you think school climate impacted the school’s
achievement?

Interviewee: I think it makes a whole lot of difference. When your
administration and your staff are getting along and they work
together, then that makes the kids and their scores --

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how students’ socioeconomic levels
impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I always think it hurts us, because we don’t have a whole lot of
parent involvement. I guess we have to take their (inaudible), so
we try to do that. We don’t know anything else, so we just do that
normally.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts
school achievement?

Interviewee: I know that we do get a lot of money from that to help our kids,
leapfrogs and stuff like, so I guess that really helps it because we
get a lot of extracurricular tools to help teach the kids.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts school
achievement?

Interviewee: I think it’s sad. One thing they always say that we teach the test,
but, you know, if you have kids come from different schools, I
guess, private schools or something, that don’t teach to the test,
then they are not so far advanced as our kids because they have to
learn or they don’t pass. So I guess that is good in that way, but
the pressure on the kids is sad, for them to be under that, to
have that much pressure on them. But it does help in one way.
They do learn a lot because they have to.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I guess it shows in our grade. We went from a C to an A.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school last year?

Interviewee: I didn’t ever have to do that, I guess, because I was accredited. It helps the teachers that come from different degrees, I guess. We had a kindergarten teacher that was a business degree, and they had a teacher mentor in there. Is that what you mean or do you mean --

Interviewer: That’s exactly what I mean.

Interviewee: Okay, and it helped her a lot because she wouldn’t have known what to do or anything like that, so it does help our teachers that are just starting off. I don’t know if beginning teachers have that.

Interviewer: It depends on if they’ve graduated from a teacher program --

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: -- like a Florida teaching program. I know at one time if you graduate from the University of Alabama and you came here, they said you graduated from an accredited program, but it wasn’t a Florida program, so you have to go through the mentoring program, and it got real expensive, because those mentoring teachers, they had to go through training, and they have to pay the people to go train them, but then they get a stipend. It used to be, like, $800 or something.

Interviewee: I think it is. I was just going to take a course this summer online to do that. It’s a good amount of money.

Interviewer: It’s expensive, because, you know, you work with them and it’s kind of fun to come and see what other teachers are doing --

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: -- and you get to tell them what you’re doing, but it’s expensive. It’s real expensive for the school district and for the state, you know --

Interviewee: Right, but they need it.

Interviewer: They need it, exactly, because there are so many teachers now that are coming out with business degrees. They’ve never been in a classroom with students.

Interviewee: It does help.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Well, our parental involvement, like I said, is not so good, but our community involvement at least, and I guess because we’re from a small town, they donate a lot of stuff and field trips just around town that we can walk to, and I think they help, and we do have a
Appendix I (Continued)

lot of parents that help a lot, too. We can count on them any time.

Interviewer: Do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: I think it does help. You learn a lot of new things, especially from the older teachers, but training I participated in last year. Let’s see. I went to a Cathy Robinson, we did the (inaudible) Centers last year. Let’s see. Last summer, was that the Reading First? We have stuff here that they do.

Interviewer: Can you think of anything here that you all may have done, here at school?

Interviewee: We do Roger (inaudible) and those strategies. We do technology training. We’re certified.

Interviewer: Have you all done any of the (intelligible) training?

Interviewee: Not us, specifically, it was given.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, our classroom size varies from, like, seventeen and last year, I had seventeen. This year I have twenty-two. I think it matters. I guess if you have a smaller class, you’ll do a whole lot better than if you had a larger class. Then again, I don’t see a difference when you have seventeen or you’ve got twenty-two, they’re still (inaudible). We have parents that come in.

Interviewer: How often do they come in?

Interviewee: Every day. They work with the lower students in reading.

Interviewer: What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a Grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: Like I said before, just making my standards harder and expecting more from them, just keep doing what I’ve been doing and just try to get through with what I’m doing each year.

Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: That’s a hard one. Any other factors -- we discussed the administration, the staff, the parents, the role of the teacher, the community. I guess just -- our belief in the kids and what we went through.
Appendix I (Continued)

School A, Interview 4
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the 2004-2005 FCAT?
Interviewee: First grade.

Interviewer: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: This will be my fourth year and I’ve always taught first grade.

Interviewer: Explain what you enjoy most about teaching?
Interviewee: Watching the kids learn.

Interviewer: What do you think your role as a teacher in __________ played in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: Teaching them everything that they needed to do in first grade to help them with the FCAT in the third grade.

Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I’m sorry. I skipped to Number 6. Let’s go back to Number 5. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: She has done really well working with us and our needs and the kids and anything that we need, and stuff like that, especially after we had the hurricanes and stuff last year.

Interviewer: We’ll go back to six now. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: A lot of it is, she does our testing, which is good. It organizes all that. It goes real smoothly and our discipline.

Interviewer: How do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
Interviewee: I just think that we really have a good school staff here, and everyone does what they are supposed to and we all enjoy the kids, and we try to do our best.

Interviewer: Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis? I know you teach first grade, so your kids didn’t take it, but maybe I can rephrase it a little bit. Are you aware of any students that you had in the past and how they progressed and gone on to do on the FCAT beginning in third grade.
Interviewee: Right. They did very well, actually. We don’t have a whole lot that don’t pass the FCAT. I check on them every once in awhile.

Interviewer: If yes, how do you perceive that this has impacted your teaching techniques, especially last year when you were trying to help
prepare those first graders to move on to second grade, and then move on to third?

Interviewee: I always try and make it harder for them. Every year I expect more from them, so my kids are doing a whole lot better this year than they did last year, because I expect a whole lot more from them, so each year it progresses.

Interviewer: What do you think your students’ parents would say impacted the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: I guess they’d say the teachers and our whole administration and staff, how well they did. We don’t have a whole lot of complaints, so, I mean, we have some, but I guess how well we work with the kids and the programs we have here for them.

Interviewer: How would you explain your school’s climate last year?

Interviewee: It was actually better than any other year because of what we went through, so I think it was one of our best years, and that is strange, because we went from C to an A (inaudible).

Interviewer: How do you think school climate impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I think it makes a whole lot of difference. When your administration and your staff are getting along and they work together, then that makes the kids and their scores --

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how students’ socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I always think it hurts us, because we don’t have a whole lot of parent involvement. I guess we have to take their (inaudible), so we try to do that. We don’t know anything else, so we just do that normally.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I know that we do get a lot of money from that to help our kids, leapfrogs and stuff like, so I guess that really helps it because we get a lot of extracurricular tools to help teach the kids.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think it’s sad. One thing they always say that we teach the test, but, you know, if you have kids come from different schools, I guess, private schools or something, that don’t teach to the test, then they are not so far advanced as our kids because they have to learn or they don’t pass. So I guess that is good in that way, but the pressure on the kids is sad, for them to be under that, to have that much pressure on them. But it does help in one way. They do learn a lot because they have to.

Interviewer: How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention
impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I guess it shows in our grade. We went from a C to an A.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school last year?

Interviewee: I didn’t ever have to do that, I guess, because I was accredited. It helps the teachers that come from different degrees, I guess. We had a kindergarten teacher that was a business degree, and they had a teacher mentor in there. Is that what you mean or do you mean --

Interviewer: That’s exactly what I mean.

Interviewee: Okay, and it helped her a lot because she wouldn’t have known what to do or anything like that, so it does help our teachers that are just starting off. I don’t know if beginning teachers have that.

Interviewer: It depends on if they’ve graduated from a teacher program --

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: -- like a Florida teaching program. I know at one time if you graduate from the University of Alabama and you came here, they said you graduated from an accredited program, but it wasn’t a Florida program, so you have to go through the mentoring program, and it got real expensive, because those mentoring teachers, they had to go through training, and they have to pay the people to go train them, but then they get a stipend. It used to be, like, $800 or something.

Interviewee: I think it is. I was just going to take a course this summer online to do that. It’s a good amount of money.

Interviewer: It’s expensive, because, you know, you work with them and it’s kind of fun to come and see what other teachers are doing --

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: -- and you get to tell them what you’re doing, but it’s expensive. It’s real expensive for the school district and for the state, you know --

Interviewee: Right, but they need it.

Interviewer: They need it, exactly, because there are so many teachers now that are coming out with business degrees. They’ve never been in a classroom with students.

Interviewee: It does help.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Well, our parental involvement, like I said, is not so good, but our community involvement at least, and I guess because we’re from a small town, they donate a lot of stuff and field trips just around town that we can walk to, and I think they help, and we do have a lot of parents that help a lot, too. We can count on them any time.
Interviewer: Do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: I think it does help. You learn a lot of new things, especially from the older teachers, but training I participated in last year. Let’s see. I went to a Cathy Robinson, we did the (inaudible) Centers last year. Let’s see. Last summer, was that the Reading First? We have stuff here that they do.

Interviewer: Can you think of anything here that you all may have done, here at school?

Interviewee: We do Roger (inaudible) and those strategies. We do technology training. We’re certified.

Interviewer: Have you all done any of the (intelligible) training?

Interviewee: Not us, specifically, it was given.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, our classroom size varies from, like, seventeen and last year, I had seventeen. This year I have twenty-two. I think it matters. I guess if you have a smaller class, you’ll do a whole lot better than if you had a larger class. Then again, I don’t see a difference when you have seventeen or you’ve got twenty-two, they’re still (inaudible). We have parents that come in.

Interviewer: How often do they come in?

Interviewee: Every day. They work with the lower students in reading.

Interviewer: What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a Grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: Like I said before, just making my standards harder and expecting more from them, just keep doing what I’ve been doing and just try to get through with what I’m doing each year.

Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: That’s a hard one. Any other factors -- we discussed the administration, the staff, the parents, the role of the teacher, the community. I guess just -- our belief in the kids and what we went through.
Appendix I (Continued)

School A, Interview 6
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the ‘04 - ‘05 FCAT?

Interviewee: Third grade.

Interviewer: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?

Interviewee: I have been teaching for twenty-nine years, and I’ve taught second, fifth, sixth, and third.

Interviewer: Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.

Interviewee: Children and watching them learn from the beginning to the end.

Interviewer: What do you think your role as a teacher at ______________ School played in the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: Just worked hard and had the children read and understand and find answers, and just teaching.

Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: She’s not lenient. I mean, she’s a driven principal, but she knows we know what it takes to get our children where -- and she sort of knows we know what to do. So she sort of lets us come up with what we feel like we need for our children.

Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: Basically the same. They know, both principal and assistant principals, know that we want the best for our children. They know that the teachers here are going to do their best to make these children understand and learn, so they sort of -- if we have a problem, they’ll help us with it, but other than that, they just try to leave us alone. We do good that way.

Interviewer: How do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?

Interviewee: The third grade especially, we worked very hard together as one unit. Our work is basically the same, our homework is basically the same, and we just developed our own style together, so I think that at our grade level, that’s where we’ve improved some.

Interviewer: Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis, and that is on the FCAT last year?

Interviewee: Yes, yes. When they come back, we get a printout of what their weaknesses, and their improvements.

Interviewer: If yes to Question Number 8, how do you perceive this has
Appendix I (Continued)

impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for the FCAT?

Interviewee: We find what the children were the weakest in and that’s what we kind of zero in for the next year, because usually it’s basically, usually the same skill somehow, and so we just keep on zeroing in on that skill.

Interviewer: What do you think your students’ parents would say impacted the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: I think the overall teachings of the homework that we give, has benefited, is sort of geared toward the FCAT, and so I think they feel that is what has helped.

Interviewer: How would you explain your school’s climate last year?

Interviewee: Well, it was very different and unusual. We had three hurricanes, out several days, but as I said, my children. I have twenty-six children, and everyone of mine passed. So the climate, they were busy, they got in with the program and they worked hard. They were kind of nervous, but they worked the program.

Interviewer: Would you say that everybody was cooperative and working toward that same goal?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah, we are very cooperative and we all, the kids and basically my parents, last year, they really worked hard with getting their children to stay on the same level all year.

Interviewer: How do you think school’s climate impacted the school’s achievement? We kind of answered that. I’ll ask if there is anything else you want to add.

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how students’ socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: A lot of times the lower economic area, the parents don’t help as much, and that is where we have a problem. And I think that is where we see some of our skills are lower, and that’s with the AYP, you know. (Inaudible) So it can help an impact because the parents are not as concerned.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: We have parents that come in and help with our lower children, so that gives them extra help.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: A lot of stress. I mean, sometimes I think it’s too much stress for little babies that we have. My children did well, but I still think the stakes are too high for these babies.

Interviewer: Any stress on teachers?
Interviewee: Oh, no, no, never. Yes, it’s a lot of stress, because we’re looked at -- we’re the ones that if they didn’t do well, we get it. If they did well, it’s because of the stress we are under. I have a problem with these babies under such stress. Third grade, this is too much, too much.

Interviewer: How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Does that mean retaining children?

Interviewer: No, ma’am, as far as those teachers that have remained here for a long time.

Interviewee: Oh, and that’s one thing about this school. Basically, when you come here, that wherever you drive, you stay here. I live in __________, and I’ve been here for twenty-two years. So when you have a group that has been here, you learn everyone and you work well together, so I think we’re good because we don’t move.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted school achievement? When I talk about the mentoring programs, I know there are some schools here in the district where if a new teacher comes in, they will pair an experienced teacher up with that beginning teacher to try to provide them with a little extra support. Do you think that makes any difference?

Interviewee: Well, we haven’t had really anyone, yeah we have had new ones, but we show them the ropes, and show -- our stuff is prepared. We get it ready during the summer, and so the new teachers, it’s there for them. It’s easy for them to come in and start working here.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Parents’ help? I see a big difference -- even without the FCAT or anything -- when a parent helps, and gets involved in their students, then they improve.

Interviewer: I’m sorry. Let me go back to Question eighteen.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Would you say that for community involvement as well?

Interviewee: Yes, because this is a small community, and the parents are in that small community, so it all sort of congeals together.

Interviewer: Do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: Several teacher training things, and there is always a need for different things you see. It might not be the whole thing that you’ve gone to, but there is one or two things that you come away with -- oh, this will be a good for my class. So we went to several and still go to?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?

Interviewee: Just like I say. Last year I had twenty-five. Every one of mine passed. This year I have sixteen, and I have some that are struggling. So if you can teach, to me it doesn’t matter the size. So I don’t have a problem with size.

Interviewer: What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a Grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: For this school year? Teaching and just keeping on drilling in their heads over and over. You can’t just teach and go on. You’ve got to -- what I started at the beginning, I’m still reviewing from the beginning, adding something new. So it’s always something, the same thing over and over, and they just keep on drilling.

Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: I can’t think of anything.
Appendix I (Continued)

School A, Interview 7
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the ‘04 - ‘05 FCAT?
Interviewee: Fourth grade.
Interviewer: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: I’ve taught for five years, and I’ve taught fifth grade and (inaudible).
Interviewer: Explain what you enjoy most about teaching?
Interviewee: I enjoy being a mentor to the students, just being a positive role model, giving them the best education that I can.
Interviewer: What do you think your role as a teacher in your school played in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I just think continuing to just to do what we always do. I don’t really feel that we did anything or I personally didn’t do anything as different, just, you know, just with the same curriculum, you know, maybe tweaking what maybe didn’t work last year, nothing major, I don’t feel.
Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: She’s been a positive role. She comes in our school, gives a lot of input, had a lot of meetings. She’s always striving to bring new ideas into the classroom to help us to keep us motivated.
Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I believe it’s the same method, a lot of positive feedback, going in the classroom, seeing what they’re doing, seeing how things can be done better. As far as different methods, just basically being a part of it.
Interviewer: How do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year. In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
Interviewee: I think we worked as a team. We work together, so when it says “what did they do,” I think it’s what we did, becoming a team, helping each other out. Any time I have a question, I go to a more senior teacher to maybe get a different method in weekly meetings. Just saying on the same, you know, path together.
Interviewer: Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?
Interviewee: Yes.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: And if yes, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques in preparing for the FCAT?

Interviewee: Well, for example, in writing, I knew where my baseline was, in what areas I need to focus on, maybe pay more attention to detail, maybe that is not needed, or together in third grade, you know, give a little bit more emphasis on fourth grade.

Interviewer: What do you think your students’ parents would say impacted the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: I think they would say a lot of the teachers’ communication with the parents. We have a lot of FCAT nights, parent nights, reading nights. We send a lot of information home. We keep continually in contact with them.

Interviewer: How would you explain your school’s climate last year?

Interviewee: Clarify it.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about the morale of the --

Interviewee: It was real positive. We’re a go-getter school, a lot of high-impact energy, just a very energetic school.

Interviewer: How do you think school climate impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Of course I think it impacted it in a positive way because when we’re pumped up or other things are positive, the teachers, administrators, everyone around it gets the kids in a positive atmosphere towards the testing.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how students’ socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Will you clarify that one?

Interviewer: Sure. Students that come from homes with varied incomes, maybe a higher income level versus a lower income level --

Interviewee: Well, it impacts our school because we have a lot of migrant students who come back and forth. We have a lot of parents who don’t speak any English, which makes it more on our part to need to get involved with all of the parents and making them feel welcome and wanted and they can help. I believe it does impact somewhat.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacted achievement?

Interviewee: There again, I do believe it does impact it somewhat, but our test scores prove otherwise. It just means that as a Title 1 teacher, I have to work maybe a little bit different, maybe a little bit harder than maybe someone in a neighborhood where parents are extremely involved, where parents play a strong role in their family, and where in our area, parents are not as involved, than maybe a middle-class or higher class child.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: What are your thoughts about high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: What do you mean by high stakes?

Interviewer: When we talk about FCAT or we talk about any standardized testing.

Interviewee: Well, as a positive way, it keeps us on our toes. We are accountable, so I don’t mind it. A lot of people do. I personally don’t because, you know, and plus when it keeps me on my toes, then, of course, the students benefit.

Interviewer: How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement? Maybe I can clarify that a little bit more. With “No Child Left Behind,” the No Child Left Behind Act says that you have to be a highly qualified teacher. In other words, you have to be certified in your area to be considered highly qualified, and they also look at teacher retention, meaning teachers who have stayed in the same grade level or the same school year after year. Do you think that either one of those impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think it does, because I’ve taught fourth grade now, this is my fourth year staying at the same school, staying in fourth grade, and I couldn’t imagine removing myself and going to second grade and having to learn it. So every year, it just makes it easier for me.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impact a school achievement? And I don’t know if you all have had any teacher mentoring programs where if you have a brand new teacher that comes in and if he or she needs some assistance or guidance, they are sometimes paired with a more experienced teacher.

Interviewee: In my first year, we had that, but I don’t think we’ve had anybody new. A lot of veteran teachers --

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I think we have a lot of community support; however, parental, I’ve found that in fourth grade, the involvement of parents is not what I think it should be. I average at less than a fourth of parents that show up on parent night. That is less than a fourth of my students show up. I don’t know if it’s just the age or our area, I just don’t know that. I don’t feel that we have great parental involvement.

Interviewer: Do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: I do think they impact it, because I remember me being a first-year
Appendix I (Continued)

teacher, I had a lot of great ideas and new, and now that I’ve been a teacher five years, I still need, you know, new ideas, what’s coming up, what can I use differently. So I do believe that that does impact it. What training did I participate in last year? Loads. Honestly, it’s one of those things where you’ve got several you could say, but not one I can throw out.

Interviewer: No problem. We can come back if you think of any.
Interviewee: Okay.
Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?
Interviewee: I firmly believe that because when you have a large number, there is a lot of behavioral management, whereas time is taken away, you know, you have to do more large group instruction. It just takes away, to me, it takes away from the student who needs the extra help. We do do groups. We do a lot of things needed for our lower-achieving students. If I had a smaller classroom size, I can bet you that I could get a lot more done.

Interviewer: What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a Grade A for this school year?
Interviewee: Just staying on top, always finding improvement in what you can do, even your highest group will improve. Your highest scores can also be improved, so just basically trying to find out how you can do things better every year.

Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?
Interviewee: Certainly the hurricanes would have impacted our school majorly [sic]. We missed a lot of days of school last year.

Interviewer: I’ll go back to that other question. Did you think of any teacher training that you did last year?
Interviewee: The Cathy Robinson training. I had a couple of reading trainings where we learned how to work with small groups. There was another logic training, and a new writing training I went to, also science, about science FCAT, how we can prepare (inaudible). I think that is about it.
Appendix I (Continued)

School A, Interview 8
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the ‘04 ‘05 FCAT?
Interviewee: Fifth grade.

Interviewer: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: I’ve taught four years, and this is my fifth and I’ve taught fourth and fifth grades.

Interviewer: Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.
Interviewee: I guess it’s seeing a student that is struggling and then seeing them catch on and doing much better in school.

Interviewer: What do you think your role as a teacher in your school has played in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I guess just trying to teach them --

Interviewer: What do you perceive as been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: (Can’t hear.) She’s very good about buying supplies --

Interviewer: What do you perceive has been the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: Everything she’s done as far as helping you with leads in the classroom and coming into the classroom or model or supply issues or student issues or parent issues, maybe.

Interviewer: All right. We’ll go on to the next question. If you think of anything, let me know. How do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make it different?
Interviewee: I think they might (inaudible).

Interviewer: Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?
Interviewee: Yes, (inaudible).

Interviewer: And if yes, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques in preparing for the FCAT?
Interviewee: I think it overall it was well, that you can always learn from the previous year.

Interviewer: What do you think your students’ parents would say impacted the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: Gosh. (Inaudible)

Interviewer: How would you explain your school’s climate last year? In other words, was the morale high? Was the morale low? Were people happy?
Interviewee: Are you talking about during the FCAT time?
Interviewer: Sure, during the FCAT time. Let me rephrase that. Maybe during
Appendix I (Continued)

the whole school year, if you can think back.

Interviewee: Well, we were just trying to get ready for the test, trying to improve instead of going downhill.

Interviewer: How do you think school climate impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Inaudible.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how students’ socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Well, we live in a -- I don’t live here -- the socioeconomic level is low here, so probably just like (inaudible).

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts your achievement?

Interviewee: I think being a Title 1 school, and I’ve been at several, but this one, the money really does go into the classroom, and then education and stuff, it helps either teach a different way, or work with a student, or other additional stuff that helps the kids.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts about high-stakes testing impact school achievement?

Interviewee: High-stakes testing having an impact?

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Interviewee: I think it makes most of our education, you know, actual teaching focus more on the FCAT, and by doing so, we’re leaving other very important areas that --

Interviewer: How do you think a highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement? In other words, now with “No Child Left Behind,” with being highly qualified, if you are not certified in your area, and you’re not highly qualified, there is some research out there that says those teachers that remain at the school year after year, do you think it makes a difference or do you think it doesn’t make a difference on your school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I think it does because, like I said, you learn from your mistakes. You look at the test data, and you analyze it, and then determine okay, if my students are low in this area, that’s where my focus needs to be.

Interviewer: So you think those teachers that are highly qualified and those teachers that stay would be better able to do that?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted school issues?

Interviewee: Well, they offer all the students after-school tutoring, and I think that does help.

Interviewer: Let me rephrase that one. The teacher mentoring programs, and you all might not have had it this is, is -- I know some schools if
you have a first-year teacher or a teacher who is, maybe he or she is out-of-field. They came from the business industry and they are not a certified teacher yet. Sometimes administrators will pair an experienced teacher with one of those beginning teacher. Do you think that kind of mentoring from experienced teachers working with beginning teachers, do you think that impacts school issues?

Interviewee: I think if it’s a person who has gone and received an education degree, then yes. But if it’s someone who is out-of-field, it’s kind of hard to just say, here you go, here’s a job, do it, because there is a lot that you learn.

Interviewer: So pairing an experienced teacher with that beginning teacher, then you think might be plausible.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: It had some parental involvement (inaudible).

Interviewer: Do you think professional development impacted your school’s achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: (Inaudible).

Interviewer: What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?

Interviewee: I think it makes a big difference. Like, last year we did go up, but we had a smaller class size, where before it was much bigger and this year, we’re up again, so I think it makes a big difference. We can’t work with the students one-on-one like we’d like to.

Interviewer: What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a Grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: I guess it’s just analyzing the test data that I do, you know, beginning, middle and end of (inaudible), and how they scored last year on the FCAT and find the areas (inaudible).

Interviewer: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Would you mind if we go back to Question Number six --

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: -- and if you think of anything, you just let me know. But I’ll restate the question. What do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: I think one of the things that she does do is, she’ll find, like, different resources that we might find useful in the classroom, certain other tools, stuff like that.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: Is there anything else you’d like to add or share?
Interviewee: No.
Interviewer: (Name), and is the principal, and we will begin with Question number one. How long have you been principal at _________?

Interviewee: This is my second year. My first year was last year.

Interviewer: Question Number 2, what areas did you teach before becoming a school administrator?

Interviewee: I taught three years of middle and high school ESE students. I taught social personal skills and life management classes, and I also coached wrestling during those times. Then, I became a dean of students for three years at Roosevelt Academy and moved from dean of students doing discipline into the assistant principal position, the APA, assistant principal administration. I maintained he discipline, though. They did not replace the dean. So I kept that title and also did the athletic director position at that school. I did that for, I guess, three years, and then became an assistant principal for seven years and then began a principalship.

Interviewer: Thank you. Could you explain what you enjoy most about being a school administrator and what you find most challenging?

Interviewee: Well, what I enjoy most is the challenge. All of it’s challenging, and that’s -- that’s what I love about the job. You know, one day you’re -- you’re water goes out and that becomes your whole day, the challenge of trying to get water to 300, 400 people. But I would say ultimately it’s the challenge of -- of, you know, reaching every child at the school. That -- that’s the greatest challenge we have. There’s so -- so much diversity in schools today. To reach them all is a true challenge, and I’ll be honest, sometimes we’re not as successful as I wish we were at reaching every single child.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Number four, as the school principal, what do you think you have done in optimizing your school’s success?

Interviewee: Probably -- probably just changing the school climate. This -- we had a lot of issues prior to my arrival coming here. I don’t want to go into great detail, but they had some -- some real climate issues, and I would say the morale was pretty low, a lot of distrust amongst the staff members, so we really -- we really hit that hard last year to rebuild relationships and I’m talking about staff relationships first, administration to teacher, teacher to teacher, grade level to grade level, all those different areas, parents to teachers. There was just a whole lot of mending that needed to take place and a lot of rebuilding in relationships.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number five, what do you think teachers would say you have done regarding the school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, I want to say they would say the same thing. I can tell you I did a -- a climate survey last year just, you know, I was a beginning principal, so we had to do some things and put on a little show for the school board to keep our positions, so one of the things that I did was a climate survey, and it was clear that the -- the overall climate of the school had increased, you know. I don’t remember the exact percent. I want to say it was 82 percent of the staff that thought morale at the school had improved, which I thought was a pretty significant amount.

Interviewer: Question number six, and there are several questions beginning with six and (inaudible) we talk about the one year period that your school improved it’s FCAT school grade from a grade C to a grade A. So when we mention that one year period, that’s the year we’re referring to.

Interviewee: So last year?

Interviewer: Yes, last year.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Question number six, can you think of any other factors that have influenced the school’s success during that one-year period?

Interviewee: Yes, I can. I -- actually, I made a list here of things. I call them main factors, and I gave them to the staff, and what one of the things that we did also at the end of last year, is we did a little thing when we came back where we wrote up on stickies what the staff felt contributed to the A. And some of these things came from that, others came from hearsay, others came from just feelings, so it’s not scientific. I want to you know it’s not scientific; however, I do believe that there are some significant ones. For example, class size last year significantly was low, and I had some classes that were as little as 11 students in them, and -- you can’t put that in your report though. Just put it in the fine print somewhere.

Interviewer: There we go.

Interviewee: Not all of the classes, but all the classes were below 20. I didn’t have any class last year that was above 20 students. And a significant number around the 15 mark, so it was definitely -- it made an impact. We did have a lot of relocation, a lot of hurricane victims because we were hit by the three hurricanes last year. We had an apartment complex, which is a housing complex behind the school that was condemned, so we lost all the students from that.
Actually, I say we lost them, they were scattered amongst grandmas and aunts and uncles so it actually, you know, should have been detrimental to us as far as our grade goes, so you know, I’m skeptical. Some say that that helped because those kids weren’t here and they were the low socioeconomic, and traditionally don’t fare well in those tests. Yet, I know that a good portion of them were living with grandmas and aunts and commuting all the way back here and actually remained with us. So it’s hard to say. But (inaudible) improved school climate. I mentioned that. I definitely think that was a factor focusing on the learning for students that they like. One of the things that I think happened is sometimes schools get away from the fun carnivals and all the things that you and I might remember from our childhood days in elementary, and I think we tried to -- we tried to make sure those things weren’t eliminated; that they -- we maintained that fun stuff that kids like to do, the reward for learning, I like to call it. We -- we implemented a ditch (phonetic) program for fourth grade. I think that had an impact especially if you look at the fourth grade math results from the test last year. Last year, we were one of the few schools that did the DIBELS testing which is a fluency test and we did it in fourth and fifth grade also. I think we were only one of two schools, so I think that may have had an impact. It just helped the teachers assess the needs of the students. We implemented thinking mats, which was a graphic organizer. Our reading score -- I mean our writing square -- excuse me, our writing scores definitely went up, so it was clear that that helped. We implemented a morning tutoring program. I thought we’d -- parents -- I’ve got to watch how I say it on tape. Not literally, but I got in discussions, sometimes heated discussions with parents in the mornings because they would drop the kids off so early. I didn’t have supervision and it was unsafe, so I would try to get them to change their -- their procedures and practices and it was quite difficult because it wasn’t always the same parents. I also had a lot of neighborhood children that would come in here really early in the morning. My -- my duty time didn’t start until 7:45, so it was -- no one was out there, so one of the things I did is when I realized I was losing the battle, I decided to have those kids go to a place where they could learn while they’re waiting, and I only had to talk one person into being there early for it. So I had a computer lab open in the morning, and they did math (inaudible) and Riverdeep and other programs so they could come here in the morning. I didn’t care how early they got here ‘cause that person was here by 7, and usually they got here.
Appendix I (Continued)

around 7:15, 7:30. So it worked out great. We kept them in that. They got to learn. The parents were happy because they got to drop the kid off early. It was a win-win for everybody, and I didn’t have kids in the hallways unsupervised. So it worked out great.

We also adjusted planning time for teachers. Last year they were -- they were in their classrooms until 3:30 which is 45 minutes after the bell released when I first started because it took that long to get all the kids out of the classroom, home on the buses, so we changed that and restructured the whole bus release time so that they went to the -- to the area, the picnic tables after school which freed the teachers up around 3:00. So it gave the teachers, in essence, anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes of extra planning time daily, so I think that had an impact. Low overall student enrollment, we talked about that. The Americore student tutoring program, we implemented last year; and -- and that’s a national program, one-on-one tutoring program where they came in and pulled third grade students from the classroom. I definitely think that had an impact. (inaudible) Pat was new to us last year. That was a -- it was a district wide initiative. So, you know, if you looked at our data versus another school’s data, you might be able to eliminate that as an actual factor ‘cause there was another school that had that same program and didn’t. My teacher, however, in that program was exceptional and did a great job. So you know, it’s always hard to understand that kind of thing. I have a very strict no videos policy. I know that that increases instructional time. I know that because my personal children spend a lot of time watching videos at these different schools. I won’t mention names, but I know that that alone a lot of times is easy for us to put in videos when we have a substitute or when were pulled for a 30-minute meeting with a parent, it’s real easy and quick to put one in there, but what I learned a long time ago is the most impoverished of families have a TV and most of them have the cable to go along with that TV, so my theory is even the most impoverished kid is getting that opportunity at home. I want to give them the opportunity that they don’t have at home. So I’m going to use the computer program. I want to do something they don’t have in their regular homes. We had some new teachers. I have three new teachers that directly impacted because they were third and fourth grade teachers. We did not ability group for third and fourth grade which was different, a change to the school. Again, I don’t know if that did or didn’t. We did ability group for writing at semester. We were not ability grouping right up till December, but we had ____________, my assistant principal had the teachers do a
writing prompt and then she graded them, and it was apparent to us that we had some kids that were -- were really in need, and we had some other kids that were really high and that we really might want to clone in on that for that last little segment right before the FCAT and the Florida Writes Test took place. So we went ability grouped for writing when January came, and we did that right up to the -- to the test time. I think that helped because our writing score did -- did go up. We had several assemblies -- am I going to long -- had several assemblies. Mr. Rick was a motivational speaker and what he did is -- is, for example, that -- for the FCAT test, he went into the cafeteria, and the whole school, school wide came in and he did great motivational and test taking strategies to the kids, you know, taught them to breathe deep and relax. It's just a test. And I believe that really impacted. And here's my evidence of that: The day of the test, I did not have one student get sick and get sent to the office. Past practice has been several times and sometimes in great numbers, they come to the office, they get sick to their stomach, they get anxiety, they didn’t sleep the night before, all those kinds of things. I really think that made a difference. Staff development, again, we really concentrated on motivation. We -- we -- besides thinking mats, that was really the only -- well, DIPS (phonetic), the DIPS training also in the compass lab was also some training. Besides those, our staff development was more on motivation, inspiring the teachers to want to get in that classroom and teach the kids, and we really hit that stuff hard. We did have a new math series, so did everyone else in the district. I figured I should mention that. And then we had a new, you know, obviously this school had a new administration move, the principal and the assistant principal.

Have I answered your question?

Interviewer: You did. Thank you very much. And a couple of the topics you will hear asked again --

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: -- that you previously mentioned, but feel free to elaborate or we can just refer to what you just previously said. Either way.

Interviewee: Certainly.

Interviewer: So question number seven, what do you think district office administrators would say about your influence on the school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, what I’ve -- what I’ve been told is that one of my strength areas would be the social personal aspect of things and so, you know, I was given some kudos for the ability to keep the ship running over here because it was -- it was frankly struggling a bit.
Interviewer: Question number eight, how do you think other principals, those who have not improved their grade, would say about your influence and the success of the school?

Interviewee: Well, it depends on which ones you talk to. I know for, you know, from hearsay that there is talk that because of the hurricanes and the fact that the housing projects closed down that the socioeconomic impact was had; however, we maintained our title and status, so we -- you know, we still have a very high socio -- low socioeconomic -- high number of low socioeconomic students. But I would say that the -- the -- I don’t want to say younger principals -- the principals that I know that -- you know, are kind of in my circle of influence because we went through the programs together and stuff, they were all, you know, wondering all the different things that we did. I mentioned Americore. I mean, clearly if I had to say something to another administrator, maybe Americore is not what you can do, but anytime I believe you can get one-on-one tutoring, you need to do that. But also, I concentrated even into this year on class size. You know, I think all the researches say, we can argue about language and phonics and all these different approaches, but nobody can really argue that if you have less kids to teach you’ll do a better job. So I, you know, I try to focus on the things that -- again, teachers love it. You know, you’ll never get a teacher that’s going to argue with you if you say, well, I’m not going to buy computers this year because I want to keep the class size down. They’re -- they’re going to go with that. So it’s really easy to -- having said that, I’ve got four computers in each class which is another role that we had because in order to differentiate -- I believe that’s where the computer comes in the most, where it can be be utilized the best. The labs are -- are okay, but some labs can still be just a worksheet on a computer, and you know, it’s a little different when the kid gets on a computer but it’s still just that, but when you start differentiating instruction, using different types programming off the computer like -- like the Academy -- Academy of Reading offers, that’s the way I think computers ought to be utilized because when you’ve got 20 kids in a classroom, you can put four that are pretty much close to each other in their ability level on that computer doing one segment, the other one, they might be doing research because they’re your high functioning kids, and so computers should really aid the teacher in instruction. I don’t know if I answered your question.

Interviewer: You did. Thank you very much. Question number nine, what do you perceive parents would say about your impact on the school’s
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: Well, I think parents have been very pleased with some of the things that we’ve done at school. I know that our PTO meetings have run very smoothly. Our SAC meeting have run smoothly. You know, everyone has a little disagreement here -- here and again, but overall, I would say the parents perceive this as a friendly environment and a place they want to come, and one of the comments I got from parents probably the most was that I was approachable, willing to listen to their -- their, you know, needs and desires and make changes if we could and if not, just, you know, stated to them exactly why not and give them a reasonable explanation as to what my decision was and why and that’s really all they needed.

Interviewer: Question Number ten, how do you think school climate impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Again, one of the factors that I know because we have the data for that one is that school climate definitely increased last year. So did our grade. So, you know, there’s no -- no doubt in my mind that that would coincide. I don’t have the data, but I have the hearsay and the background knowledge to know that the year before, the climate was -- was quite tense and their grade went down. You know, that -- so I -- I would say if you look at the data and you saw what the climate chart showed, there’s a clear impact.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Question number eleven, what are your perceptions of how the socioeconomic level students impact school achievement?

Interviewee: I think it impacts school achievement if you allow it to impact school achievement, and what I mean by that is if you provide the lower socioeconomic students the same opportunities implored to the others, than you’re fine, which really is the goal of Title 1. You know, all that federal funding is supposed to be just that. Unfortunately, sometimes administrators buy programs or packages that impact the total school, and when you’re doing that, you’re spending dollars that were meant for low socioeconomic -- low socioeconomic kids or your upper. So what I try to do is use that -- utilize that money to do things that I know are going to -- going to impact it, you know, keeping class size down, any kind of tutoring programs I can do, any of the individualized instruction, utilizing it to give them field trips and opportunities that they otherwise wouldn’t get. Those are the kinds of things that I really want to use that money for.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: Good. Thank you. Question number twelve, do you perceive that being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, I mean, there’s no question that -- that the kids come in when you’ve been there -- I shouldn’t say it like that. Certain kids that are low socioeconomic who are disadvantaged in what they have in the home environment are going to come to you with less background knowledge than others, and all the research would suggest and let you know it. Now, there’s also low socioeconomic that the parents are, you know, educated and teach them and give them books and all those things and they’re fine. I’m just -- so I’m not saying that socioeconomic is the impact, but you know, certainly the research would suggest that it does. However, the extra resources you get certainly, I think, really do impact your ability to kind of even the playing field. We have some positions here that other schools don’t have that are Title 1, and you know, I sit there and think, boy, I don’t know how they would do it without those three parents to go in there and do one-on-one tutoring of those kids, so you know, it definitely does in that they’re coming in a little bit disadvantaged, but I think that if you really keep that high expectation for all the kids on that even playing field, you can -- you can overcome it.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question thirteen: What are your perceptions of how high stakes testing impact school (inaudible)?

Interviewee: I think -- I think the high stakes testing and the impact it has is all about the perceptions by everyone, the administration, the all the way to the superintendent level down to the parents and then ultimately the students. I have seen where it’s over exaggerated, over done. It’s the -- if we’re not an A school and if we don’t do this, then, you know, that’s it. I know another principal school who runs an outstanding school and the velocity that that principal has is, you know, the state can grade us and whatever that grade is is fine, but I’m more concerned about what the teachers and the students and the parents of this school think versus what this outside grade says. You know, and that’s a way to look at it. You cannot though -- you cannot ignore it. You certainly cannot ignore it. It’s definitely going to be around. It’s going to be around for a long time. So I think it plays a certain role. I think it’s important though that you -- you don’t, you know, you cannot change everything towards that one aim or your lose so much of the other stuff that’s important.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question fourteen, do you believe a highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I absolutely believe that, and I think that if you -- if you were to do
a study and researched schools that lose 15 teachers a year on a regular basis, I can almost guarantee you won’t find an A school, and there’s schools in this district that do that. I don’t know the retention the year before last, but I know that over the summer, I only lost one teacher, so, you know, I think that it clearly -- you have to have some consistency with your staff. You have to. For all of your programs to work, for the staff to gel and mesh and get along with each other I think it’s a very important part of it. Now, that -- the highly qualified part, let me speak to that for just a second. See, my definition of high qualified doesn’t necessarily always go with what the state -- and I’m talking about the actual law indicates. To me whether you have your master’s degree or doctorate degree isn’t as significant as what you do with the kids in the classroom. To me, you’re highly qualified if you can take those 20 kids and get them from point A to point B, point being where you want them to be as far as their learning goes. That to me is a high qualified individual. I don’t care if it’s a custodian without a degree. You know, it can be -- and sometimes, you know, you look at -- we look at degrees and high qualified and you go overboard in that area too. I think the intent’s well. The intent -- the intent is great. We all want to know the person teaching our child is a highly qualified individual, but sometimes those definitions and whenever you try to legislate it, somehow in the mix of it, you end up hurting people’s feelings because the they -- they’ve been teaching 30 years and all the sudden they don’t meet a criteria that you set. That -- you know, that hurts morale, and I’m against anything that’s going to hurt morale.

Interviewer: All right. Thank you. Question fifteen, what are your perceptions of how teaching mentoring programs impact school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, I mentioned, we had our -- our Americore program but we also do have mentors, and last year we had several mentors, one of them was a maintenance worker. He came every day and went an pulled his child -- not everyday, every week, and pulled his child out for about 30 minutes and mentored him one-on-one. Those things have a huge impact and in the State of Florida and I’m guilty of this myself, we need to really tie into our elderly population, our retirees in Florida, they’re -- it’s a huge pool that we have to access for that and most of them would love the opportunity to come in and I’m just as guilty as the rest because we get so busy we neglect that area, but I really believe if we could tie into that population and get them involved in students and education and you know, some of them need to see what’s going
on back in the classroom again. Sometimes they don’t -- they
don’t realize, and I had a -- I had a senior citizen once complaining
that teachers made too much money, and I said well, what do you
mean, and she said well, my neighbor makes, you know, $50,000 a
year and she gets her summers off, and she gets Christmas off, she
gets Thanksgiving. She only works a little, you know, few days a
year. She said I worked every day of my life, you know, I didn’t
make that much money and -- but they -- see they’re seeing -- they
have a perception of what’s at the end see ‘cause you know making
$50,000, that’s after you’ve been teaching 22 years. Prior to that,
you made 30. So it’s -- a lot of it’s perception. I think if they saw
the job and when they -- if they realized the time that the teacher
puts in during those days they’re teaching, they would realize it all
evens out in the end.

Interviewer: May I get you to speak to teacher mentoring programs as far as
pairing perhaps a -- an experienced teacher with a beginning
teacher?

Interviewee: Yes. Well, the district does that with peer teach -- peer teachers,
and last year we had three. If I’m not mistaken it was three young
teachers that were at least first year teachers. One was fresh out of
college, one had substitute -- substitute taught and the other one --
the other one was an experienced teacher, but she was in a private
school. And I’ll tell you, in that case, it probably helped the most
because -- because she was experienced, she thought that she could
go into this school and just, you know, teach the way she always
had and she quickly realized that the way she had been used to
teaching and relating to the kids was not working because these
kids were different. So she -- we immediately assigned -- we
didn’t have to assign her a peer teacher, but we immediately did
and then she was able to understand. That teacher really helped
her especially with classroom management.

Interviewer: All right. Thank you so much. Question sixteen, what are your
perceptions of how parental and community involvement impact
school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, parental involvement, you know, without parental
involvement, and that’s what I think reaches even the
socioeconomic. I don’t care if you’re a millionaire. If you parents
could care less about your education, it will show up in public
schools. The same is true -- you can be the most impoverished
young person in the world and if your parents are saying listen,
education’s important, you’re going to do find and you’ll succeed.
So, you know, parenting definitely has an impact. Unfortunately,
there’s times where teachers have to be -- become that -- that
Appendix I (Continued)

child’s parent in their absence and you know, it adds a whole new challenge for the teacher because now they not only have to teach them ABCs but they got to teach them how to use manners and right down to potty training sometimes. I mean, it’s -- it’s amazing to me. As far as the community involvement goes, it -- you know, and Lake Wales is unique ‘cause we have the charter issue. So it’s definitely a community that takes education and believe it’s important and has a high importance on education. The more that they’re willing to use funding for the schools, the better off we’re going to be because all of us know that we’re -- we need to money constantly and forever and the more support, the more your community feels like they’re a part of you and you’re a part of them, the more they’re going to be willing to support you especially financially. It goes more than that. For example, here we have a party that’s called Casper’s Birthday, and it’s completely put on by PTS. It’s all parent and community members. A lot of them had graduated from here and they don’t have a kid here anymore and they still come back and they still volunteer and it’s been a tradition of this school forever. See, those are the kinds of things I think build a sense of community.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Questions number seventeen, what are your perceptions of how professional development or continuous improvement impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, it definitely impacts it. Sometimes I think it can impact it negatively. Sometimes I think we -- we overburden our teachers with new programs, new ideas, new strategies and then they end up, you know, hurting, I guess the morale goes down, then they don’t want to implement that new thing or they fake it, act like they’re implementing it just to please you. I think the best -- the best staff development is when the teachers buy into it. If you have the teacher buying, it really doesn’t matter it whether it’s a math program or an assembly then it doesn’t matter because staff, and when I say staff there’s always going to be an exception. You know the majority of your staff when they buy into it, it’s going to fly regardless of what the staff development is.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Thank you. Question number eighteen, what are your perceptions of how school size impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, I’m a small school, so it’s -- that -- that’s a -- that’s a tough question for me to answer. I think small size related to classroom size and having a low number of kids in your classroom definitely impacts it. I think if you could keep -- if I had a thousand kids at this school, and I still kept that class size down to, you know, 18
Appendix I (Continued)

kids in a classroom, I think that would be very manageable. I guess, however, though it would be a little bit harder to be more personal with the kids and know them all by name and all those kind of things. Last year, of course, I had that problem anyway ‘cause I was new, so, you know, coming in new, I might as well had a thousand of them ‘cause I didn’t know a single kid here, but it certainly would have taken me a lot longer to get to know the kids and get the right programming for them, those kinds of things, so, you know, I -- to me, small works.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question nineteen, what do you perceive your role as school principal can do to maintain a grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: Well, I know that I have to get rid of the notion that we made this A because a certain population of students left. That -- that’s something that I don’t even -- I don’t even allow the teacher to -- to go there. So -- so -- that’s one way. Maintaining the expectations that we set last year, maintaining the -- all those high expectations, all those things that we implemented last year, and then constantly looking for new -- new ways to do it, because I’m just one of those who believe you have to continually improve or you never get better. You stay the same. I -- I don’t want to be an A. I want to be the best school in Florida. I want to be the best school in the nation. I want to be the best school in the world. So until I’m there, I’ll improve forever, and I suspect I probably won’t get there in my lifetime, so and I’m a good believer in continuous improvement.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Last question, number twenty, can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: Probably not that we didn’t discuss. I’m sure there’s a -- you know, something else out there that I haven’t though of and that a teacher hasn’t said something to me, but yeah, not -- that -- not that I didn’t list out for you here.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. I do want to just get it on recording that I appreciate sincerely your time today and answering the questions, and I will give you every opportunity to make any changes. If you think of anything later, after I get the transcripts e-mailed to you, you feel free to let me know. It’s completely anonymous. Your name won’t be used. The school won’t be used, and I just appreciate your time.

Interviewee: Sure. Thank you.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 2
(Assistant Principal)

Interviewer: Assistant Principal interview with (name), and we are going to be looking at questions 1 through 20, assistant principal interview questions. Question number one, how long have you been the assistant principal at ________ Elementary?

Interviewee: It’s been a year and a half.

Interviewer: Number two, what areas did you teach before becoming a school administrator?

Interviewee: I started out with my first teaching job as a first grade teacher, and I taught at -- do you want to know the schools -- okay. I began at Gibbons Street Elementary in Bartow, and then at the end of that year, transferred to Lake Shipp Elementary. Was there as a first grade teacher for several years and then went to a third grade teacher. Then I transferred to Inwood Elementary and was a third grade teacher there and then transferred to Pinewood Elementary where I helped open the school, and I was a third grade teacher, and then I was the instructional support teacher when we became a Title 1 school. From there, I went to Boone Middle in Haines City and was the reading resource teacher for two years teaching the middle school teachers that you do teach reading in all the content areas. Then, I became the assistant principal at ________.

Interviewer: Thank you. Number three, could you explain what you enjoy most about being a school administrator and what you find most challenging?

Interviewee: Oh, the most fun is -- the things I enjoy the most is being with the kids and seeing them grow and working with them throughout the day and seeing their smiles and getting their hugs and that’s -- that’s really a joy. And the most challenging is -- it’s working sometimes -- sometimes working with the teachers that when we have mandates from the district office or from the state, and it changes, trying to relate that message to the teachers that it’s not coming from us, that, you know, the state and the district have their mandates, and we have to abide by them. So sometimes it’s just real challenging to convince the teachers that we’re not trying to make their life miserable. We’re trying to work together and do what we’re told.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number four, as the school’s assistant principal, what do you think you have done in optimizing the school’s success?

Interviewee: I believe I have tried to motivate the teacher to keep a positive attitude. I have been in the classrooms to assist them in every way
that they want. I’ve tried not to impose myself on them because sometimes that’s -- that -- especially at this campus, the teachers, I’m assuming the way they’ve reacted, that they’re not used to the administrators being in the classroom. I assisted them in adjusting their lesson plans and implementing whatever the county is asking us to do. So I -- I feel like I’ve had the open-door policy. I have -- you know, been in the classrooms and helped them in any way that I could.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Question number five, what do you think teachers would say you have done regarding the school’s success?

Interviewee: I think that they realize that I am open to suggestions and I am flexible and I have done everything I could to get them the materials that they needed, that they felt like that would help them to be successful in the classroom. I’ve helped them or at least got them training. I’ve been in their rooms to make sure they understand about data collection, and I know that they know that I have the open-door policy.

Interviewer: Thank you. The next questions, questions six through question number twenty; those will focus on the success over the one-year school period where your school improved from a grade C on the FCAT to a grade A on the FCAT. So I just wanted to make you aware of -- there are several questions that talk about that one-year period, and that’s the year that we’re focusing on. So let’s look at question number six. Can you think of any other factors that have influenced the school’s success during that one-year period?

Interviewee: Well, I know that at the beginning of this school year, we were reflecting on last school year where we became an A school, and we asked the teachers what they thought helped us become an A and we have excellent teachers, number one; and they don’t have any downtime. They really utilize the school, 325-minute day, but the teachers felt like it was the positive attitude that -- I mean, we - - we insisted that learning needed to be fun, and I feel like that we brought in Mr. Rick, he was -- he’s a motivational speaker. We brought him in twice. We bought his videos to -- to develop, you know, positive attitudes and positive character. We’ve got -- we do the mission statement for Mr. Rick every morning. We see him on our ________ Live in the morning. We did that all last year. But then we also brought in Dr. Lindley to speak to our staff about the trials of being a teacher and it really was a positive influence on them, and then he worked with them on what they could do to improve in their classrooms. He actually brought in grade levels after he talked to the group. So we really tried, I mean, with the factor of having three hurricanes coming through, we really tried to
Appendix I (Continued)

be a family and to show that we all care about each other, but I think one of the biggest things that helped us was the Americore tutors. We have been fortunate. There are seven schools in Polk County that have that opportunity, and we had four or five Americore tutors and they worked with -- they could work with 16 students each and -- for the whole year, and they are trained in the Ruby -- Rigby curriculum before they come and they meet with their student three times a week for a 30-minute timeframe. So, you know, and they were like grandparents to these kids, and the kids loved going. The program was just absolutely -- it ran smooth. There were no problems, and I mean, that was just like a dream come true for the teachers to have that extra help and it’s -- it was no cost to us. It is just awesome. So we really feel like that helped. We used the compass lab. We did SRA tutoring. So with all of that and all of the teachers working together, I think that’s what helped.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number seven, what do you think district office administrators would say about your influence on the school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, they’re aware that both administrators were brand new and that, you know, we did a lot of cleaning up around the school. That was apparent to the district office. We were able to get a new parking lot, and we were able to get, you know, just clean up around where it just -- it just was a more pleasant place to be. I know that they’ve made comments about that, and you know, when you feel good about where you are, then you’re going to feel good about everything. So you know, that was a big help. I know that they’ve said that positive motivation, motivational things that we had done, they felt -- they impressed with that, and I’ve talked to them about the Americore, but the leadership style of coming in and not being overbearing, not being over demanding. I did things like when we would come back from the hurricane, I would cook breakfast for everybody because we didn’t have a cafeteria either. The teachers were having to eat with their kids in their classroom up until January, yeah, and they never complained -- I mean, it was just not an option or anything you could do about it and so we really try to go the extra effort. You know, I felt like I was the mother of the school. I was bringing homemade cookies in all the time and doing kind of things, so every little thing to show them that we care about them and that we supported them and that we were willing to do whatever we could to get them what they needed. The district was aware of that, and they were here to see it
happen, so I think again, it’s kind of repeating what we said on six, but I think that would be what they would say.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you so much. Question number eight, how do you think other principals, those who have not improved their FCAT school grade would say about your influence and the success of the school?

Interviewee: Well, I know that principals have commented that ________ and I work well as a team and that they see that. We kind of balance each other. I’m the more serious one, and he’s the one that kind of says, okay, we need to lighten up. Let’s back up a little bit. So it’s true, you know, it’s like opposites attract, and that’s exactly how our relationship is. I know that other principals said that, you know, we lost the federal housing, what is behind our campus and they feel like that, well, that probably had a big influence on our school. I don’t know because I wasn’t here whenever the -- those kids were attending our school. But other than that, they know that we have a smaller student body. We only had 420 students that year, and they -- I know they’ve made a comment that we were Title 1 and that we had extra money. Other than that, I don’t -- you know, they haven’t made any comments other than our sub groups are small, so they didn’t count. They feel like we had above-average income -- average, above-average income, so I’ve had teachers come -- I mean principals comment that we, you know, we have the migrant kids that come in and out, and we don’t, you know, they’re schools do. So that’s all that -- that I’ve heard, comments from other principals.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number nine, what do you perceive parents would say about your impact on the school’s success?

Interviewee: Well, the parents are real good about bringing up the past, and our school has had a history of several administrators changing, and having conflict with the previous administrators and so they were kind of leery of us. They didn’t know how we were going to deal with them, and there again, we have an open-door policy with our parents and so our parents appreciate the humor that Matt brings into it, and I believe they appreciate the organizational part that I bring to the table. They appreciated the motivational speakers and us allowing them -- every year they do a Casper celebration on the last Friday in October, and it’s a free carnival for all the kids, and they didn’t know if we were going to take that away, and we didn’t. We didn’t do a lot of changes. We just came in and made sure that we were supportive of the parents and the PTO and of the
Appendix I (Continued)

teachers, and the parents really responded to that because we have an excellent PTO here that really, really worked with us well.

Interviewer: That’s excellent. Okay. Question number ten, how do you think school climate impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Oh, it really effects it. I mean, you know, research supports that if you have conflict within your staff, between your staff members and between the administrator, that your grades are going to come down, and you know, they are still -- the teachers are still gun shy, I mean, because of, you know, I don’t know the previous administration, but I just know that the -- there was a real conflict, and they were yelling and screaming and that kind of thing and we just made sure that that didn’t happen, and we know that it’s important to see what the teachers are saying, so ________ would actually have the teachers come in one-on-one and -- with me sitting there with him, and he would ask, you know, what is it that you don’t want. Tell me one thing you don’t like that’s happened. I mean, we did this in December, and we were doing the intern -- the middle (inaudible), just review, and then tell me some -- tell me one thing that you liked. I mean, it was real important that we were in tune to what the teachers were thinking.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: And I think that they appreciated that, but it was -- when we did this, we did it on paper and then we did it face to face and when we did that to see what the climate was, they felt that like -- I’d say I think it was like 80 percent of the staff felt like it had improved. So there again, that probably had a big effect on our school grades.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: ‘Cause there wasn’t -- there wasn’t the conflict that was there in the previous two -- two or three years.

Interviewer: Okay. Question number eleven, what are your perceptions of how the socioeconomic level of students impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, I have always worked in a Title 1 school, and probably Boone Middle was the lowest at socioeconomic, and I know that with the poverty that is there, I don’t see -- I mean, it’s a cycle, and it goes back to what, you know, I’m a (inaudible) trainer, and I’ve gone through, you know, all of -- a week’s school of training with her, and she actually came to Boone Middle School and talked to our teachers on this subject. It -- the -- the schools -- the teachers -- the kids that are migrant workers, they don’t have any background knowledge. A lot of them are out of the school six months out of the year, maybe not six months, maybe three to four months going back and forth and traveling. It can’t help but hurt
and lower their achievement level because they don’t have that consistency. Number 1, they don’t feel safe; Number 2, they come to school, and they’ve probably have been up since dawn helping mom with the little kids and maybe not have even eaten anything. They’re worrying about, you know, where the next meal is going to come from. There are so many things that low -- socio -- socioeconomic level students have to deal with. I mean, we had -- I mean, I don’t know if you want to put this on there -- but we had really -- we had parents that were prostitutes. We had parents that were pimps, and they were drug dealers. They don’t have -- they’re raising themselves. So with all of that going on in their lives, it -- it’s -- they just cannot concentrate. So I know that Mr. Henderson is going into the state level to discuss this at length to show that there is just no way that kids from her area can compete with kids in Lakeland at George Jenkins that have -- go to Europe, you know, and they go skiing. They do all of these vacations and they’ve got all of this world experience, and these other kids at Boone are just surviving. So now, we do have some low-level kids here, but I mean, we really are like a middle, middle income family, and that is probably why we did so well.

Interviewer: Thank you. Number twelve, do you perceive that being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I’m going to -- I’m kind of on the fence on that because I know that Boone was a Title 1 school, and we had all kinds of money coming into that school, and it’s nice to have the extra help for the resources, but it did not help them, and I know that Garden Grove has never had -- been a Title 1 school, and it’s been an A school for several years. We are a Title 1 school, but we’re right on the verge of losing it because our -- our free lunch is not as low. I mean, we’re right there where the line is, the cutoff line for that. I know that our Title 1 budget was cut in half this year, so to say whether it impacts the school achievement, being able to buy the Leap Frog and being able to buy the classroom libraries, it can’t help -- it can’t do anything but help. But it’s all in how you spend that money. You’ve got to get the most for your money, and sometimes that doesn’t happen. So having the extra money, the extra training, being able to put -- put teachers in professional development and cover their classrooms, that -- that all would help.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number thirteen, what are your perceptions of how high stakes testing impact school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, as everybody keeps saying, we teach to the test, but it -- it holds us accountable. I don’t feel like we teach to the test, and this is what I keep asking, you know, pointing out to my teachers. We
Appendix I (Continued)

are teaching what the state says that our students need through our standards, our Sunshine State standards, so I -- I agree with the high stakes testing. I know it’s stressful. I know that we have to take a step back and make sure that we’re having fun while we’re teaching, but it -- you got to be help accountable and I don’t know any other way to do that. It’s really sad though whenever, you know, like, everybody tells us it’s going to be harder to keep this A then to get there, but _________ and I feel like, you know, it’s wonderful to be an A school. But if we’re not -- but we see on data, paper, that our kids are still learning, that’s what’s important. But the high stakes tests force everybody to stay focused. And it’s so easy to get sidetracked if you don’t have something like that in place. So I think that it -- it does -- I think it impacts school achievement because it makes us be accountable.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Question number fourteen, do you believe highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I’m not sure what you mean by teacher retention.

Interviewer: Those teachers who remain year after year.

Interviewee: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. ‘Cause you get a program -- for example, we are implementing right from the beginning and before that, you had to do thinking mats, so when you get new teachers in that hasn’t had the thinking mats, then they can’t really understand as well the right from the beginning, so -- and also, we’re developing a curriculum alignment and you get -- you get one curriculum alignment set up and then you’ve got a new teacher coming in or a new administrator’s coming in and they drop that, and then they pick up something else, and personally, I feel like it takes you three years to really feel like you know the curriculum, because I know that when I would teach -- be a brand new teacher in first grade and then I went to third grade, it was like being a brand new teacher all over again, and I felt like the first year, I’m reading the manuals, I’m doing everything I can and then -- but I don’t feel like I’m doing the best job, and then the second year, I can kind of pull up the things that didn’t work and then -- and then the third year I pretty much have it balanced out where I feel like I’m doing some really good teaching and understanding the curriculum. So it’s the same way. If you’re constantly having turnover with teachers, it’s starting all over again, because if you’re coming from another school, you’ve got to learn what we’re doing and you’ve got to learn how to get along with the teachers in your grade level. You’ve got to learn all the procedures. You know, there is just so much at the beginning, so it’s like having a new teacher all over again. It is very hard if you don’t have the
Appendix I (Continued)

consistency with the teachers. And you know, the -- you know, the highly qualified staff that’s really -- that’s been a struggle because there’s so few teachers out there, but I think it -- I do believe that it does impact school achievement along the same line as I’m saying as teacher retention because if you don’t have that consistency, then -- and you’re continuously learning, but if, you know, if you’re not -- if you’re not highly qualified, that means that you haven’t been in that grade level for very long, so it’s like a beginning teacher and you’re still in that learning stage. So most definitely that impacts school achievement.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Next question, question number fifteen, what are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impact school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, that goes back again to a beginning teacher. If we can connect her with -- and I’m assuming you’re meaning a peer teacher --

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: -- that has got the experience, that has already worked through those problems that, you know, the trial an errors that worked and didn’t work, it’s -- it’s going to help the beginning teacher’s attitude because she knows well, she’s not the only one that struggled and she sees this great teacher now has got it together. She has that person to bounce ideas off. She has that person to when she’s down and out you know, give her that pep talk and be there for her so she’s not out there all by herself. If they didn’t have it, I think -- you know, right now, we’re having a real problem with retaining new teachers because they’re so overwhelmed and with a good teacher mentor program in place, I can -- I just feel like that that would help them feel like they’re not out there alone, that this -- this anxiety of getting it all together is going to actually go away. It’s not going to be like this forever, and you know, with the assistance of, like, discipline problems that come up and then having an older -- highly qualified teacher to explain to them different strategies that they can do, they may be able to pull out resources for an area that the teacher’s really struggling with. I was going to say that beginning teacher time is going to give them a direction, and it’s just going to help them make it through the year.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Question 16, what are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impact school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, if you can get parents involved, and the community supporting -- you know, a perfect example, last year we had the
Appendix I (Continued)

three hurricanes, so we lost 13 days of school, and a lot of our kids had holes in their roofs. Everybody had blue tarps and, you know, kids lost clothes, and their toys and things like that were destroyed in the hurricane. Well, we had a school in Largo that is an all Alpha school that saw our school on a website, ‘cause they knew Lake Wales, they knew ______ and then they just connected that with us. They adopted us and they did a fundraiser and raised $870 and they sent it to us with Wal-Mart gift certificates and Publix gift certificates. So the kids knew that kids were caring about them and we -- we disbursed them to families that really -- that showed a need that -- you know, our teachers let us know. It wasn’t a big to do. It was done privately, but they got Christmas gifts and they knew -- and food. I mean, some of them just didn’t even have food for Thanksgiving dinner, you know. So we were able to give them those gift certificates. We had a sorority from Georgia send us book bags because a lot of their book bags and their school supplies, all of that was destroyed, and the parents didn’t have money to replace it. So they sent book bags. And then we had the Women’s Club of Lake Wales brought in coats at the winter time for the kids. The Sonic Blige (phonetic) brought us about $1500 worth of book supplies. It was just outpouring, and it just made our kids feel so good, and they didn’t have to worry and feel bad that mom couldn’t buy the book bag or the paper or the folders or the crayons or whatever they needed because all they had to do was that, you know, I don’t have it, and the teacher just picked up on that, sent a note to the office, and we got it for them. So most definitely, and, you know, and then our parents still had the Casper celebration and that’s a free carnival for the kids. They get -- the little guys are buddied up with the fourth and fifth grade and they take them around to little booths and they all get -- they get pop-corn, they get snow cones, they get cotton candy, and soft drinks, and all kinds of candy, so, you know, we try to keep things as normal, but the parents and the community just kept just giving. It was just awesome, so, yeah, and you couldn’t help but help their attitudes.

Interviewer: That’s wonderful. Thank you. Question 17, what are your perceptions of how professional development impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Well, the professional development that we did last year was the thinking mats. That was the major one that we implemented and then we had -- like I was telling you, we had Dr. Lindley come and talk to them about, you know, being a teacher and how wonderful that profession is and just a real motivational and then he gave
them some steps to go back to their classroom to implement, and then he came back and said how did it work for you, you know, and, you know, they were -- they were still -- the people that are dealing with stress at home would come to school and still have that stress and they couldn’t get over it and so that ended up being a negative attitude and then by him helping them work through that, I think that that professional development impacted our students because then, you know, the old saying, you know fake it till you can make it was really put into place with these teachers who were dealing with things that -- their -- I an, their homes had holes in it and all this but they were still here for the kids. We did -- we did a lot of professional development on learning how to do reports and look at data last year which they hadn’t been familiar with, they hadn’t dealt with. So we, you know, we looked at the FCAT scores and then in the compass lab, we were really looking at -- they did weekly reports so that they could really see where the kids were, and with the DIP program, that was focused. That’s direct implementation program through the compass lab. We focused in fourth grade and we had a 13-point gain with our fourth graders and so we were recognized at the banquet that they have in the spring every year. So it was -- you know, we really wanted those kids to know that we care, and we did a lot of that one-on-one and really trying to personalize the (inaudible) kids. But the teachers needed help with that, so they’re -- they were uncomfortable at first, and they -- they still were a little uncomfortable at the end of the year, but they’re getting better as we go along, so -- and we tried to do the -- we tried to make sure and let them have input on what professional development they needed and so they wanted everybody to be on the same page, so we started working on that, and we had worked with grade levels and if they needed _____ and I in, then we did. We went in and we discussed, let them lay things out on the table, so we worked with what they needed.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Question number eighteen, what are your perceptions of how school size impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Well, I had been, like I said, at Boone with 1200 students and now I’m at _____ with 420. I can tell you that as an administrator, I can get to know these kids. I got to know groups of kids at Boone, but I didn’t get -- not all 1200 students even after being there two years knew my name, and they didn’t know exactly what I did since I was a resource teacher. So -- but with -- with a small school, I mean, these kids all know me, even the little babies. Kids say, ______________, which isn’t an easy name to say, so I think
Appendix I (Continued)

the kids knowing that I know their names and that I come in and I look at what they’re doing and I show them that I’m interested and that they can explain to me -- you know, now I go in and go what are you doing and they can sit there and tell me, so you couldn’t do that with 1200 students. You only have so many hours in the day and then you got paperwork and you got parents and you got all these other e-mails, you know, to answer. So I think it goes back to the climate of the school. If the climate of the school is good, then your grades are going to go up. If it’s not good, then you’re going to go down. So being able to be there and let the kids know that -- that both of us care and that we’re out in those classrooms I think really helps with student achievement.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number nineteen, what do you perceive your role as school assistant principal can do to maintain a grade A for the upcoming school year?

Interviewee: Well, I am a mediator and I am trying to keep the climate on a positive note, so I -- I am their leader and I am -- and meaning that, I mean that they know they can come to me, they can tell me if they’re upset about something and then I’m going to do my very best to get it done and when they ask me to do something and I say I’m going to do it, they know they can depend on me to do it. That all helps with the climate, but my role as an assistant principal is to guide them to do what the county and the district tell us to do, the state, and to be supportive and be able to get them help when they have questions. If I can’t answer it, then, you know, I’ll tell them I can call, and I’ll do what I can to get the answer, so it’s being there as a resource, being there a support and somebody to lean on. And when there’s problems, you know, this has been real difficult thing because there’s a lot -- there’s a lot of problems here. Not a lot, I’m not going to say that, but there’s a few that want to continuously start problems and that’s been hard for me to deal with, but I’m the mediator and I have to be the bigger person. So to, well, just to be the person that they can count on. That’s the bottom line.

Interviewer: Last question, number twenty, can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: No. wait -- I’ve talked about the Americore, I talked about the motivational speakers, I’ve talked about the professional development, the community and parent involvement. The fact that _______ and I were knew administrators and we didn’t come in and do a lot of changes. We’ve already talked about that. We’re -- we’ve taken the attitude that we need to let these teachers
Appendix I (Continued)

heel from previous situations that they’ve had and ideas of what a administrator is, and -- and we know that when they vent, that it’s really -- it’s kind of like when you have a parent come in and they’re just going off on you and you don’t know what you really did, well when you really research it, it something that happened back at home and it didn’t really have anything to do with me, so you have to learn not to take it personally, and we haven’t really talked about that, but I think that ________, he does better at it than me, but he says if you want to come in and yell at me, you close that door and you come in and you yell and you scream and then get it all over with but, you know, don’t go back out there with all the staff and keep carrying it on. Get it over with, let’s talk about it and see what we can do to fix it. And that certainly, I think has been maybe -- because it really shocks them because they come in and they start telling us what they’re going to do and we just look -- we just look at them, and we’ll say okay, let’s discuss it, you know, but the bottom line is what we had to do here is just say, you know, you don’t have to like me, but you have to respect the position and know that we’re going to work together and figure out the problem together. And I think with that, it’s finally sunken in. we just sit back and we let them scream and yell if they needed to, we were just a bigger person, so I think -- and then they kind of went, oh, they’re not going to yell back, they’re not going to slam the door, you know, they’re not going to write me up because they know -- they realize that we understand where they’re coming from. So I think that helped. That’s (inaudible).

Interviewer: Thank you so much. I truly appreciate your time and your honesty and your willingness to share just the information for these questions. I know that some of them were pretty extensive, but hopefully it will depict some things that you all have done to make your school the success that it is today.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 4
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the ‘04, ‘05 FCAT?
Interviewee: Physical Education.
Interviewer: Number two, how long have you been teaching, and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: I’ve been teaching 34 years. I have also -- I also teach driver’s education in the summertime, summer school.
Interviewer: Thank you. Number three, explain what you enjoy most about teaching?
Interviewee: I enjoy the students. That’s probably about it.
Interviewer: Okay.
Interviewee: I enjoy being with the students.
Interviewer: Okay. Great. Question number four, what do you think your role as a teacher in School B played in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: It’s funny he asked and put a little note, what do you think caused the A at the beginning of the school year, and I put down PE. And personally I think -- I teach square dancing, I do aerobics, a lot rhythms, which I think helps kids listen and learn and cooperate and do a lot of things. We’ve put a program on every year for the last 30 years in this school about -- some schools may not be programs. I do, and we’ve done well with that, so I think rhythms, in general, is a big part of that.
Interviewer: Sure. Absolutely. Thank you. Question number five, what do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: Supportive, that’s about it.
Interviewer: All right. Thank you. Question number six, what do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: About the same.
Interviewer: Same thing?
Interviewee: Yeah, same thing.
Interviewer: All right. All right. Question number seven, how do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference last year?
Interviewee: I figure the same thing. I have an opinion about, give just a minute, why I think it occurred; but I think it’s a pretty old staff, very good staff in general. Some schools have very young staff, this is not. I think that helped a lot.
Interviewer: Question number eight, are you aware of how your students performed
Appendix I (Continued)

on the FCAT on an individual basis? And I -- since you’re a PE teacher, you may have kept up or you may not have kept up with how some of your kids actually performed on the FCAT individually?

Interviewee: We hear of one or two here and there as far as that, but as far as keeping up, no.

Interviewer: Okay. I’m going to go ahead and ask you question 9 and it may or not pertain --

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: -- but if yes to question 8, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for the FCAT?

Interviewee: We do the same thing, actually, a lot of rhythms, aerobics, things like that, you know, not much difference actually. I’ve been doing the same thing basically for a long time.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Thank you. Question number ten, what do you think your children’s parents would say impacted the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: Old, good teaching. This -- this school is different. I don’t want to talk about it right now. Is there a way to talk about things later on in this?

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Interviewee: Let me do that then, there.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Just good, old teachers.

Interviewer: Question number eleven, how would you explain your school’s climate last year?

Interviewee: Good, nice.

Interviewer: How do you think the school climate impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: The students learn better if you’re happy.

Interviewer: Question thirteen, what are your perceptions of how students socioeconomic level impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: We lost a lot of low socioeconomic children last year, period. Lost a lot. Sunrise, right behind us -- you see -- you hear the construction. It’s gone. A place called Caroline Place, we lost that too. A lot of low children left.

Interviewer: Question number fourteen, what are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: That’s a hard one for me. There’s more money, I know that, but as far as how it impacted, I’d have to say I have no opinion on that really.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I don’t know.
Interviewer: Question fifteen, what are your thoughts of how high stakes testing impacts the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I guess you could say it raises it. Personally, I think you learn to take a test or teach a test better. This is my opinion about that.

Interviewer: Sure. Sure.

Interviewee: I don’t like high stakes testing. I don’t like that, but that’s just my opinion. I don’t like it at all.

Interviewer: Next question, question --

Interviewee: Sixteen.

Interviewer: -- sixteen, how do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: A great deal. We had some -- actually some (inaudible) with charter last year, and the charter students, we gained some of the older staff from the charter schools to come here, not a lot, but a few. Again, it raised our teacher ratio as far as years experience by them coming in. I think it’s a better -- older teachers, in my opinion, is a better teacher.

Interviewer: Question eighteen, what are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievements?

Interviewee: We have a lot of parent volunteers here a lot of caring parents come by. This school has always had a lot of parents volunteering which to me tells me that the kids’ parents care and that helps a lot too.

Interviewer: Question nineteen, do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: Do I personally think that, no. I think you can be over trained and I think simplification is how I teach phys ed, being sports -- a successful sports team is a very simplistic, very basic thing to do it well. That’s why I think a lot of train -- you get over trained too much here and you can’t use it at all. That’s just -- okay?

Interviewer: Sure. Absolutely. Question number twenty, what are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success? Maybe we’ll start again. Okay. Questions number twenty, what are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?

Interviewee: I think a great, great deal period. The smallest class sizes I’ve ever seen in 34 years of teaching. One of the reasons, in my opinion, the rest of this town was charter. If it had been a normal year and a normal situation, we would have lost tons of units because they could size the school, but we did not. I think the county was kind to us and left us alone because the rest the town was charter. We had student classes of 10, 11, and 12 kids period. I have never seen it in my life, probably never will.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: That’s a good size. It makes a difference.
Interviewee: In my opinion -- I know studies say it does not, but in my opinion, it makes a big difference.
Interviewer: Sure. Sure. Question 21, what do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a grade A for this school year?
Interviewee: Doing the same thing I’ve been doing, lot of square dancing, a lot of rhythms, things here, and cooperating with, you know, making sure the kids know these things.
Interviewer: Last question, can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school achievement last year that we have not discussed?
Interviewee: No. The main two goals is -- are old staff, the teacher rate to teach -- I mean, the experience is great, the lowest class size I’ve ever seen in my life, period. We lost a lot of low socioeconomic kids which very seldom happens. Two things happened, the storm came, Sunrise basically closed down at the back here, we lost Carolina Place which is another socio -- low place -- socioeconomic children here, and those two things combined I think created it, because a lot of teachers thought, oh my gosh, we’ll be a C again, and we were an A and I was totally shocked. I’ve been doing the exactly the same thing I’ve been doing for years. I basically didn’t change a thing myself particularly, but I did see -- I see everybody in the world as far as schools, and that’s the two things that created, I think created the biggest change -- very, very low class sizes, all the good teachers here, and we lost a lot of low children, lots.

Interviewer: Anything else you’d like to ask?
Interviewee: No.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 5
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the ‘04, ‘05 FCAT?
Interviewee: I taught fourth grade.
Interviewer: Number two, How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: Okay. This is my 19th year of teaching, and I have taught 1st grade for eight years, I taught 2nd grade for 3 years, and 3rd grade for a couple years, so fourth grade now for -- this will be my 9th year in 4th grade.
Interviewer: Thank you. Number three, explain what you enjoy most about teaching?
Interviewee: I enjoy the interaction with the children. I enjoy seeing them learn. I also enjoy curriculum and integrating my curriculum and putting it together.
Interviewer: Thank you. Number four, what do you think your role as a teacher in school B played in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: I think perseverance, teaching to mastery as much as I possibly could, documentation of test scores, and looking for successes.
Interviewer: Question number five, what do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: Our principal was new last year, so he was relatively unsure of himself; however, he did implement school-wide testing which I think that certainly helped.
Interviewer: Question number six, what do you perceive has been the role of the school’s assistant principal in the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: She has worked to put some programs together and to get some things a little bit more on track. Again, she was new last year.
Interviewer: Great, question number seven, how do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
Interviewee: I think at _________, it’s an old staff of teachers. I -- they’re -- they’re very dedicated teachers. They work very hard. Many teachers are here on the weekends and late after school, and they make a difference because they work together as a team and -- and they work hard to teach all the students.
Interviewer: Thank you. Number eight are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?
Interviewee: The test scores came in at the beginning of the year, and quite frankly, at the beginning of the year, I’m more concerned with the new class I have; but I do have that -- that material available to me. So when we ability grouped our students and put them in different
Appendix I (Continued)

ability groups, I did look at that basically, for the student that I pre
-- that were coming into my class this year. So I was looking at the
third-grade scores.

Interviewer: Question number nine you’ve already partially answered, but I’ll
go ahead and ask. If yes to question eight, how do you perceive
this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for
the FCAT?

Interviewee: Well, we certainly are always looking to use practice material to
better prepare our children for the FCAT, to use their vocabulary
from the FCAT, and certainly looking at their test scores, finding
their weak areas, and the scores that they’re weak in and -- and
trying to teach that to mastery.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number ten, what do you think your
children’s parents would say impacted the school’s success last
year?

Interviewee: I believe that they would say it was the teachers’ dedication.

Interviewer: Question number eleven, how would you explain your school’s
climate last year?

Interviewee: Being that we had a relatively brand new administrative group, but
everyone was cautious as to what they did, but everyone just
proceeded with what they knew and that they had learned to do and
-- and what we did best and -- and that’s why had a successful
year.

Interviewer: Number twelve, how do you think the school climate impacted the
school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Well, obviously our achievement was very good last year, so it is a
good impact.

Interviewer: Question number thirteen, what are your perceptions of how
students socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: Looking at the students’ socioeconomic levels, we’re also looking
at how we can bring those children that are struggling readers or
struggling in math, you know up to grade level, so we had a lot of
tutoring put in place last year, a lot of extra curriculum put in place
to meet the needs of these children.

Interviewer: Thank you. number fourteen, what are your perceptions of how
being a title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think being a Title 1 school, it puts a lot more rules and
regulations and documents, a lot more achievements throughout
the year, and I think that can be a good thing.

Interviewer: Number fifteen, what are your thoughts of how high stakes testing
impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think the high stakes testing is good to a certain extent and it does
impact the school achievement, but I also feel that it takes over in
Appendix I (Continued)

the classroom as far as creativity because we’re very limited on what we can be creative with since we are, you know, constantly implementing test taking strategies and how best to get our students to pass the test, and I think finding a blend of both these ideas is what teachers strive for, to make the learning fun and creative but also prepare them for the high stakes testing.

Interviewer: Question number sixteen, how do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I think that our highly qualified staff certainly impacted our achievement last year; and like I said, we have a lot of older teachers on this campus and many dedicated teachers and certainly some brand new teachers that are hard workers as well and certainly worked for school achievement.

Interviewer: Question seventeen, what are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school achievement?

Interviewee: I think it’s very important to have some of the older teachers mentor some of the younger teachers so that they can come to them questions and then they can feel comfortable about asking things and -- and the older teachers, the mentor teachers, can certainly model things for them and make them more successful in the classroom.

Interviewer: Question eighteen, what are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievements?

Interviewee: We have pretty big community involvement and have a lot volunteers in our school, the parents; and certainly that played a part in making it a little bit easier for teachers and to be successful in the classroom.

Interviewer: Thank you. Number nineteen, do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: The professional development, we have had a lot of computer training. We have also had Kagan (phonetic) training which is cooperative groups --working in cooperative groups in your classroom, and also it -- show -- giving the children the opportunities to move around in the classroom and to be -- to be successful working in groups and to take leadership roles.

Interviewer: Question twenty, what are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?

Interviewee: One of the things that we did have last year in our school overall, most of our class sizes were down; and I, myself only had 14 children which is absolutely wonderful. In all my years of teaching, I’ve never had a class with only 14 children. So I certainly feel that the lower amount of students in a classroom
Appendix I (Continued)
certainly impacts the success of testing.

Interviewer:  Number twenty-one, what do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a grade A for this school year?

Interviewee:  I feel that you never let your guard down, and you continue to work as hard as you possibly can, and every year is a new year, and every group of students is a new group of students, and they all have different learning styles, and you have to pinpoint those learning styles, and you have to work as hard as you need to for the success of the students.

Interviewer:  Number twenty-two, can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee:  Again, I just feel it was the dedication of the teachers and everyone working hard and working together and also pinpointing the children that are the struggling readers and the struggling math students and working to bring them up to level.

Interviewer:  Thanks so much.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 6
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the '04-05 FCAT?
Interviewee: I taught primary, it was third grade. I did have some fourth grade students, too for remediation in reading.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Number two, how long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: Okay. I've been in the teaching field here at ________ for about fifteen years. I've worked predominantly, most of that as a paraprofessional, three years as part-time teaching and two years now as full-time teaching.

Interviewer: Thank you. Number three. Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.
Interviewee: Well, I think, number one, it's the children. They're just enjoyable to just see how they grow during the year from the beginning to the end. I've enjoyed that very much. I enjoy the peers that I work with very much and just the interaction.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number four. What do you think your role as a teacher in School B played in the school success last year?
Interviewee: Well, I hope it played a very good role because of the Spell, Read Cat Program being introduced last year and it had such an intense remediation value to it as far as with their sounds and fluency, things like that. So I think it was a very, very good impact.

Interviewer: Question number five. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's principal in this success last year?
Interviewee: Well, I think he (inaudible), number one been, you know, very responsible with providing (inaudible) getting it put together a design. She especially was helpful with this new program, (inaudible) Discovery Pad, helping me get it put together and whatever I needed, she was there to help, to find it. If she couldn't find it, she got it.

Interviewer: Okay. Question number seven. How do you think other teachers have impacted the school's success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
Interviewee: Okay. Well, I think the teachers here are more outstanding as far as working together, especially in grade levels, how they read
Appendix I (Continued)

together. They really -- you know, if there's new teachers on board they are always there to -- seems like to help them along, encourage them. And I think as far as my program is concerned, because I have a tendency to have to pull kids out of their classrooms at all different times. They were very, very good supporting, that they were there on time, providing any time that I needed to get information from (inaudible).

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number eight. Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?

Interviewee: Yes, because of the Spell, Reading Cap Program I have to be very aware of the FCAT scores and who passed and who did not pass, especially because I target all (inaudible) that were retained. That's the top priority. So, the third grade did very well.

Interviewer: Right. Question nine relates to question eight. If you answered yes to question eight, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for the FCAT?

Interviewee: Well, definitely it was important that I know about the FCAT scores, basically because that's the study program we designed to help any of the children that were retained. So, I could definitely see, especially in the reading area where I needed the emphasis on the (inaudible). and fluency needed to be (inaudible).

Interviewer: Question number ten. What do you think your students' parents would say impacted the school's success last year?

Interviewee: Well, I would say different with teachers just, you know, and the hard work that they put in, working together, I would think the different programs that they used computer-wise. They have a lot of things they implemented like that. I'm not involved in a lot of that, but I know just by talking to some other teachers that they do that. So, it was, I think -- just basically I think the teachers and how they pushed very hard, no nonsense approach.

Interviewer: Question number eleven. How would you explain your school's climate last year?

Interviewee: Okay. I would say at ______ especially it was, you know, a very exciting climate. I think people would really -- we had new administrators and things come aboard, and everybody was trying very hard to, you know, learn and listen and followed the directions of them. And I think it was an exciting thing for all of us.

Interviewer: Thank you. Number twelve. How do you think school climate impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: Well, definitely, because it was a positive influence. I think because it was a positive and exciting place to be that I think that
Appendix I (Continued)

definitely Hill can promote what they pulled together. So, I think it was very good.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question thirteen. What are your perceptions of how students' socioeconomic levels impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: Okay. I would say, personally, I think the socioeconomic levels do have an effect on the school and how they perform, and I think the teachers are very aware of that part, and so they try to kind of understand the background of these students and they try to approach it in what would be best for these students to learn from. And so, I think, you know, it has been an important part in the impact of our school.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Question fourteen. What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school issues?

Interviewee: Okay. With the Title 1 program, from what I understand it, since I'm not super heavy involved in all of that, would be that -- I know that it provides of lot of extra funding that they get, and so they can get the programs with computers and things like that. And I think that has been a tremendous help. Possibly maybe on the other side of it is that it takes a lot of paper trails and work on the teacher's part to fulfill all those obligations. But in the long run, I think all the things that they were provided extra was a big help.

Interviewer: Question fifteen. What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts you each year?

Interviewee: Okay. On that one I would have to think on that a little bit. I'm not quite sure.

Interviewer: Why don't we come back.

Interviewee: Okay. Let's come back.

Interviewer: Number sixteen. How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school this year?

Interviewee: Okay. Well, differently by them looking at the qualifications of the staff and teachers, I think helped the school to perform better because they definitely have followed those guidelines, have good teacher instruction, good staff, that are always there to assist. That helps.

Interviewer: Question seventeen. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school achievement?

Interviewee: Definitely I think a big plus, the teacher mentoring program is -- you know, I think had a tremendous help for the school because of a lot of our children coming from different backgrounds that need some guidance, and anything that helps them have a more positive outlook, it's definitely going to affect that (inaudible).
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: All right. Thank you. Question eighteen. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: Well, I think at _____ they have, you know, a really good parent participation and I think anytime you've got parents involved, helping with carnivals and all kinds of extra programs going on, and that definitely helps achieve a balance between our staff and the administration and the parents, and, you know, I think that gives a strong support. The kids see it and it helps pulling everybody together.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number nineteen. Do you think professional development impacted the school's achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: Okay. Definitely I think professional development is very important. It keeps the teachers updated and in the know, and I personally, my emphasis was put on, I did two weeks of everyday training, all day for the Spell, Read Program, and they had trainers that came from Canada and taught us. And then all through the year they had trainers that came in weekly and observed this on a two-hour basis. So, it was -- it was definitely a good thing because it really helped -- it didn't just train us the two weeks and drop us. They followed it through and were on top of it. So, it was very good. It kept us right on the program.

Interviewer: It sounds like it.

Interviewee: Yeah, it was neat.

Interviewer: Question twenty. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts the school's success?

Interviewee: Well, I really believe that, you know, a school size is -- a smaller basis, I think you can reach a lot more students and they were not overwhelmed and I think that, you know, I know persons fulfill our (inaudible) down, but I also noticed a raising up. So that could possibly have played a part.

Interviewer: Question number twenty-one. What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: Okay. Well, again, again the Spell, Read CAP Program, really targeting the students that are struggling. Anyone that was retained or then anyone that was identified in third grade as a struggling third-grade reader, from zero to 25 percentile on the FCAT is who I work with, so I think that's been probably an important part for the school, and to help them on the FCAT test.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: Question twenty-two. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted the school's achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: Well, I think there's so many programs that go on here, and I know like even the media center, all the (inaudible) things that they don't hear that help promote them in their (inaudible) it's quite an achievement, I think, what they keep doing and running --

Interviewer: Sure. Sure.

Interviewee: -- it's pretty awesome.

Interviewer: Sure. Absolutely.

Interviewee: And also the computer labs and things like that, I think are just...

Interviewer: If you don't mind, we'll go back to Question fifteen.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: And I'll ask you again. What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: Okay. Now my question is, on the high-stakes testing, what exactly is that?

Interviewer: You can use another word for high-stakes testing, standardized testing.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: FCAT testing. I know other states have standardized tests that are similar to FCAT, but it's not called FCAT, it's called whatever their state is, plus their achievement test name.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: How do you think those kinds of tests affect a school's achievement overall?

Interviewee: Okay. Well, Overall I think, you know, definitely the FCAT puts the pressure on for the teachers to really, you know, go out at it strong. My only thing is that sometimes they pushes really hard to teach only to those things on the testing, and sometimes they can't quite expand out into the teaching field. And when there's other aspects of social life for the children because they're always pushed on time and I think sometimes some of the fun is lost, it's sometimes taken out because it's more all pure academic driven.

Interviewer: Thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to add or change or go back to before I turn the tape off?

Interviewee: No. I think that's all.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 7
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the '04 ‘05 FCAT?
Interviewee: First grade.

Interviewer: Number two: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: This is my ninth year, and I've taught ESC, learning disabled class, gifted and first grade. And this year I'm teaching kindergarten.

Interviewer: Number three. Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.
Interviewee: The children.

Interviewer: Number four. What do you think your role as a teacher in School B played in the school success last year?
Interviewee: I think mostly it's just being part of the team, and being a team player and doing what everybody else needed to help with the success.

Interviewer: Number five. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's principal in the school's success last year?
Interviewee: I think that his leading us and he's very data driven, data driven. And making us look at where we were, weekends, and going from there.

Interviewer: Number six. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's assistant principal in the school's success last year?
Interviewee: Probably the same things, maybe helping a little more with the curriculum, and he took over some behavior issues, so that kind of helped let you deal with the curriculum, instead of just behavior. It makes a big difference. It does.

Interviewer: Question number seven. How do you think other teachers have impacted the school's success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
Interviewee: Well, I think that we had a teacher who pulled out third-graders who had low scores and really concentrated on them and that helped a lot. And also being team players. Each grade level acted as the team instead of individuals working alone, and that helped -- that just helped with the success a lot, I think.

Interviewer: Question number eight. I'm going to ask you this anyway.
Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?
Interviewee: I am aware how they did on the SAT 10.

Interviewer: I know some teachers have said that they kept up with their students maybe from year to year. If they taught a primary grade.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: Teaching first long enough to do that.
Interviewer: All right. Very good. I'll go ahead and ask number nine and you can just answer whatever comes to mind. And I know it says if you answered yes to eight, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for the FCAT? Maybe if you --
Interviewee: When we got results I didn't know I was going to be in kindergarten, and so we were already looking at changing the -- I don't know if you'd call it the scope and sequence of how we taught math because we weren't reaching some of the skills that were tested. And so we were going to rearrange the chapters to do that.
Interviewer: Question number ten. What do you think your students' parents would say impacted the school's success last year? I'll ask you that again.
Interviewee: Okay.
Interviewer: Number ten.
Interviewee: Thank you.
Interviewer: You're welcome. What do you think your students' parents would say impacted the school's success last year?
Interviewee: I think that they would think it was new leadership that impacted it. That's what I perceive.
Interviewer: Good. Okay. Question number eleven. How would you explain your school's climate last year?
Interviewee: Probably the same as in years past, ups and downs. Good times of the year, bad times of the year.
Interviewer: Number twelve. How do you think school climate impacted the school's achievement?
Interviewee: I think it had a lot to do with it. One of the years that we didn't do so well we had a very bad -- some very bad situations, and on teachers. There was just a general down feeling, and that was the year we didn't do so well. And also, it just -- I think it has a lot to do with if people want to come to work, they want to do a good job. If you don't want to come to work, you're kind of down the whole day.
Interviewer: This is true. Question thirteen. What are your perceptions of how students' socioeconomic levels impacted the school's achievement?
Interviewee: Because we are Title 1, I think we -- I think we focus more on helping involved parents. I really feel that some of our children come to school with nothing. They don't know how to hold a pencil, and therefore we're teaching skills like that, where as other schools, they come knowing the alphabet. So, I think that it affects it greatly.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: It makes a difference.
Interviewee: It makes a big difference, yes.
Interviewer: Number fourteen. What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school issues?
Interviewee: It's kind of the same things. On the financial end of it we did get more money to have the extra units to buy extra materials so, yes, it does. It does help. It does.
Interviewer: Number fifteen. What are your thoughts of how high stakes testing impacts school achievement?
Interviewee: There are good things because of accountability, but I also feel for the third graders and the pressure they feel and getting the ulcers, so I go both ways. But I do agree with you on the accountability part of it.
Interviewer: Question number sixteen. How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the schools achievement?
Interviewee: I think it makes a huge difference because, you know, a couple of years we've had on staff quite a few teachers who came out of -- you know, not that there's anything wrong with that, but came out of a different field and just decided to teach, and because it seemed easy, and it's not easy. And I really think it hurt us, hiring, you know.
Interviewer: Sure. Question number seventeen. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school achievement? And I don't know if you all had any first-year teachers that were assigned, an inexperienced teacher.
Interviewee: Yes. I had a student -- I mean, a teacher last year, a first-year teacher. I had two -- two teachers. The one used me the way she should. She asked me questions. I helped her with different things. I helped her with lesson plans. Anything, you know, I could help her with. The other one didn't use me at all. And she didn't stay in teaching. It was -- she lasted six months. But it's because I would offer, offer, offer and she would just not take me up on that, and now I don't think she's -- I'm pretty sure she's not in teaching. She's not at our school, for sure.
Interviewer: Interesting. Question eighteen. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school's achievement?
Interviewee: It helps because we had several parents who donated -- you know, they donate time and money. And the money buys us the things we need to - you know, the extra manipulatives, the extra test practice books. The time, you know, is just -- it gives the teacher more planning time. But there are bad things with it, though.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: Sure. Can you think of anything that might be maybe negative with it that you could think of?

Interviewee: I think that sometimes when a parent is on campus constantly people tend to cater to them and so, say, they want their child in a certain classroom. Well, they're on campus all the time. Why shouldn't I have my child. I've done this for the school. I've done that for the school, and now you're going to put my kid in so and so's room. Things like that go on. It's very negative, in my opinion.

Interviewer: Question number nineteen. Do you think professional development impacted the school's achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: I don't know that many people went to things last year. They went to things over the summer. I, myself, went to a reading workshop that I used some of the things to help out with, but I don't really know about anybody else.

Interviewer: Do you think that teacher training does help?

Interviewee: I think if you use -- I think it does if they come back and use it. If you don't use it, you forget what you've done. So... Well, we did have a training, a writing training, which I think is pretty wonderful. I don't know if everybody else, you know, does.

Interviewer: Was it here on campus?

Interviewee: Yes. Yes. We had a new -- yes.

Interviewer: So you don't have to go anywhere.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Question twenty. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school's success?

Interviewee: The year that we had -- I think we had 800 students, almost double what we are now. It was just -- we were spread so thin. We couldn't -- you know, you couldn't do hardly anything, so I think it makes a huge impact.

Interviewer: Question twenty-one. What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: Preparing the students for the future grades, making sure I don't let them go on if they're not ready to go on. I think that's a hard thing.

Interviewer: Last question. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted the school's achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: I think that when you have students go through -- you hate to say it, but you generally have a group who is brighter than another group, and so I really feel like we have a couple of groups up there that are very bright. And unfortunately, when I was in first grade,
Appendix I (Continued)

it was just kind of an average group. Nothing wrong with being average, but very few who apply. I think that that goes up through, it may really -- you know, unless they just make leaps and bounds, we might just be average. We may maintain, but we may not. So, I think that has a lot to do with it, the student population. And I hear that at different schools, too, so.

Interviewer: Is there anything else?
Interviewee: We covered a lot.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 8
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the '04-05 FCAT?
Interviewee: I taught fifth grade.
Interviewer: Thank you. Number two: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: This is my 24th year and I've taught third grade and sixth grade, as well as fifth.
Interviewer: Right. Question number three. Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.
Interviewee: I enjoy the interaction with the children and seeing learning going on. I think that sometimes you get a little discouraged when you don't see too much learning, but as the year goes on, I think that maybe what you thought they wouldn't have understood they're able to show you later on and sometimes it's -- it's not right away that you see the effects. But throughout the school year if you see one child light up because they finally understand something makes it all worthwhile.

Interviewer: Right. Thank you. Question number four. What do you think your role as a teacher in School B played in the school success last year?
Interviewee: I think I was part of a team's effort, and I'm speaking primarily for the fifth grade team. We worked very, very hard to try to get the students prepared mainly for the FCAT testing, and I think that the math portion is what we concentrated most on.

So, I'm thinking of the testing results and how the FCAT testing may have played a part in our school's receiving the A, but also I think as far as teacher attendance goes -- I didn't miss a day last year at all, and so I think that had a little something -- they were there with a teacher who was there every day and they didn't have substitutes to worry about and do busy work for. It was all good quality instruction. Be that as it may, I think that those would -- my parts in the role as the teacher at this school.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number six. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's principal in the school's success last year?
Interviewee: Okay. Let me back up to question five because we skipped that one first. The school's principal, I think he was a motivator to try to motivate the students because the teachers are motivated. He was new at the school and learning the ropes, but I think that with his enthusiasm, with his youth, and being first year as a principal, he -- I think he really did a lot to try to get the teachers motivated.
Appendix I (Continued)

There were a lot of problems that we had had school-wide the year before, and he has worked very hard, I think, to try to get the morale of the teachers up, trying to get the students in a learning mode. He relates well to the students. I think that he did a tremendous job as far as the school raising their grade to an A. I think that he just -- he's done a fabulous job of having a rapport with the students and gotten them to want to do better.

And now, as far as the assistant principal, well, sometimes I see her as a cheerleader, and she -- she does everything she can to try to help the teachers. She will get anything that we need to try to do our job better. She helps us read reports and tries to figure out areas where we're weak that we need to do better. So, she's -- she's kind of a -- in between the principal and the teachers, just doing all that she can to assist us in any way that is possible.

Interviewer: That's fine. I apologize that we skipped that question. Question number seven. How do you think other teachers have impacted the school's success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?

Interviewee: I think it's the dedication of the teachers here at the school that has really affected the grades of the testing of the students and the grade of the school. It's dedicated teachers that work every day, sometimes drilling the students, that they get very tired of doing, but it's just the dedication that the teachers have, not only in my grade level, but in all the grade levels that came before it, trying to get the students prepared for all of the testing that has to be done, and trying to make it fun, the preparation, fun activities, not just drudgery and drilling and worksheets. I don't think that that really would do that much, but it's just the teachers doing all that they can to try to prepare the students.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number eight. Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?

Interviewee: Yes. Unfortunately, we don't get the results before the end of the school year, and we have to wait, but we, as a grade level, sit down with the results and we look at the individual scores and see what areas the majority of students did poorly in and tried to do better in that particular area the next year. We talk frequently about things that maybe have worked with one of the teachers that we can try to boost up their grades. And the administration here also has given us plenty of work as far as books and things that we can use to try to help prepare the students better. So, yes, we do look at those results and individually look at it and see what we can do to help prepare the next group of students a little bit better.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Question number nine. You may have partially answered this already but, if yes to question eight, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for the FCAT. Maybe if you --

Interviewee: Well, I think I answered that pretty much, that we look at the results as a team, a grade level team and see what the weak areas are and try to find other materials that we can use to try to maybe approach it in a different way so that we can teach it, put a little more emphasis on it. Another thing that we have tried to work on is the alignment for math. And I know I'm focusing on math more. We also do it with reading as well, but for the math, just making sure that we cover all the areas that are strongly hit on the test.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number ten. What do you think your students' parents would say impacted the school's success last year?

Interviewee: Well, that's a good question. Hopefully they will see that the teacher is working very hard to try to improve the learning environment of the students. This year I know that we have -- we've started the 325 minutes a day on -- that we're focusing on academics, and some of the parents might not be as happy that we're not doing a lot of frou-frou stuff, but I think that they've seen the dedication of the teachers. The work that the students are doing to try to get them prepared is what helped to make the school successful last year.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number eleven. How would you explain your school's climate last year?

Interviewee: Last year I think we were a school that was in transition between a principal that many of the parents did not like, and so once we got a new principal who was full of enthusiasm and full of energy, I think that the parents thought that the climate of the school was much better. Teachers sometimes -- it's hard to say because we have so much that's put upon us, to teach, and then so much extra paperwork involved that sometimes the teachers get discouraged and the morale of the school is down somewhat. But I think as a whole, that the climate of the school last year was hopeful, and trying to come back from a couple of years before that were not so good, but we were motivated, I think would be a good way to describe it.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number twelve. And again, you may have answered this partially. How do you think school climate impacted the school's achievement?
Interviewee: I think that the fact that we had the new principal on board and his enthusiasm and vigor and trying to get the teachers to be the best that they could be, really helped to have us focus on the real reason we're here, and that is for the children, and to teach them to the best of our ability. And sometimes the teachers didn't like the fact that they couldn't spend as much time at the playground or wherever, and they had to focus more on teaching. But I think that it helped the school in the long run.

Interviewer: Right. Thank you. Question thirteen. What are your perceptions of how students' socioeconomic levels impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: We have a broad range of socioeconomic levels here at this school, and I think that it doesn't really matter the environment that the student comes from. You can work with those students. You can -- you can teach them, and they can show growth, as well as the ones who are higher socioeconomic levels. Overall, sometimes you see the ones from the lower levels do not do as well, but when you take everyone into consideration, even the growth that they may make throughout the year, I believe, is part of the school's grading, the amount of growth that's made, and so I think it all works together. The higher economic students do well and they may affect the grade as far as the testing results, but then I think the lower end also, they make gains and it all averages into the achievement of the school.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number fourteen. What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think that we sometimes may get more materials, being a Title 1 school, and because of that we have more -- more supplies at our discretion to use that may help. Title 1 schools also have a lot more paperwork they have to -- we have to do which some of the teachers grumble about that, but I think just the fact that we have a Title 1 person who is on board to help get us what we need and we've had excellent Title 1 people who have really tried to get parents involved, with having resources for the parents to use, and I think it all worked together to help our school achieve more.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you very much. Question number fifteen. What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: I think that because we know that testing was there in the spring, it forces us to do a better job. I don't want to say that we're teaching for the test, but we're aware of what needs to be covered in the standardized testing so that we cover all of that material, and hopefully that helps to improve the school's achievement.

Interviewer: Super. Thank you. Question number sixteen. How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: We had a high number of teachers who were new to the school who were, some first-year teachers and not as sure of what they were doing, but we also had a lot of the teachers who were retained, so to speak from year to year and I think that helping, with us helping each other has done a lot. The highly-qualified staff that we have here, who have been here year-after-year, and are motivated to do what we can is a good thing, because the students know when they get to fifth grade so and so teachers are there, and I think that it helps because we're veterans and have been teaching for quite a while. Back in my grade level, I'm the one with the lowest number of years, with 24. And I think that it impacts and if we see a teacher, a new teacher who is struggling -- and I know I'm going into question seventeen -- we do what we can to try to help them to get them prepared, to show them the materials that we have available and just to give them sometimes a shoulder to cry on at times.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Question number seventeen. I will ask that anyway, just in case there's anything you'd like to add. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: I think that we -- since we do have that program here at the school where we pair up a beginning teacher, or a novice teacher with somebody who is a veteran. I think that that helps a lot, because they're struggling, knowing that all this testing is coming up and not knowing where to begin. And so we can kind of show them the ropes and show them what we have, what works. Sometimes they find out on their own things that work and don't work, but I think because we kind of give them the helping hand, it helps, it has made an impact on the achievement of the school.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you. Question number eighteen. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school's achievement?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: I think that that has a great deal to do with the school's achievement. We have parents here who are wonderful as far as coming in and helping with motivational activities that we've had, fun activities that -- that give the child a break from the day-to-day routine, and I just think that because they make it fun, they give support, they'll come in and do anything that we want. That helps the whole school environment, just the overall climate, because the parents and the community can come in and give of their time. It really helps a lot.

Interviewer: Question number nineteen. Do you think professional development impacted the school's achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: Yes, I do think so. We've had quite a bit of training. Well, last year we were involved with computer programs that got -- at least got myself the status of Technology II, which is the second step in technology training. It makes us more aware of the technology that's out there that we can use with the students.
We've had quite a bit of training also with our computer lab as far as programs that we use with the students in there. How to get the reports, looking at the reports. We've had numerous -- I can't remember all the training, but we had numerous training events throughout the year.
Even during the summer we came back a few days early for training, and I just think that all of that makes us better teachers because we learn what's new out there and put it to use, so it can't help but help us to be better teachers which, in turn, affects the students.

Interviewer: Question number twenty. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school's success?

Interviewee: Well, I think that our school last year and this year, in particular, have been a lot lower, which I think does impact a school's success. Not that a school with more enrollment can't do a good job, but when you have a smaller class size, it can't help but improve the learning that's going on, because you can take more time one-on-one individually with struggling students. And I think that the lower class size this year has helped enormously because I am able to devote more time individually to some of the students who are having problems.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Question number twenty-one. What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a grade A for this school year?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: I think that it's just the diligence of assisting with the daily -- day-in, day-out teaching. Keeping on sometimes when you don't see that spark in the eyes of the students that they understand it, just continuing to teach it until finally it clicks with them. And I think also sometimes pairing up a struggling student with somebody who is a little more academically advanced also will help them. So my job is to put students with the ones who are struggling and also to give more of my time when I can to a small group of students who may be struggling in one particular skill. So I see myself as being devoted and just maintaining that forward thrust to try to get them with the knowledge that they need in order to do well, which hopefully will impact the grade for a good grade again this year.

Interviewer: Thank you. Last question, number twenty-two. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school's achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: I think that the teachers being part of a family here at school. I know that many of the teachers feel as though they are part of a family, and they can go to somebody when they want some advice that maybe that they can get a boost from another teacher when they're feeling down about something. I just think that the family atmosphere here at the school can help the well-being of the teachers and when a teacher feels good and is motivated and has good ideas, then I think that that helps the achievement of the school, but I think that working together as a family, being motivated to do the best we can, and just giving the students love, I think sometimes that -- you know the home life of the child is not very good, and just a pat on the back or just letting them know that you care does a lot to help that student feel better about him or herself, and that sometimes we make a difference for them to do that.

Interviewer: I will stop for just a minute, and if there's anything you would like to go back and change or add, you are welcome to do so.

Interviewee: I don't think so.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 9
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the '04-05 FCAT?
Interviewee: Second grade.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number two: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: This is my fifth year and I've only taught second grade. This is -- I'm reading coach this year, so...

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number three. Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.
Interviewee: Influencing the students in a positive way and making an impact, you know, where they experience things they might not. It's experience.

Interviewer: Right. Thank you. Question number four. What do you think your role as a teacher in School B played in the school's success last year?
Interviewee: I helped -- I mean. I was a teacher. I actually tutored third, fourth and fifth grade students and since second grade, so on a testing grade, I was also part of the extended learning, tutoring for them. So, I just prepared the students in second grade for the FCAT in third, fourth and fifth, you know, building the stepping stones, and then helping by enrichment or remediation for kids in third, fourth and fifth.

Interviewer: All right. Thank you. Question number five. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's principal in the school's success last year?
Interviewee: He was visible at school. He was here -- like he was here most of the time and he was in the classrooms, and he was very positive. Always positive.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number six. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's assistant principal in the school's success last year?
Interviewee: Oh, I don't -- as a new assistant principal last year, I'm not sure yet. She's new last year. That would be my answer to that. I don't... I am passing on that question.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Question number seven. How do you think other teachers have impacted the school's success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?
Interviewee: They go above and beyond in everything, in all they do. They don't just stop. You know, they keep going and they question, they question. If they're not getting what they need they'll ask another colleague. And if they need to go to parents' houses, you know,
Appendix I (Continued)

they'll go. I've seen teachers go to parents' houses, call parents, you know, they'll do whatever it takes to get the child here to make sure the child's motivated, to make sure the child is learning and making the gains that we expect.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number eight. Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis? And let me rephrase that a little bit. Since you worked in the extended learning program and you had for your upper grades, do you know if any students that you tutored or worked with and how they performed on an individual basis, since second grade doesn't take the FCAT.

Interviewee: Right. Not necessarily on an individual basis. It was more of a kind of here by the teacher and all they did, you know, good, bad or whatever, you know, just about it.

Interviewer: All right. Question number nine. I'm going to go ahead and ask this and you can just answer it.

Interviewee: Right. Okay.

Interviewer: If yes, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing those students for the FCAT?

Interviewee: Just knowing what they need to work on each -- you know, if they didn't do well in this, just continue to work on that.

Interviewer: All right. Great. Question number ten. What do you think your students' parents would say impacted the school's success last year?

Interviewee: New administration and small class size.

Interviewer: It made a difference. Great. Question number eleven. How would you explain your school's climate last year?

Interviewee: Let me think it over. It was positive and they were kind of feeling their way with brand new administrations and with all the trauma, the hurricanes last year, they kind of were feeling their way through it. So, seeing where each day took them.

Interviewer: Great. Question number twelve. How do you think school climate impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: I think it makes an impact if teachers, you know, are happy in the climate of the school, if the students are happy, they're going to want to be here and they're going to want to do well. So, if they're not happy, they're not going to do well.

Interviewer: Do you think that impacts the teachers as well?

Interviewee: Yes. I think it does. If the teachers are happy, the students are happy. Students can perceive that the teachers aren't happy, if the teacher is sick, the teacher won't be here, they pick up very easily on that. So I think it all, you know, goes back to them.

Interviewer: Thank you.
Interviewee: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Question number thirteen. What are your perceptions of how students' socioeconomic levels impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: I think there is some impact, you know, on the lower socioeconomic students. They don't have as high -- usually, not in all cases, as much parent involvement because the parents have to work so much. But also the higher socioeconomic you might not have a parent working where they are more involved and able to help the kids. I think it balances it out. But many of the teachers and faculty try to, you know, monitor the lower socioeconomic, so they're still getting the extra through the tutoring and then * and everything. So, I do think it makes an impact, but I think the lower and the higher kind of balance out, because we do have a good split.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Question number fourteen. What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacted school issues?

Interviewee: I think the Title 1 funding, we're able to receive more things and to get more trainings, more materials because we have that funding. We're able to purchase things from our classroom and bring in speakers, or are able to apply to go to different conferences where sometimes other school that are not Title 1 don't get the extra materials or the extra chances to do things that Title 1's get to do. So, I think it's a good thing.

Interviewer: Question number fifteen. What are your thoughts of how high-stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think the high-stakes testing, if used effectively is good. I don't think it should be taught for the test or have teachers teach the test, but if you use the data for the testing to drive your instruction, then I think it's effective. But if you're only teaching to the FCAT, then it's not effective, because the students will not, you know, retain if they are making emotional connections in learning, then it will be - - you know, and they understand how this is. So, I think it's good if it's used effectively.

Interviewer: Question number sixteen. How do you think highly-qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: Teacher retention, I'll start with that. If the teachers, the same teachers remain at the school and are consistent, then the children are more aware, you know, the parents are more aware of the teachers. There's more comfort, they have a better relationship. Teachers also feel more comfortable at a school and they have, you know, they have their feet firmly down and they know what they
Appendix I (Continued)

can do, they're not worried about, you know, learning the ropes of a school. So I think they are able to now focus more on the academics. Highly-qualified staff, if they know all of the -- If they are highly-qualified, then -- my brain is just shot today

Interviewer: Just take your time.

Interviewee: I'm fine. Highly-qualified staff, they know the basis of education, what makes a child learn and what, you know, drives a child. If they are not necessarily highly-qualified, they don't know that, they are just coming in and teaching the academics. They're not reaching the emotional needs or any other needs of the child, they are just teaching the math and the reading, they are not getting inside the child. You know, not all highly-qualified, but most, you know, if they are highly-qualified they've gone through the psychology and, you know, sociologies and all that to learn about how a child learns.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Question number seventeen. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school achievement?

Interviewee: Teacher mentoring, it kind of allows for more teacher retention. It builds a bond with the mentor. I know we had many teacher mentors last year. We had quite a few new teachers, and the more experienced staff would mentor and kind of guide the teachers and, you know, where the copier is, so they're not -- you know, what to do if a child is absent, what to do if a parent -- you know, an irate parent -- and once again, it goes back to that teacher retention. If they feel comfortable at the school and they know that they can lean on someone, they can go back to, you know, focus on the academics, they're not having to worry about that, and just kind of a shoulder to lean on.

Interviewer: Question number eighteen. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: I think it makes a positive difference in our school achievement. I think that the parental and community involvement that we have here at our school is very high. And we have very involved parents, a very involved community. They provide the school with different options, different resources through donations, not only monetary, but also volunteering in the classrooms, you know, with the bodies and tutoring and mentoring the students, allowing for that smaller group size and everything. So I think it makes a huge positive difference in the school's achievement.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: You're welcome.
Interviewer: Question number nineteen. Do you think professional development impacted the school's achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: I think it does impact school achievement because teaching is continually learning, and it's new ideas and new things. The professional development that I did last year, I did Psych III to be a mentor and have an intern. I did different reading in the professional developments and different national professional developments. I'm on a national in New Orleans. So, you know, it just provides, you know, more knowledge to rely back on as a teacher that you can then go back and apply it to your classroom.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Question number twenty. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school's success?

Interviewee: It impacts it immensely. I think a small school size, you know, a smaller class size -- necessarily not school size, but class size allows for more one-on-one teacher attention. It alleviates some of the behavior problems. The school size, more teachers, no more kids than they can call them out, you know, "Wow, you're doing a good job," or "Wait, slow down." The principal and the administration also are able to connect more with the students when they are in a smaller school with 400 students compared to some schools with 1100, 1200 in elementary. It's very hard to know all of your students at that rate. So, I think smaller schools equal more success.

Interviewer: Question number twenty-one. What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: Continuing -- continuing what we did last year, trying to reach every child, the high children to challenge them to continue to let them exceed. Excel, I mean. The average children continue, you know, wanting them to go up and not, you know, go down and continuing to work with the lower babies, you know, see -- use the data that we have, the FCAT, the DIBELS, you know, all the data we have to drive the instruction, you know, to see what each child needs, not just trying to keep the A, but keeping, you know, the A and the keeping of points going higher, so you're not just, you know, continuing to work and correct.

Interviewer: Last question. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school's achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: I think, due to the hurricanes we lost a lot of children. Simon Certain Subcategories for the FCAT, they derive their scores from,
Appendix I (Continued)

a lot of our subcategories didn't help, so that was, you know, a help because you have to have, I believe, 30 of each subcategory. A lot of our subcategories didn't have the 30, so only certain areas did count. So, I think because of our losing many children from the hurricane, having a small school size has really benefited us, to jump from a C to an A.

Interviewer: I'm going to pause for just a minute.
Interviewee: Okay.
Interviewer: And if there's anything that you want to go back and add to or change or delete, you just tell me if there's anything at all, anything you'd like to add to anything.
Interviewee: No. I maybe... No. I'm good.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 10
(Classroom Teacher)

Interviewer: What grade level did you teach during the '04-05 FCAT?
Interviewee: I taught third grade during '04-05.
Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Number two: How long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?
Interviewee: This is my 35th year, this year, so I -- last year I had 34 years of teaching. I've taught grades one through 5.
Interviewer: Very good. Thank you. Explain what you enjoy most about teaching.
Interviewee: I love children. I felt from a very early age that that was what I was supposed to do in life, was to be a teacher. Just the smiles on the children's faces and seeing the excitement that they have when you are presenting something that they know nothing about and they are excited about, that is worthwhile for me. I love children. That's it.
Interviewer: Thank you. Question number four. What do you think your role as a teacher in School B played in the school success last year?
Interviewee: Well, I think it was extremely important. My role as a third-grade teacher -- third grade is very crucial on the FCAT testing because of the retention if the students do not score a level 2 or higher. The grouping and the individualization that we did in our reading program, I think that was a big impact on the school's A grade last year.
Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Next question, number five. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's principal in the school's success last year?
Interviewee: That's a hard one. __________ was new to the school last year. We had a completely new administration. He came in and he was - - had different ideas and was open to a lot of changes. Some of the older teachers were a little reluctant because we had felt very comfortable in what we had done for the past many years, and he came in and there were a lot of changes made. But I think his -- I think __________ willingness to try some different things that he thought might help improve the school certainly had an impact.
Interviewer: Thank you. Question number six. What do you perceive has been the role of the school's assistant principal in the school's success last year?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: ___________ was very willing to try to get us any materials that we thought would be beneficial to the students in the preparation for the FCAT and she went above and beyond the call of duty there in providing us with what we felt like we needed, some extra supplemental materials to prepare us. And she also, if we had any problems, we could go to her at any time and she would -- she was very willing to help us.

Interviewer: That's nice. Question number seven. How do you think other teachers have impacted the school's success last year? In other words, what do you think they did to make a difference?

Interviewee: I think the teachers working together as a team, teamwork. It took all of us together. And I think that's just something that we all wanted to do, is work as a team to do the best that we could for ___________.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number eight. Are you aware of how your students performed on the FCAT on an individual basis?

Interviewee: I saw the scores, yes.

Interviewer: All right. Very good. Number nine. If yes to question number eight, how do you perceive this impacted your teaching techniques last year in preparing for the FCAT?

Interviewee: I think, in looking over the scores, the teachers were able to see which areas that we needed to really focus on. And in planning our lessons before the FCAT test arrived, we knew exactly what we needed to spend more time on.

Interviewer: Next question, number ten. What do you think your students' parents would say impacted the school's success last year?

Interviewee: Let's come back to this.

Interviewer: Okay. We certainly can. Number eleven. How would you explain your school's climate last year?

Interviewee: It was certainly a school of change with a new administration. There were many new teachers on the staff, learning each other and getting used to different procedures and different things that were going on at the school. That's all I can think of for the climate here. It was -- it was enjoyable.

Interviewer: Great. Question number twelve relates to number eleven. How do you think school climate impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: Well, I think because they were so new, so many new staff members, and we were all new and the new staff members learning, meeting the other teachers and getting used to them. I think we all decided that we wanted to work together as a team to do the best that we could to help the children prepare for the FCAT. We just gave it our all. We just gave it our all.
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: All right. Thank you. Question number thirteen. What are your perceptions of how students' socioeconomic levels impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: Well, this definitely affects a classroom and the achievement of the student. We have had -- back there, behind the school building, we have had projects and they have since been removed, and the families have moved out, but many of the lower socioeconomic students did struggle, didn't have, really, the supportive home that they needed and really had to have that nurturing here at school. We had to give them extra help and extra tutoring and things like that. I mean, I think that little extra pushed -- definitely helped them on the testing.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number fourteen. What are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school issues?

Interviewee: I think being a Title 1 school does help the school because we are required to do testing and we have to really stay up on top of things which, if we were not Title 1, we might get a little lax. And I think we're always looking at new ways, assessing scores, you know, data, going over data and trying to figure out, you know, this didn't work, what could we do better, how can we show some improvement. You'll try this a little bit differently next year. So, I think that did help us with all the Title 1 testing that we do, that helped us.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number fifteen. What are your thoughts of how high stakes testing impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I think sometimes with the students it brings on some frustration and some nervousness. Some students do very well on testing, some are not test-takers at all. So, sometimes I don't think it's as valid as maybe the results appear to be. I think maybe if there's different ways that it could be presented in the classroom, other ways that they can get to the data without test, test, test, because it is tough on the children. It's very tough.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number sixteen. How do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the schools achievement?

Interviewee: Oh, teacher -- the retention of students, yes. Sometimes teachers know immediately at the beginning of the school year students should have been retained that are not. So it did have an impact, the students being retained that needed to be retained. The highly-qualified staff, I think that helped the school. I believe practically everyone here on staff is highly-qualified and have had many years
Appendix I (Continued)

of experience where you have many veteran teachers here, and I think it has helped. Helped the school.

Interviewer: Yes, ma'am. Let me clarify a little bit for number sixteen. I may have stated it incorrectly. Do you think teacher retention as far as those teachers who remain here year after year --

Interviewee: Oh, okay.

Interviewer: -- has impacted. Yes, ma'am.

Interviewee: Oh, okay. That would be a veteran teacher that has been --

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Yes, I see that.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm sorry.

Interviewee: No, that's all right. That's okay. Definitely. Definitely. I think when a teacher has been in the same school for many years they really have -- they feel as if that's part of their home and they have a lot invested in that school, and I think they're hoping for the very best for that school and they're willing to work as hard as necessary to do whatever needs to be done to see that the students achieve.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question seventeen. What are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school achievement? And for this particular question I'm not sure if you all had any beginning teachers that have been paired with more experienced teachers.

Interviewee: Yes. Yes. That definitely happened last year and I think it did help. It's very overwhelming for a new teacher to start in at the beginning and come into a new school. And they definitely need a teacher to mentor them and help them to be able to know what, you know, what's expected and to know that they have somebody that's there, willing to help at any time that they need help. And that definitely was an impact last year at _______.

Interviewer: Right. Question eighteen. What are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school's achievement?

Interviewee: Well, we had community involvement. We had business partners, and that helped a lot, because they were able to donate money to each grade level, and we could use that money to buy supplies and things that we needed to prepare us for the testing. So that was a very positive impact on our school.

Interviewer: Great. Question number nineteen. Do you think professional development impacted the school's achievement, and what types of teacher training did you participate in last year?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewee: Let's see. Yes. The professional development did impact ____. We started our data analysis and looking at scores and deciding what we need to do differently, what could, you know, bump those scores up, and that helped us. Oh, the types of training, mostly computer training, getting teachers technology certificate -- certification number two last year, so that was where we spent a lot of our time, on the extra training that we did, is on technology.

Interviewer: What would the training number two designate you to be able to do? Would that take you to a different level of training?

Interviewee: Yes, there's technology certification one and then there's certification two, and it's just a continuation of one, using different methods of using technology in your classroom and your instruction, more in-depth use of computers in the classroom.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Question twenty. What are your perceptions of how school size impacts a school's success?

Interviewee: Now, when you say school size, are you talking about classroom size?

Interviewer: I could be talking about class size or the --

Interviewee: Just the entire school?

Interviewer: -- size of the school in general. Yes, ma'am, the number of students there.

Interviewee: Well, with smaller classrooms I can definitely say that is a big plus. That has helped tremendously in the past few years when we've had smaller, under 20 students per class, versus 35 in the past, a big difference in the amount of time that you can spend with the children and give them individual help. You just almost feel overwhelmed when you have the large classrooms and you feel very frustrated because you just simply don't have the time that you want to spend with all the children. A good -- the school as a whole, this is a large campus. Although we did lose some students when we lost the projects back here behind the school, but we're looking -- they're thinking about rebuilding back there, so our campus will grow again in a few years.

Interviewer: Question twenty-one. What do you perceive your role as a teacher is for maintaining a grade A for this school year? For this school year.

Interviewee: I think, as a teacher being willing to go the extra mile, do whatever is necessary, work with those students that are struggling. The lower 25 percent, extremely important, working in small groups with them every day, if possible, seeing that they get the extra tutoring. We have many programs here at school where that's offered, and that has been very helpful, too, so that they have an
Appendix I (Continued)

opportunity that they can get some extra tutoring and some extra help from other programs, besides just the classroom teacher. So, I think all of us working together, that's what it takes.

Interviewer: Question twenty-two. Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school's achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: I cannot really. May I be honest with you?

Interviewer: Please

Interviewee: I was quite surprised, as many staff members were, that we achieved an A, because we -- with the changes that were made last year and seeing that after doing things, you know, the same way for many years, the new changes, I think we were all a little nervous and hesitant, but it worked. It worked, and maybe that's what we needed, some changes. Sometimes you need that to kind of shake you up a little bit.

Interviewer: Thank you. If you don't mind, we'll go back to question number ten.

Interviewee: Question number ten.

Interviewer: Yes, ma'am. And I'll just repeat it again and give you some time to answer. What do you think your students' parents would say impacted the school's success last year?

Interviewee: I would say that the continuation of the reading program, the grouping for reading, that has been very helpful in the past and parents have been very happy with that. Perhaps they would say the administration, having some new administrators. I'm not real sure. I'm not real sure on that. But I think that the devotion of the teachers, because we do have many, many devoted teachers on the staff here, and I think the parents realize that.

Interviewer: I'll give you a second if there's anything else you'd like to add or ask me to take out, all you have to do is just let me know before I turn off the tape.

Interviewee: I think I'm fine. I think I'm fine.
Appendix I (Continued)

School B, Interview 3
(Computer Lab Manager)

Interviewer: Okay. Question number one, what area did you teach during the ‘04, ‘05 FCAT?

Interviewee: I tutored second grade, and then I -- I started in here in February -- in February right..

Interviewer: All right. Very good. Number two, how long have you been teaching and what other grade levels have you taught?

Interviewee: I’ve been -- I started last school year, August last school year, and right now I’m tutoring the low reading class in fourth grade and the low math class.

Interviewer: Good. Question number three, explain what you enjoy most about teaching?

Interviewee: Helping the students. The ones I teach reading right now are very low and it’s -- it’s hard for them to -- some of them, it’s hard for me to manage them, but what they’re doing.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number four, what do you think your role as a tutor and computer repair professional in School B played in the school’s success last year?

Interviewee: Helping them get ready for the FCAT (inaudible). Helping them with whatever they were doing in the classroom.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number five, what do you perceive has been the role of the school’s principal in the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think he did last year to make the school a success?

Interviewee: (Inaudible) been in the classroom. It’s hard for me to say.

Interviewer: Sure. All right, well, why don’t we skip that one and we’ll come back to that. Question number six is similar, what do you think the assistant principal did last year to make the school a success?

Interviewee: I’ll answer both of them at the same time. I think it’s getting the right teachers in the classroom, small class sizes, keeping discipline in the classrooms. Of course, that had a lot to do with the teachers also.

Interviewer: Great. That’s great. That’s fine. Thank you. Number seven, how do you think other teachers have impacted the school’s success last year? In other words, what do you think the teachers did to make a difference?

Interviewee: Get the students ready for the test, and they did a lot of practice testing and making sure they knew how to do, you know, the different subjects.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number eight, and I’ll reword question number eight just a little bit.
Interviewee: Okay.
Interviewer: Are you aware of how any of the students perhaps that you tutored and worked with on an individual basis, how they performed on the FCAT, if they did well, if they didn’t do so well?
Interviewee: I don’t really know about the FCAT, but I -- I tutored first and second last year and as far as I -- I didn’t see their testing results or anything. As far as I know they did well. Most of them went on to third grade.
Interviewer: I think I’ll skip number nine and go on to ten. What do you think your children’s parents would say impacted the school’s success last year?
Interviewee: And this is as a parent because I have two children here.
Interviewer: Please do. Thank you. That would be great.
Interviewee: Giving them as much practice as possible. I know that we did not have very many that did not pass it. A lot of the lower students did pass, and I think that has a lot to do with the different practice and the books that they went through up until the FCAT.
Interviewer: Question number eleven, how would you explain your school’s climate last year? In other words, what was the mood of the school last year?
Interviewee: You mean the students or?
Interviewer: Students, teachers, just everyone. Describe how it felt last year. How would you describe that?
Interviewee: I think there was a good atmosphere with the students in getting them ready and I know they were wore about by the time the test came, just keeping their -- keeping, you know, their mood up and keeping them excited about taking testing stress free and doing things different with them.
Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Next question, question number twelve, how do you think the school climate impacted the school’s achievement?
Interviewee: I think it helped them from being so stressed. Most of them anyway, most of them just -- they just dreaded the test, but I think the majority went into it, you know, not really worrying about it. I know my son did, and he took it last year, but he did very, very well. I think it was a good atmosphere. Most of them did very well.
Interviewer: Okay. Question number thirteen, what are your perceptions of how students’ socioeconomic levels impacted the school’s achievement?
Interviewee: What do you mean by that --
Interviewer: I’m sorry, let me re -- let me --
Interviewee: -- socioeconomic?
Appendix I (Continued)

Interviewer: Students from different backgrounds and levels of income within their families.

Interviewee: We have a lot of low income, and I know some of the students of the students live with their grandparents because, you know, mom and dad are elsewhere, but I think a lot of them did well because they had the encouragement from their teachers to do well even on the practice tests.

Interviewer: Good. I’m sorry did you have any more?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Question fourteen, what are your perceptions of how being a Title 1 school impacts school achievement?

Interviewee: I don’t really know the background for Title 1. I’m not sure how to answer that question.

Interviewer: That’s all right. Let me see if I can -- I can add a little bit more. I know in Title 1 schools, Title 1 typically gets extra funding, extra money. I don’t know if perhaps you all have used that money in any specific way for new programs or -- or added new teachers or staff members as a result of getting that money.

Interviewee: That, I don’t know.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I can’t really answer that question. I don’t know.

Interviewer: Not a problem. We’ll go on to question fifteen.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts of how high stakes testing impacts school achievement, and again, that just (inaudible).

Interviewee: Are you talking about student grades or?

Interviewer: It could be student grades, it could be do you think that with having the FCAT every year, do you think it makes a difference in how well a school is doing, or do you think it doesn’t make a difference?

Interviewee: I think it does and it doesn’t because of some -- you know, a lot of the students are -- there grades are very high, but then you got the low, you know, the low grade students that really have a hard time with just basic, their basic class work in the classroom. I think it helps them learn different applications in like Math and reading comprehension.

Interviewer: Thank you. Question number sixteen, how do you think highly qualified staff and teacher retention impacted the school’s achievement, and I’m sorry, let me clarify it a little bit. I apologize if these might be real vague but when I -- when I speak of highly qualified staff members, those teachers that are trained to be in that position and those teachers that are certified to teach. Those teachers when I discuss teacher retention, those individuals that stay year after year after year. They don’t stay one year and then
Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: -- and stay there for a year. Do you think that those type of issues make a difference in how well the school does?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. A lot of the students that are in the lower grades know, you know, a lot of the teachers that are in the upper grades, and I think that has a lot to do with how well they do in the classroom because the teacher has been here for a certain amount of time.

Interviewer: Question number seventeen, what are your perceptions of how teacher mentoring programs impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I’m trying to think. Another teacher mentoring, like, I guess, a teacher that’s been here for a year or I know they’ve had interns.

Interviewer: Do you think that if you did have a new teacher or a teacher that was struggling, do you think it would make a difference for them if they have someone that had been successful and had experience in the past helping them? Do you think that would make a difference for that teacher and therefore make a difference for the school?

Interviewee: Definitely. That mentor would be able to give them some ideas in how to run a classroom such as discipline or how to setup, how they do their reading classes or their math classes because there is always different students on different levels of each of those. And someone who hasn’t been in a classroom. It may be their first year, just being their first year, they’ll have a hard time.

Interviewer: (Inaudible).

Interviewer: That’s great. Thank you. Question number eighteen, what are your perceptions of how parental and community involvement impacted the school’s achievement?

Interviewee: I think they helped a lot because we have very good volunteers here and of course the parents of the students here also, so -- and they help the teachers a lot, you know, getting their, like, things together and, you know, maybe for the next week or whatever. That way, they can spend more time on their lesson plans or teaching in the classroom or, you know, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number nineteen, what do you think professional development -- I’m sorry. Let me say that again. Do you think professional development impacted the school’s achievement, and what types of training did you participate in last year?

Interviewee: The only training I got last year was a course when I started in here in February, but other than that, I really didn’t have any other training.

Interviewer: Do you think that those training opportunities impact a school’s
Appendix I (Continued)

achievement when teachers and staff do get trained on different programs?

Interviewee: Yes, because then they’re able -- they’re able to help the student when, you know, maybe they’re doing it in the classroom or even in here. I’m not always in here, you know, so I think it does.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question number twenty, what are you perceptions of how school size impacts a school’s success?

Interviewee: There’s a subject. School size, I don’t think it matters how many students are in the school. I think it matters how big the classroom sizes are. If you have enough teachers to maybe have less than 20 students in a classroom, and I think that way the teacher is able to help them, you know, there’s more attention paid to each student if there’s not so many in a classroom.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Question twenty-one, what do you perceive your role as the computer peer professional is for maintaining a grade A for this school year?

Interviewee: I guess by tutoring them, you know, the lower reading or lower math students to keep their grades up, helping them in here and that’s about it.

Interviewer: That’s great. That’s great. Thank you. Last question: Can you think of any other factors that you believe could have impacted your school’s achievement last year that we have not discussed?

Interviewee: I can’t think of anything.

Interviewer: I’ll just take just a second, and if there’s anything that you want to add or change or go back to, all you have to do is just let me know before I stop the recorder. You just take your time.

Interviewee: (Inaudible)

Interviewer: All right.
About the Author

Tracey Duff Tedder is a 4th generation Floridian. She grew up in Lakeland, Florida and attended public schools in elementary, middle and high school. She was a public schools classroom teacher, public schools district office employee and public school based administrator. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of Education and Director of Clinical Education at Southeastern University. Teaching is a passion for the author and as a public school teacher, high stakes testing is of high interest.

The author is certified by the state of Florida in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education and Educational Leadership. She has taught Early Childhood courses at the Community College level and continues to enjoy teaching future teachers at the Bachelor Degree seeking level. She is a member of Phi Delta Kappa and many local community organizations. Mrs. Tedder believes that all students can learn and strives to instill that in the students she teaches, today.

She and her husband reside in Lakeland.