

# **Bridging the Gaps to Improve Teaching and Learning**

**Written by**  
**Jody C. Isernhagen, Ed.D.**  
**Principal Investigator, Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability**  
**Associate Professor of Educational Administration**  
**132 Teachers College Hall**  
**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**  
**Lincoln, NE 68588-0360**  
**402.472.1088**  
**jisernhagen3@unl.edu**

**Jackie Florendo, M.A., Doctoral Candidate**  
**Secondary Investigator, Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability**  
**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**  
**Lincoln, NE 68588-0360**  
**402.472.8026**  
**jflorend@unl.edu**

**Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Project**

**Contracted by the Nebraska Department of Education**

**Also supported by**  
**College of Education and Human Sciences,**  
**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**  
**October, 2012**



# Bridging the Gap to Improve Teaching and Learning

## Table of Contents

<b>Section I: Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section II: Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Section III: Research Studies.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Study 1: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress of Title I “Needs         Improvement” Schools .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Theme 1: Title I School Improvement Plan.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Theme 2: Clear Focus .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Theme 3: Culture.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Theme 4: Instructional Strategies.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Theme 5: Professional Development.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Theme 6: Data/Monitoring.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Theme 7: Community Involvement .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Theme 8: Overall Improvement.....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Study 2: Educator Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Nebraska         Public Schools .....</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Section IV: Appendices.....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>A. Study 1: IRB Approval Letter .....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>B. Researchers and Team Members .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>C. Study 1: Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Survey .....</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>D. Study 1: Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability         Interview Protocol Survey.....</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>E. Study 2: IRB Approval Letter.....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>F. Study 2: Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey.....</b>	<b>233</b>

# TABLES

## Study 1: Tables

1	Administrators' and Teachers' Highest Mean Ratings .....	21
2	Administrators' and Teachers' Lowest Mean Ratings.....	22
3	Title I School Improvement Plans Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings .....	59
4	Clear Focus Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings .....	67
5	Culture Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings .....	81
6	Instructional Strategies Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings .....	99
7	Professional Development Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings .....	113
8	Data/Monitoring Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings .....	124
9	Community Involvement Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings .....	141
10	Overall Improvement Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings.....	151
11	Significant Differences between Male and Female Administrators .....	176
12	Significant Differences between Male and Female Teachers.....	176
13	Significant Differences between Administrators and Teachers.....	177
14	Significant Differences between Teachers with 0-10 years and 10-20 years .....	177
15	Significant Differences between Teachers with 0-10 years and 20-30 years .....	177
16	Significant Differences between Teachers with 10-20 years and 20-30 years .....	178
17	Significant Differences between Teachers with 20-30 years and over 30 years .....	179
18	Significant Differences between Free and Reduced Lunch Rates .....	179
19	Significant Differences between Rates of ELL Student Population .....	180
20	Significant Differences between Rates of Student Mobility.....	181
21	Significant Differences between Elementary and Secondary Schools.....	181

# FIGURES

## Study 1: Figures

- 1 Average survey rating of administrator and teacher perceptions of Title I School Improvement Plans (2011-2012) .....20 and 58

## Study 2: Figures

- 1 Positive Parental Involvement Predictors.....191
- 2 Indicators Impacting Student Success .....193
- 3 Rural and Non-Rural Schools Level of Success in Engaging Parents.....195



## Terminology

**The following list is comprised of commonly used terms which emerged in conversations with Title I Administrators and Teachers.**

**AdvancEd:** An organization which engages “in delivering high-quality school improvement and accreditation services. We are committed to helping each institution celebrate its successes, yet continue to push for excellence aided by an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. Our staff and volunteers provide leadership, technical assistance, quality assurance reviews, and communication support.” Source: [www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org)

**AIMSweb:** “A web-based assessment, data management, and reporting system that provides a framework for Response to Intervention (RTI) and multi-tiered instruction. Designed specifically to universally screen and progress monitor, AIMSweb uses brief, valid, and reliable General Outcome Measures of reading and math performance for Grades K-8 that can be used with any curriculum.” Source: [www.aimsweb.com](http://www.aimsweb.com)

**APL:** APL Associates are “professional staff development associates” who work to develop and refine those skills that result in a more productive in-class program but also (are) committed to setting up and assisting in maintaining a follow-up process.” Source: <http://aplassociates.com/>

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** “As a condition of receiving federal funds under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), all states are required to define a process for identifying groups of students, schools, districts and the State as being in need of improvement. This requirement is called adequate yearly progress or AYP. It is an annual status check of identified data elements to determine whether or not buildings and districts are meeting State AYP progress goals.” Source: [http://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/pdfs/AYP\\_Guidance\\_2010\\_11\\_March\\_04\\_2011.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/pdfs/AYP_Guidance_2010_11_March_04_2011.pdf)

**BrainPOP:** “Founded in 1999, BrainPOP creates animated, curricular content that engages students, supports educators, and bolsters achievement. In traditional, blended, and ‘flipped’ learning settings, BrainPOP supports individual, team, and whole-class learning. At school and in informal learning environments, our characters help introduce new topics and illustrate complex concepts.” Source: [www.brainpop.com/about](http://www.brainpop.com/about)

**California Modified Assessment (CMA):** “In April 2007, the United States Department of Education enacted regulations for an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards. The California Department of Education, in response to the federal regulations, is continuing to develop and implement an alternate assessment of the California content standards based on modified achievement standards for children with disabilities who have an individualized education program (IEP).” Source: [www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/cmastar.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/cmastar.asp)

**Check4Learning (C4L):** “The Check4Learning assessment system: blends the processes for developing, delivering, and scoring standards-based assessments, displays reports that indicate student performance, and provides feedback that supports data-driven instructional planning.” Source: [c4l.caltesting.org](http://c4l.caltesting.org)

**Core Phonics:** “The *CORE Phonics Survey* assesses the phonics and phonics related skills that have a high rate of application in beginning reading. Each survey presents a number of lists of letters and words for the student to identify or decode. Pseudowords, or made-up words, are included since the student must use decoding skills to correctly pronounce these words and cannot have memorized them. These assessments are best used to plan instruction for students in the primary grades and to develop instructional groups. They may be administered every four to six weeks.” Source: <http://www.senia.asia/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/CORE-Phonics-Survey-Scholastic.pdf>

**Danielson Model:** A Framework for Teaching often used for teacher evaluations, which consists of a research-based set of components of instruction, grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching. It is also referred to as “Charlotte Danielson,” for the teaching and learning expert who formulated the model. Source: <http://www.danielsongroup.org/>

**DesCartes:** “DesCartes is a learning continuum resource aligned to state standards. It is designed to help you translate the raw data from your students' assessments into actionable plans for instruction, grouping and more.” Source: [www.nweq.org/products-services/classroom-resources/descartes](http://www.nweq.org/products-services/classroom-resources/descartes)

**DIBELS:** “The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills.” Source: [www.dibels.org/dibels.html](http://www.dibels.org/dibels.html)

**Direct Instruction:** “Direct Instruction (DI) is a model for teaching that emphasizes well-developed and carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined and prescribed teaching tasks. It is based on the theory that clear instruction eliminating misinterpretations can greatly improve and accelerate learning.” Source: <http://www.nifdi.org/15/about-di>

**Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA):** “At the beginning of the school year your child will read a benchmark book to the teacher and then retell the story. The teacher then scores your child on a range of skills, such as accuracy of reading, comprehension, and fluency. This system starts with level A, for the easiest books, and then switches to numeric levels, running from 1 to 80.” Source: <http://www.scholastic.com/resources/article/leveled-reading>

**English Language Learners (ELL):** “An academic program targeting students whose primary language is not English, and who are working to master the language as well as content in various areas in school.” Source: <http://www.netc.org/focus/challenges/ell.php>

**English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA):** “ELLA is a research-based professional development program that improves academic literacy instruction for pre-K through 8th grade students. ELLA meets the needs of English language learners, students with low-literacy skills, and other students who may experience difficulty mastering academic language.” Source: <http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/serv/125#data1>



**Educational Service Unit (ESU):** “ESUs are service-oriented, non-regulatory agencies designed to achieve a better balance of educational opportunities for students regardless of the population, financial differences, or geographic limitations of school districts.” Source: <http://www.esu10.org/about-us>

**Intervention Project Manager (IPM):** “An individual hired to work with building principals and district administration to assist with coordinating implementation and evaluation activities, manage data and report progress to the Nebraska Department of Education to meet Title I School Improvement requirements.” Source: [www.nde.org](http://www.nde.org)

**John Baylor Test Prep:** This program “is the in-person and on - line ACT<sup>®</sup> Prep course that boosts ACT scores an average of more than two points following your first JBTP ACT<sup>®</sup> Prep course - more on later ACT<sup>®</sup> tests.” Source: [www.johnbaylortestprep.com](http://www.johnbaylortestprep.com)

**Kagan (Structures):** “Kagan Publishing and Professional Development is all about engagement! Central to most Kagan publications and workshops are Kagan Structures. You've probably heard of some popular Kagan Structures including Numbered Heads Together, Timed Pair Share, RallyRobin, and Quiz-Quiz-Trade. Those Kagan Structures, and many more, are now used world-wide from kindergarten to adult education, in all academic subject areas to boost student engagement and learning.” Source: [www.kaganonline.org](http://www.kaganonline.org)

**Marzano:** “Robert J. Marzano, PhD, is cofounder and CEO of Marzano Research Laboratory in Centennial, Colorado. A leading researcher in education, he is a speaker, trainer, and author of more than 30 books and 150 articles on topics such as instruction, assessment, writing and implementing standards, cognition, effective leadership, and school intervention. His practical translations of the most current research and theory into classroom strategies are internationally known and widely practiced by both teachers and administrators.” Source: [http://www.marzanoresearch.com/about/about\\_dr\\_marzano.aspx](http://www.marzanoresearch.com/about/about_dr_marzano.aspx)

**Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McRel):** “A nonprofit, nonpartisan education research ‘laboratory’ where knowledge about what works in education would be turned into practical guidance for educators.” Source: [www.mcrel.org/about](http://www.mcrel.org/about)

**NeSA:** “The Nebraska State Accountability assessment. NeSA-R is the reading, NeSA-M is the math, NeSA-S is the science, NeSA-W is the writing assessment. These are administered throughout the state, are available in Spanish and allow for special accommodations in efforts at a more balanced educational system.” Source: <http://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/Index.html>

**National Institute For Direct Instruction (NIFDI):** This is “a non-profit organization providing continuous administrative and curricular support to schools and districts as they implement Direct Instruction (DI) programs; as well as conducting, promoting and publicizing high -quality research on the effects of DI implementations.” Source: [www.nifdi.org](http://www.nifdi.org)

**Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA):** An organization “Born from the common goals to improve the education system and encourage learning for each and every student,

NWEA was founded in 1974, creating one of the first computerized adaptive assessments.”  
Source: [www.nwea.org](http://www.nwea.org)

**Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAPS):**

“Created by educators for educators, MAP assessments provide detailed, actionable data about where each child is on their unique learning path. Because student engagement is essential to any testing experience, NWEA works with educators to create test items that interest children and help to capture detail about what they know and what they’re ready to learn. It’s information teachers can use in the classroom to help every child, every day.”

Source: <http://www.nwea.org/products-services/computer-based-adaptive-assessments/map>

**Paraprofessional or Paraeducator:** “A teaching-related position within a school generally responsible for specialized or concentrated assistance for students in elementary or secondary schools.” Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraprofessional\\_educator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraprofessional_educator)

**Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRC):** A resource center which works to “help implement successful and effective parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that lead to improvements in student academic achievement and that strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the education needs of children.” Source: [www2.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html)

**Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools (PLAS):** “PLAS is yet another way of looking at school performance to identify specific schools for assistance. PLAS does not replace the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of No Child Left Behind. All schools identified as being in need of improvement under AYP are now also considered PLAS.” Source: [http://www.education.ne.gov/arra/PDF/PLAS\\_TALKING\\_POINTS\\_5\\_10.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/arra/PDF/PLAS_TALKING_POINTS_5_10.pdf)

**Professional Learning Communities (PLC):** Within a school, “a PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work *interdependently* to achieve *common goals* linked to the purpose of learning for all. The very essence of a *learning* community is a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student.” Source: [www.allthingsplc.info](http://www.allthingsplc.info)

**Promethean Interactive Whiteboard (Smart Boards):** “With the use of various pen tools one can write onto these smart boards or also can make some sort of drawings, which help in art classes and other classes where students need particular visuals. The invention of smart boards has helped us to move out of the traditional blackboards and overhead projectors. With their usage one can interact with the class from the front side because now one does not need to sit behind the computer to showcase the changes. The changes can be brought on the screen directly with the usage of touch sensitive screen.” Source: [www.technology-education.net/smart-boards.htm](http://www.technology-education.net/smart-boards.htm)

**Parent Teacher Organization (PTO):** “Single-school groups that operate under their own bylaws and by and large concern themselves with the goings-on at their building or in their town only. They are generally comprised by parents, teachers, staff and other concerned adults.” Source: [www.ptotoday.com](http://www.ptotoday.com)

**QReads** (QuickReads): “A research - based and classroom - validated program that systematically increases fluency, builds vocabulary and background knowledge, and improves comprehension. Through a unique combination of text and consistent instructional routine, QuickReads result in improved reading proficiency for students at all ability levels.” Source: [www.quickreads.org](http://www.quickreads.org)

**Quick Write:** “A versatile strategy used to develop writing fluency, to build the habit of reflection into a learning experience, and to informally assess student thinking. The strategy asks learners to respond in 2–10 minutes to an open-ended question or prompt posed by the teacher before, during, or after reading.” Source: [nrhs.nred.org](http://nrhs.nred.org)

**Read Right:** Read Right is “a system of reading instruction and reading intervention for every age and grade level grounded in brain science and Piaget's highly respected constructivist learning theory.” Curriculum exists for K-12, college and adults. Source: [www.readright.com](http://www.readright.com)

**Reading Mastery:** Reading Mastery is “a successful reading intervention program with a wide range of students, including significantly at-risk populations, for more than 35 years. Flexible and comprehensive, the *Signature Edition* greatly expands and refines instruction found in previous editions, appropriate for use as a supplemental intervention program or a comprehensive core reading program.” Source: [www.mheonline.com/program/view/4/1/21/0076181936/](http://www.mheonline.com/program/view/4/1/21/0076181936/)

**Response to Intervention (RTI):** “A combination of high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction; assessment; and evidence-based intervention; implementation will contribute to more meaningful identification of learning and behavioral problems, improve instructional quality, provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school, and assist with the identification of learning disabilities and other disabilities.” Source: <http://www.rti4success.org/whatisrti>

**RIT Score:** “The RIT Scale is a curriculum scale that uses individual item difficulty values to estimate student achievement. An advantage of the RIT scale is that it can relate the numbers on the scale directly to the difficulty of items on the tests. In addition, the RIT scale is an equal interval scale. Equal interval means that the difference between scores is the same regardless of whether a student is at the top, bottom, or middle of the RIT scale and it has the same meaning regardless of grade level.” Source: <http://www.nwea.org/support/article/532>

**Ruby Payne:** “As an expert on the mindsets of economic classes and overcoming the hurdles of poverty, she has trained hundreds of thousands of professionals who work with people from poverty, from educators and school administrators to community, church, and business leaders. Recognized internationally for *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, her foundational book and workshop, Dr. Payne has helped students and adults of all economic backgrounds achieve academic, professional, and personal success.” Source: [http://www.ahaprocess.com/About\\_Us/Ruby\\_Payne.html](http://www.ahaprocess.com/About_Us/Ruby_Payne.html)

**Saxon Math:** “Saxon's unique pedagogical approach-based on instruction, practice, and assessment distributed across grade levels-incorporates more than 25 years of research and classroom experience.” Curriculum for K-12. Source: [www.saxonpublishers.hmhco.com](http://www.saxonpublishers.hmhco.com)

**School Improvement Grant (SIG):** “Grants through State educational agencies (SEA = Nebraska Department of Education or NDE), to local educational agencies (LEA = districts) for use in eligible schools that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of their students.” Source: [www.nde.gov/federalprograms/](http://www.nde.gov/federalprograms/)

**SMART goals:** Short and long term goals creating using a template to ensure they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.

**Study Island:** “Founded in 2000, Study Island helps students in kindergarten through 12th grade master state-specific, grade-level academic standards in a fun and engaging manner. We provide standards-based instructional, practice, assessment, and productivity tools that improve the performance of educators and students via our web-based platforms.” Source: [www.studyisland.com](http://www.studyisland.com)

**Teach for Success (TFS):** Developed by WestEd, Teaching for Success is a “focused, collaborative, research-based framework and process that improves classroom instruction, K-12, and student achievement.” Source: [www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pj/551#data1](http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pj/551#data1)

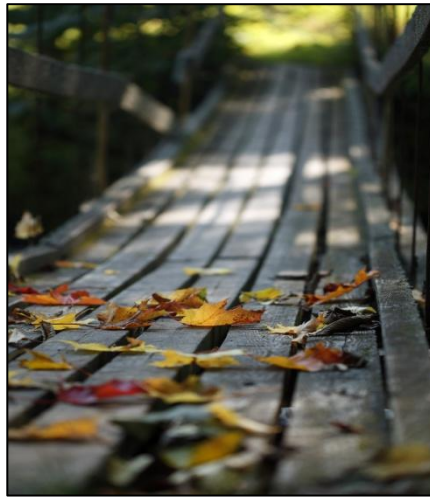
**Think-Pair-Share:** “Think-Pair-Share is helpful because it structures the discussion. Students follow a prescribed process that limits off-task thinking and off-task behavior, and accountability is built in because each must report to a partner, and then partners must report to the class.” Source: [www.readingquest.org/strat/tps.html](http://www.readingquest.org/strat/tps.html)

**Timez Attack:** A program developed to increase fact fluency, “The real break-through for Timez Attack is its speed. Schools have so many competing priorities that they run out of time long before students are fluent. Because our high-end game play engages so intensely, we can also teach more intensely.” Source: [www.bigbrainz.com/schools.php](http://www.bigbrainz.com/schools.php)

# **Bridging the Gaps to Improve Teaching and Learning**

## *Title I Needs Improvement Schools*

### **Section I: Introduction**



The Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Project is an independent evaluation of the success of the implementation of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans to improve student achievement in identified schools. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) characterized by the highest level of integrity, with respect and equitable treatment for all persons involved in the study in order to maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of participants in the study (Appendix A). The research was contracted between the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) in 2011-2012. The research was supported jointly by the NDE and the CEHS.

Dr. Jody Isernhagen, Associate Professor, served as the Principal Investigator. Jackie Florendo, Doctoral Candidate and Graduate Assistant, served as the Secondary Investigator. Nicole Effle, Research Assistant, aided in analyzing data and developing the final report. Dr. Isernhagen and Jackie Florendo served as interviewers for the project. All researchers and members of the research team for the Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Project are listed in Appendix B.

## OVERVIEW

The Nebraska Department of Education in a 2012 report stated, “The achievement of Nebraska students has shown growth on the tests that have been given over multiple years.” (2012 NeSA Report Page). This is exciting news for teachers who are struggling to educate Nebraska’s children; especially for some students across the nation described by U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan as “challenged by poverty, neighborhood, or family issues that are almost unimaginable” (United States Department of Education (USDE), 2012, p. 1). Furthermore he indicated that “teachers are the heart and soul of our education system” and “. . . I won’t sugarcoat facts or paint a fantasy where every child’s social and emotional needs are always being met in their home, and where the learning environment in every school is perfectly suited to support your work every day. That’s not our children’s reality.” (p. 1)

In Nebraska changes are being made and gaps in achievement are being overcome. In fact, “the percentage of students proficient in the NeSA - Reading and NeSA - Math has increased” (NDE, 2012, 2012 NeSA Report Page) for the 2011-2012 school year. However, due to the No Child Left Behind reform movement, some Nebraska schools are still targeted where achievement has lagged behind for *some* students, specifically, a significant number of students school-wide who have not scored at the “Met” level of proficiency on Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) tests. These schools have been tagged as “Needs Improvement” schools. The Nebraska Department of Education, in order to better understand the needs of these schools, has funded a Nebraska Statewide Accountability Research Project for the past three years to monitor changes in schools relative to the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plans and funds that have been provided to improve schools.

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the success of the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans in needs improvement schools. Areas examined were: Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data Monitoring, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. This research provides Nebraska educators, the Nebraska Department of Education, the State Board of Education, other policy makers, and all other stakeholders with the information to assess the effectiveness of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans.

## SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Study was conducted during the 2012 school year. The report is summarized in Section II with the complete report in Section III. This mixed-methods study examined perceptions held by administrators and teachers regarding the development and implementation of their school’s Title I School Improvement Plan and the improvement evident at their school. The concepts explored in the study were aggregated into eight central themes: Title I School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected in the winter and spring of 2012. Additionally, as a follow up to last year’s study findings, a parent involvement study was conducted. This study can be found in Section III.

## **FORMAT**

This report has been designed to serve multiple audiences and provide the most pertinent information available relative to the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans and the processes indicative of schools receiving a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in Nebraska.

The report is divided into four sections beginning with an introduction of the report (Section I); an executive summary of the findings of the study conducted (Section II); the complete research paper of the study conducted during the 2011-2012 school year, and the parent involvement study (Section III); and the Appendices (Section IV).

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We thank the many districts and schools that opened their doors, graciously gave us their time, and offered personal, candid insight into the implementation and progress of their Title I School Improvement Plans. We offer a special thanks to the teachers and administrators who saw value in the project and took time out of their busy schedules to complete surveys and participate in interviews.

A special thanks to: Dr. Roger Breed, Commissioner of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE); Diane Stuehmer, Federal Programs Administrator and Title I Director; and Randy McIntyre, Title I Consultant. All have offered great assistance for the completion of the Statewide Title I Accountability Research Study.

We offer our sincere appreciation to Nicole Effle, Research Assistant, for her long hours and dedication to this project. Without her support, this report surely would not have been completed.

For help in bringing this project to fruition, we thank Cindy DeRyke, Diane Gronewald, Shelia Hayes, Tammie Herrington, and Ronda Alexander for their support with the third year completion of this project. A special thanks to Marjorie Kostelnik, Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences; and Brent Cejda, Chair of the Department of Education Administration, for their continued support for the Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Project.

## **REFERENCES**

Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). (2012). New 2011-2012 NeSA test results report: reading, mathematics, science. Retrieved from <http://www.education.ne.gov/nesainitial/>

United States Department of Education. (2012). Change is hard: Remarks of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at Baltimore County Teachers Convening. Retrieved from [www.ed.gov/news/speeches/change-hard](http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/change-hard)





# Bridging the Gaps to Improve Teaching and Learning

## *Title I Needs Improvement Schools*

### Section II: Executive Summary



*“I’ve realized that leadership is probably the most important thing about a school, for the teachers. For the students, the teacher is everything! I am a better teacher because of my principal. She has solidified why I do the things I do, and I think we needed a really strong principal to change the teachers, and the teachers to change the students!”*

A Female Elementary Teacher, 2012 Study

## INTRODUCTION

Excellent leadership, excellent initial instruction, and excellent data systems have always been essential pieces of high performance schools. . . . Diagnostic testing, proportional increases in instructional time, focused teaching to the deficient sub-skill, and retesting to assure that learning has actually occurred are common-sense strategies and central to how we catch up students who are behind.

Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007, p. 19

Nebraska schools are addressing education reform mandates to increase student achievement for *all* students. The education reform efforts in the United States are intended to bridge the disparities in two types of achievement gaps: one within the subpopulations in the United States, the other a globalized gap between the U.S. and other countries (Zhao, 2009). The “achievement gap” within the United States is “often used to refer to the performance gap between minority students, particularly African American and Hispanic students and their white peers and similar disparities between students from low-income and well-off families in a number of areas: standardized test scores, grades, dropout rates, and college completion

rates” (Zhao, 2009, p. 7). Additionally, closing the achievement gap in the United States and other countries aligns to the “well-being and future of the U.S. economy” (Zhao, 2009, p. 7).

“No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) formed the basis for identifying schools as “Needing Improvement” based on assessment data over a period of years. Within this reform movement, specific schools have been targeted where achievement has lagged behind for *some* students, specifically a significant number of students school-wide who have not scored at the “Met” level of proficiency on Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) tests. These schools have been tagged “Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools” (PLAS).

Within the education reform movement, academic standards were raised “to the highest level in history with common core standards that are so rigorous and include such challenging cognitive demands that they align with the highest international benchmarks . . . no generation of educators in the history of the United States has ever been asked to do so much for so many” (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 5). All schools, including schools in “Needs Improvement” status are being asked to accept the challenge – and succeed!

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the implementation of Nebraska Title I Plans for improving student achievement in schools identified as “Needs Improvement” and having received financial assistance. This research provides Nebraska educators, the Nebraska Department of Education, the State Board of Education, other policy makers, and all other stakeholders with the information to assess the implementation of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans.

## **RESEARCH STUDIES**

The Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Study was conducted during the winter through summer of 2012. This study is summarized in this section of the report and presented as a complete report in Section III.

### **STUDY I: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Implementation and Progress of Title I “Needs Improvement” Schools**

**Jody Isernhagen, Ed.D., Associate Professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**  
**Jackie Florendo, M.A., Doctoral Candidate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

#### **Introduction**

This study examined the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans in Nebraska identified as “Needs Improvement” schools. This mixed method study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data.

#### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the implementation of Nebraska Title I Plans for improving student achievement in schools that have qualified for and received a federal School Improvement Grant (SIG). Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data was collected in the winter and spring of 2012.

## **Research Design**

This mixed-methods research study focused upon the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans by identified “needs improvement” schools in Nebraska. Administrators and teachers serving in these schools across the state were surveyed using an online instrument regarding their perceptions about the Title I School Improvement Process in their school.

Schools eligible to participate in the project have applied for and received a School Improvement Grant (SIG) for the 2010-2011 or 2011-2012 school years. Eleven schools in eight districts were invited to participate in the survey portion of the project, ten schools in seven districts agreed to participate. A total of 88 teachers and 17 administrators participated in the surveys.

## **Instruments**

The surveys (Appendix C) were designed to collect perceptions about the implementation of the Title I School Improvement Plans. Administrators responded to a 78-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers responded to an 82-item survey (Appendix C). Four items on the teacher survey focused specifically on elements relating to classroom teachers and were not included on the administrator survey. Where this occurs, it is noted in the results. Both surveys explored all eight themes: The survey themes examined were (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Community Involvement, and (8) Overall Improvement.

Participants responded to survey items using a five - point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for this instrument was .971 for administrators and .975 for teachers.

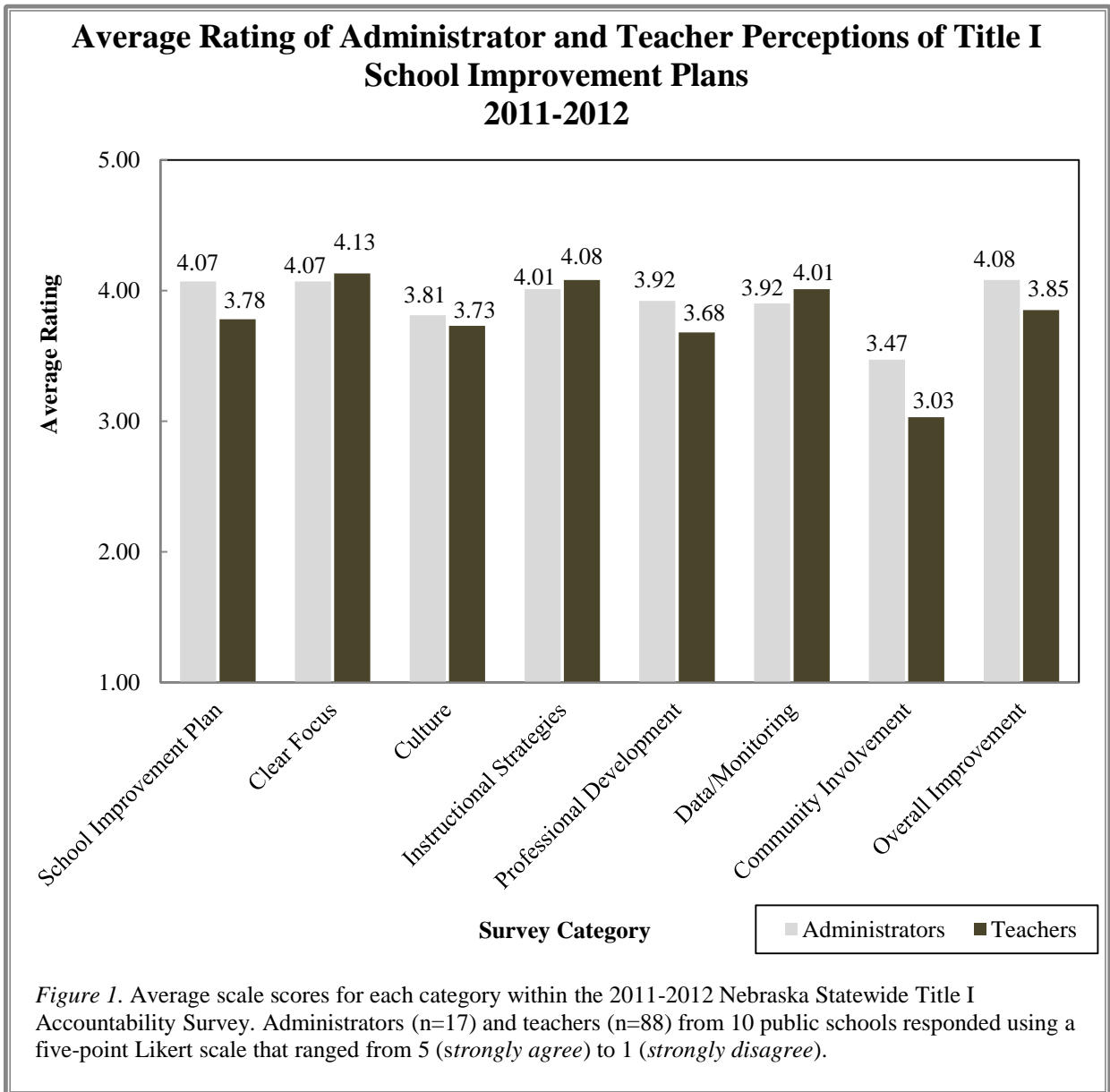
Second, open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in six public schools in five districts. Detailed perceptions were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix D) that gathered qualitative data. These five districts were selected based on geographic area, district Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate, and student ethnicity. The interview protocol asked for participants’ demographic information and posed nine questions about their perceptions of their school’s Title I School Improvement Plan focused upon the same eight themes as the survey. Additionally, five new themes emerged from the interviews: (1) Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation, (2) Parent and Student Expectations/Goals, (3) Consultant Support, (4) Teacher Leadership, and (5) Student Engagement.

Interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in elementary and secondary settings in five school districts. Twenty-two (22) individual interviews were conducted statewide during the spring of 2012. A minimum of four interviews were conducted in each district. Probes were identified for use with each question. Interviewers were provided a Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Manual and received training prior to conducting interviews.

## Findings

Teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their schools' Title I School Improvement Plans explored eight categories in the 2011-2012 Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Survey.

Figure 1 indicates administrator and teacher mean ratings within the eight survey categories.



The mean ratings for the eight categories within the 2011-12 Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Survey are located in Table 1. The item, “I am passionate about student learning” in the category “Culture” was the highest rated item by both administrators (4.88) and teachers (4.84).

**Table 1**  
*Administrators’ and Teachers’ Highest Mean Ratings by Category*

Category	Administrators	Teachers
Title I School Improvement Plan	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.67)	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.41)
Clear Focus	“My school engages in continuous school improvement.” (4.65)	“I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” (4.45)
Culture	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.88)	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.84)
Instructional Strategies	“Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.” (4.12)	“Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.” (4.35)
	“Teachers search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.12)	“I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.35)
	“Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.” (4.12)	
	“Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan.” (4.12)	
Professional Development	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (4.41)	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (4.10)
	“Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data.” (4.41)	
Data/Monitoring	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.76)	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.43)
Community Involvement	“The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders.” (4.00)	“The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders.” (3.56)
Overall Improvement	“Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.53)	“I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.27)
	“The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement.” (4.53)	

The lowest mean ratings of teachers and administrators are identified in Table 2. In two survey categories, “Instructional Strategies” and “Professional Development,” teachers and administrators gave the same item the lowest mean of the respective category. The items, “I use/Teachers in my school use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance” and “I am/Teachers are encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom,” were rated the lowest in their categories by both teachers and administrators.

**Table 2**  
*Administrators’ and Teachers’ Lowest Mean Ratings*

Category	Administrators	Teachers
Title I School Improvement Plan	“I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.” (3.67)	“I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” (3.15)
Clear Focus	“The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” (3.88)	“My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program.” (3.91)
Culture	“The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.” (3.41)	“Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.” (3.30)
Instructional Strategies	“Teachers in my school use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” (3.06)	“I use peer coaching and peer review to improve my performance.” (3.61)
Professional Development	“Teachers are encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.” (3.47)	“I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.” (2.93)
Data/Monitoring	“My teachers monitor students’ additional learning time to ensure success.” (3.59)	“I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.36)
Community Involvement	“Parents are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.” (3.24)	“Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.” (2.77)
Overall Improvement	“During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers about the way they are helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals.” (3.65)	“Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.” (3.18)

### **Results by Survey Category and Theme**

In this section of the report, teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of their Title I School Improvement Plans will be explored in eight categories: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Community Involvement, and (8) Overall Improvement. Administrators and teachers responded to survey items using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*).

Additionally, five new themes emerged from the interviews in the study: (1) Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation, (2) Parent and Student Expectations/Goals, (3) Consultant Support, (4) Teacher Leadership, and (5) Student Engagement.

### ***Title I School Improvement Plan***

In the category, “Title I School Improvement Plan” (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7), the average response of all administrators was 4.07. The average response of teachers was 3.78. Both teachers (4.41) and administrators (4.67) gave the highest item rating in the Title I School Improvement Plan category to “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” Additionally, administrators gave the item “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals” the lowest rating in the category (3.67), while teachers gave the item “I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals” the lowest rating in the category (3.15).

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the category was “I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” Teachers rated this item 3.15, while administrators rated it higher at 4.06. A female administrator explained how Title I goals are identified, “They (teachers and administrators) are highly involved in that. The building administration and the leadership team that work with the principal; those are the ones that are the most involved in it.”

There was a significant difference ( $p=.027$ ) between teacher (3.22) and administrator (3.88) responses for the item “All teachers in my school were/I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Goals.” This item also yielded a significant difference ( $p=.005$ ) between responses from educators at schools with an ELL student population of lower than 5% (3.00) and responses from schools with higher than 5% ELL population (3.63). A female teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate explained the involvement of classroom teachers in the identification of Title I goals at her school,

I think the teachers and administration were very involved in it. Then, the consultation program that we had, also gave a lot of guidance. Then we have a leadership team in the elementary, and they’re very aware. The classroom teachers have also been aware of, maybe not as much with the development, but they’re definitely looking at it, and seeing what needs to be done.

Three other items in this category resulted in significant differences between the higher and lower ELL population groups:

- “I /administrators have consistently communicated the Title I Goals to teachers.” ( $p<.001$ )
- “Teachers in my school/I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals.” ( $p<.001$ )
- “Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified.” ( $p=.002$ )

A female elementary teacher explained the areas of focus in her school, “I believe for reading it’s just reading comprehension, being able to understand. Math, I think is a little bit trickier, I believe, just basic computation and understanding of problem solving.”

### *Clear Focus*

In the category of Clear Focus (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17), administrator's average rating in this category was 4.07 while teacher's average rating was 4.13. The item rated strongest by administrators within the Clear Focus category was "My school engages in continuous school improvement" (4.65). The item rated strongest by teachers was "I engage students in order to improve academic performance" (4.45). A female administrator explained how students are involved in improving their academic performance,

Another great thing we've done is helping kids know where they are in relationship to the target. We do a lot with goal setting, and having kids be really clear about what that target looks like and really clear about where they are (in relation to the target). So, they know what they need to do to close that gap.

Administrators rated the item "The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels" (3.88) the weakest item in the "Clear Focus" category. Teachers rated "My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program" (3.91) the weakest item in this category.

The item, "Teachers in my school engage students in order to improve academic performance" was rated high by both teachers (4.45) and administrators (4.00). This item also elicited the largest mean discrepancy in the category. A female elementary teacher shared,

At the beginning of the year, (we) just double check to make sure everything is aligned and they (standards) are written actually into our teachers editions, that way if somebody were to walk in, we could clearly let them know what we are teaching . . . and constantly checking to make sure this is what the kids need to (have) happen before they can begin the next level.

Two items in this category yielded significant differences between administrator and teacher responses, "There is a clear articulation of standards in my school" ( $p=.018$ ), and "Teachers in my school/I engage students in order to improve academic performance" ( $p=.003$ ). A female elementary teacher explained, "When they're engaged, they're also less likely to be distracted, less likely to be off task, they're definitely more on task, even my lower learners, have that chance of staying on task, I think that has really worked for them."

Six items in this category resulted in a significant difference between teachers with 0-10 years of experience and teachers with 10-20 years of experience. Likewise, five items yielded a significant difference between teachers with 10-20 years of experience and teachers with 20-30 years of experience.

### *Culture*

In the "Culture" category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31), the average response of all administrators was 3.81, while the average response of teachers was similar at 3.73. The item rated strongest was "I am passionate about student learning," with ratings falling between "agree" and "strongly agree," for administrators (4.88) and teachers (4.84). A female elementary ELL teacher explained the impact of school improvement on the culture of her school,



Our school has a very distinctive culture - one built on mutual trust among educators and an ever-present commitment to high expectations and student learning. All staff work together to ensure that the school is a place where students are safe, respected, and academically successful. There is an emphasis on creating and maintaining the community we have.

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the Culture category was “Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.” Teachers rated this item at 3.50 while administrators rated it higher at 4.12.

Additionally, the item “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.” received the lowest rating in the category for administrators (3.41) while “Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together” was rated the lowest by teachers (3.30). There was a significant difference ( $p=.031$ ) between male (3.00) and female teachers (4.09) responses to “The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation.”

Two items yielded a significant difference between teachers with 20-30 years of experience and teachers with 10-20 years of experience, “The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning” ( $p=.018$ ), and “The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation” ( $p=.004$ ). The item, “I am passionate about student learning,” resulted in a significant difference between responses from schools reporting a 55% and lower rate of free and reduced lunches and responses from schools with a rate of over 55% ( $p<.001$ ). A female elementary administrator from school with a high free and reduced lunch rate explained,

This is a difficult question to answer. Many answers depend on which group of teachers one is looking at. My answers reflect the group as a whole. There are pockets of all of the above. Positive school culture has suffered during the improvement process.

In addition, five items resulted in a significant difference between responses from schools reporting an ELL population of less than 5% when compared to those reporting a population of 5% and higher:

- “The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning.” ( $p=.019$ )
- “The culture of our school and our teachers includes a commitment to high expectation.” ( $p=.009$ )
- “The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas.” ( $p=.005$ )
- “The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.” ( $p=.020$ )
- “I am passionate about student learning.” ( $p<.001$ )

As shared by a female administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate, “It’s exciting to see the kids achieve, and that’s what we are here for!”

The item “The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogues and the search for new ideas” resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.050$ ) between responses from schools reporting less than 25% mobility and those from schools with a 25% and higher mobility rate.

Three items in this category produced a significant difference between educators in elementary schools compared to those in middle and high schools” “The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning” (p=.014), “The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation” (p=.010), and “I am passionate about student learning” (p=.010).

### *Instructional Strategies*

In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42), the average response of all administrators was 4.01 while teachers average response was 4.08. Administrators gave four items the same high rating (4.12) in the Instructional Strategies category:

- “Teachers search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.”
- “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.”
- “Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.”
- “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan.”

The items rated strongest by teachers in this category were “I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences,” and “Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it” (4.35).

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the Instructional Strategies category was “I use peer coaching and peer review to improve my performance.” Teachers rated this item higher at 3.61, and administrators rated it lower at 3.06. This item was also rated the lowest in the category for both teachers and administrators.

Two items produced significant differences between teachers with 20-30 years of experience and those with 10-20 years of experience: “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school” (p<.001), and “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan” (p=.013). A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about instructional strategies that are based on research,

This has also been a big discussion in the building, looking at strategies vs. activities a lot, and we’ve looked at (it) deeply. (We’ve looked at) Marzano, and looking at what he said, what we can use as the biggest effect size. I’ve used comparing and contrasting, summarizing things, and just using non-linguistic representations for things where they (students) can connect it with something else. So those have been big ones (we are discussing).

Another female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about instructional strategies that are based on research,

I think the idea of non-linguistic, maybe because that’s the most recent, too. We had a conversation about that the other week, and about how everything we do. We use a lot of words, it’s always words; but if we can teach kids to associate a picture or associate an action, or something else that’s not a word, that is going to click with them. They can

hook that . . . we talked about hooking . . . to the schema that they already have. I think the thought that really stuck with me was the two parts of the brain and how the one deals with the words, and the other with the imagery part. If we can teach kids to do that same thing, how much better it will be for them to recall.

The items “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their/my performance” ( $p=.031$ ), and “Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities” ( $p=.017$ ) yielded a significant difference between educators in schools with less than 5% ELL population and those in schools with 5% and higher ELL populations. A female secondary teacher explained how professional development has supported her ability to differentiate instruction in her classroom,

We went to some professional development this winter. It focused on differentiated learning, which has helped me. I have all kids - none get pulled out. Professional development really helped me get set up, “ok, I know this kid’s level, I know this kid is a higher achiever;” I could change different aspects of what I’m doing so that they are all learning something at their own capacity.

A significant difference ( $p=.040$ ) was found between educators from schools with less than 25% student mobility and those with 25% and higher mobility for the item “Teachers in my school/I reflect and compare their/my actual teaching practice to what they/I had planned and hoped to achieve.”

Lastly, responses from educators in elementary schools compared to those from middle and high schools resulted in a significant difference for the items “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan” ( $p=.001$ ) and “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance” ( $p=.027$ ). A female elementary administrator shared how peer coaching is used to improve student performance,

We want to make sure that 85% or more of our students are engaged in learning, and using selected student engagement strategies. We chose for teachers to go out and peer coach and peer observe each other. So, these are the two areas that they work on. They (the teachers) have to choose once a quarter to observe one primary and one intermediate (teacher) to see what’s going on in other classrooms. It’s a great opportunity to create support; it’s not an evaluation, its support. If I’m a teacher, and maybe it just didn’t click that day, they might see something as a peer to help with that.

### ***Professional Development***

In the “Professional Development” category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50), the average response of all administrators was 3.92. The average response of teachers was 3.68.

A female administrator discussed implementing professional development and talking about instruction incrementally to impact classroom practice, “Our meetings are for talking about kids and talking about instruction. . . . We’re doing professional development every time we are together; we’re starting to see the impact on the instructional strategies being used.” The item rated strongest by both administrators (4.41) and teachers (4.10) within the

“Professional Development” category was, “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” Additionally, administrators rated the item “Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data” with the highest rating of 4.41.

The item rated weakest by both administrators and teachers was, “I/Teachers are encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.” Administrators (3.47) rated this item between “uncertain” and “agree” while teachers’ (2.93) perceptions were lower, between “disagree” and “uncertain.” Some schools are using peer observations to enhance teaching strategies. A female administrator explained how a procedure in her school used peer observations, “We’ve worked on ELLA, and we’ve worked on engagement strategies this year. We have also (implemented) the observation model we use with teachers, and we train them on how to use it because they’re also doing peer observations in engagement strategies.”

A male secondary administrator discussed how he is trying to encourage teachers to observe other teachers in his school, “Then, they implement those goals in the classroom; I suggest to the teachers that instead of having me go monitor their goals, have your peers monitor them, and bring back what works for you in the classroom. That’s a reference point they can use.”

The largest mean discrepancy in the Professional Development category was “I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.” Administrators were more likely to rate this item “agree” at 4.12, while teachers were more likely to rate it between “undecided” and “agree” at 3.23.

Three items resulted in a statistically significant difference between responses from teachers with 10-20 years of experience and those with 20-30 years of experience: “Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data” ( $p=.004$ ), “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning” ( $p=.046$ ), and “Teachers in my school/ I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data” ( $p=.029$ ).

A statistically significant difference also emerged between educators in schools with less than 5% ELL population and those in schools with 5% and higher ELL populations. Those items were:

- “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.” ( $p=.032$ )
- “Teachers in my school/ I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.” ( $p=.001$ )
- “Teachers in my school collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity.” ( $p=.030$ )

A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate explained how teachers’ planning periods support working collaboratively,

It’s not across the hall collaborations, they all eat together; nobody goes home for lunch here. The teachers’ lunch periods overlap, so there’s at least 15 minutes minimum, that all of the teachers are in the teacher’s dinner area. So, they get a lot of interaction there. But, our teachers planning periods are centered around specials so that they are usually (together).

Ratings between educators from schools with less than 25% student mobility and those with 25% and higher student mobility also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) for the item, “Teachers in my school/ I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.”

Lastly, there was a significant difference between educators from elementary schools versus middle and high schools for the items,

- “Professional development was provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies.” ( $p=.003$ )
- “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” ( $p<.001$ )
- “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.” ( $p=.038$ )
- “Teachers in my school/I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.” ( $p=.042$ )

### ***Data/Monitoring***

In the “Data/Monitoring” category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67, items 64-67 on the Teacher Survey were not included on the Administrator Survey), the average response of all administrators was 3.92 while teacher’s average response was 4.01.

The item rated strongest by both administrators (4.76) and teachers (4.43) in the “Data/Monitoring” category was, “Data are essential to our school improvement process.” A female elementary teacher shared the extent she is involved in monitoring the Title I Improvement Goals,

I’m just aware of the goals we have as a group (and) as a school. Our goals are to make sure the kids come as close to benchmark as possible. We help them if they have ELL difficulties, or speech difficulties. Or, if they can articulate answers but not write them out. Those are the types of things that I do.

A female secondary teacher shared the extent the administration and teachers were involved in the development and monitoring of the Title I Improvement Plan, “I would say quite a bit. We also see our test scores that come through. We know which programs we need improvement in. So, I would say quite a bit.”

The item rated weakest by administrators (3.59) was “My teachers monitor students’ additional learning time to ensure success.” Teachers (3.36) rated “I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data” the lowest in this category. The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the Data/Monitoring category was, “My teachers monitor students’ additional learning time to ensure success.” Administrators rated this item lower at 3.59, while teachers rated this item at 4.02.

Seven items in this category resulted in a significant differences between teachers with 20-30 years of experience and those with 0-10 years, 10-20 years, and 30+ years. In addition, only three items did not result in a significant difference between any two groups.

For the item, “The faculty and staff/ teachers in my school monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively” there was a significant difference ( $p=.017$ ) when comparing responses from school with under 5% ELL population (3.86) to those with 5% and higher ELL population (4.30). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.83, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.19. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.30, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.76, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.007$ ).

For the item, “Teachers in my school/ I examine disaggregated standardized test score data,” there was a significant difference ( $p=.029$ ) when comparing responses from educators in schools with an ELL population of under 5% (3.78) to those with 5% and higher ELL (4.15). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.73, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.07. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.20, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.61, producing the highest mean discrepancy (0.59) in this category and a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ).

A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate explained,

I would say that monitoring happens in a couple of different ways on a couple of different levels. The first would be with our administrative leadership team. We meet every week, and set both long term and short term action plans related to the improvement plan, from the data that we receive in relation to that. For example, when the instructional coaching group was here and gathered information about the instructional practices, we looked at that and identified some priorities that we wanted to gather additional information about, so that we would know more specifics. That same kind of action happens with our PLC leadership group. The leadership team goes through similar types of activities looking at the implementation of the plan and professional development needs for the building, as well as providing each other with support, since they act as team leaders, they provide each other support for different issues which occur within teams.

For the item, “Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school’s Title I Goals,” there was a significant difference ( $p=0.05$ ) when comparing schools over 55% free and reduced lunch rates (4.02) and those schools with 55% and lower free and reduced lunch rates (3.59). This item produced the highest mean discrepancy (0.43) in the category between responses from schools with the lower versus higher free and reduced lunch rate.

Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.75, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.11, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.018$ ).

Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.67, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.04, a

significant difference ( $p=.050$ ). A significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) was also revealed between educators from elementary schools (4.14) and those from middle and high schools (3.61).

For the item, “Changes in grade-level classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented,” educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.69, while those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.15, resulting in the highest mean discrepancy (0.46) in the category of Data/Monitoring.

Responses from educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% (3.63) and those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater (4.04) also elicited the highest mean discrepancy (0.41) in this category. Lastly, educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.14, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.59, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ).

A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate explained the extent of her involvement in monitoring the Title I Improvement Goals,

Well, on a scale from 1-5, I would probably say 4. We discuss them, also when we have our floor meetings, we discuss our student’s progress and success. We meet kindergarten, first and second grades together, third and fourth grades meet together, and fifth and sixth grades meet together as a team. The high school, they’re split up into education teams also. We look to see what we need to improve, then we give each other suggestions, or if we’re struggling with something we bring that to the team and they can help us or say, “When I had this kid, this is how I reached him.” Then, whoever is the lead of our group, then meets with the administration there again, to cut down some of the meeting.

The item “I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students” elicited varying responses from teachers based on their level of experience. Significant differences resulted from responses by teachers with 0-10 years of experience and those with 20-30 years ( $p=.002$ ), teachers with 10-20 years and those with 20-30 years ( $p=.001$ ), and teachers with 20-30 years of experience to those with 30+ years ( $p=.015$ ).

The item “I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students’ performance based on data” had a similar result based on experience levels. There was a significant difference when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience to those with 20-30 years of experience ( $p=.003$ ), teachers with 10-20 years of experience to teachers with 20-30 years of experience ( $p<.001$ ), and when comparing teachers with 20-30 years of experience to those with 30+ years ( $p=.012$ ).

Additional details regarding these significant differences can be found, by item, in the Data/Monitoring Category of the Research Study.

### ***Community Involvement***

In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-70, Teacher Survey Questions 68-74), the average response of all administrators was 3.47. The average response of teachers was 3.03. The item rated strongest by administrators and teachers in the Community Involvement category was “The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to

all stakeholders.” Administrators rated this item mostly agree at 4.0, while teachers rated it between “neutral” and “agree” at 3.56.

The overall mean rating in this category for both administrators (3.47) and teachers (3.03) is lower than any other categories. A female elementary administrator shared,

There are lots of opportunities for weekly information, the face-to-face opportunities have been best for us because not everyone reads their email in a timely fashion, we have a difficult time giving information that way. We have to have those face-to-face opportunities.

Administrators and teachers rated different survey items the lowest in this category, however Teachers rated “Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed” the lowest (2.77), while administrators rated “Parents are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed” the lowest (3.24).

The largest mean discrepancy (0.63) in the Community Involvement category was “Community members are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” Teachers rated this item between “disagree” and “uncertain” at 2.78 while administrators rated this item between “uncertain” and “agree” at 3.41.

Three additional items had relatively large mean discrepancies (0.52) between administrators and teachers:

- “Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.”
- “Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.”
- “Community members understand why our school has a Title I School Improvement Plan.”

This discrepancy may indicate that information related to the Title I School Improvement Goals and Plan may not be communicated, or there is a misperception regarding how parents are engaged in the Title I School Improvement process.

For the item, “Community members understand why our school has a Title I School Improvement Plan,” educators from schools with an ELL student population of under 5% rated this item 3.37, while those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.06, creating the greatest mean discrepancy (0.32) between the groups in this category. A female elementary teacher from a school with a high ELL rate shared her perception of this when asked about the extent of parents and community members understanding of why the school is in Title I Improvement, “This is how it is, they (parents) don’t understand why or what is going on, or what it all means.”

### ***Overall Improvement***

In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 71-77, Teacher Survey Questions 75-81), the average response of all administrators was 4.08. The average response of teachers was 3.85. The items rated strongest by administrators (4.53) in the Overall Improvement category were “The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement,” and “Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement.”



A female elementary administrator explained how the appraisal process in her school supports student achievement, “The district has a new appraisal process this year and I really like it. It is much more time intensive, but I also feel I have a better understanding of what teachers do . . . I think this process is more focused on growth for all teachers.”

The item, “The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement” yielded the greatest mean discrepancy (0.70) between administrators (4.53) who rated it between “agree” and “strongly agree” and teachers (3.83) who rated it between “neutral” and “agree.” A female elementary administrator explained how the appraisal process needs to be an honest conversation in order to promote teacher growth,

If you can’t be honest with people, you can’t turn around then and say I have concerns about your performance. So, I don’t have a problem telling people when I think they are basic, just like I didn’t have a problem in the past telling people that I didn’t think they deserved a plus on something. But, that still felt like I was doing it to them, this feels like we’re doing it together. I still think you can be honest, because I thought you could be honest in the last system. But, I think here, you can be clearer and you can help them see what it means to be better. It’s right here in this rubric. To go from here to here, it’s right here, you know exactly what it looks like. So, when this happens, that’s what will be highlighted.

The item rated weakest by teachers in this category was “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan” (3.18). The item rated weakest by administrators in the Overall Improvement category was “During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers about the way they are helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals” (3.65).

For the item, “During teacher evaluations, I/administrators discuss with teachers about the way they are helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals,” responses from educators from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower (3.36) and schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% (3.87) resulted in the greatest mean discrepancy (0.50) for the category.

This item also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.019$ ) when comparing elementary level responses (3.94) to those from middle and high schools (3.49).

An additional significant difference ( $p=.007$ ) arose between responses from schools with an ELL student population of under 5% (3.51) and those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher (4.00). This was the highest mean discrepancy between the two ELL groups for the category. A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate explained,

As part of the post-observation conference, if I’ve been to a reading lesson, I say to them, “Talk to me about your team’s smart goal, and how this fits into that, and what kind of data you have related to that, and what you’re tracking. How do you track the data for the lesson you just did?” So it’s always a part of the conversation even if (student achievement) is not the focus. If it fits perfectly, then we can talk at length about it. But, some teachers want me to come see writing, so I go to see writing. We don’t have smart goals about writing, but we talk about how the reading SMART goals support writing.

For the item, “Data shows that progress is being made in implementing our Title I Goals,” there was a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (4.10) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.42). An additional significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) occurred when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.18) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.42).

### **Results by Interview Themes**

In this section of the report, teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of their Title I School Improvement Plans will be explored in five new themes that emerged from the interviews in this year’s study. The number of comments per theme ranged from 58-14. The themes with the number of quotes that reflected the theme include:

- 1) Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation (58)
- 2) Parent and Student Expectations/Goals (26)
- 3) Consultant Support (19)
- 4) Teacher Leadership (17)
- 5) Student Engagement (14)

Educators taking part in this study discussed the processes that were occurring in their school to successfully improve student learning. Specifically, they shared curriculum and changes in curriculum, new strategies, interventions and professional development that provided training and support for implementation of new strategies as well as purposeful engagement of students! Their description of this process is consistent with research from Schmoker (2011) on the essentials of improving student learning. In “Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning,” Schmoker suggests three essential elements to improve student learning: “(1) reasonably coherent curriculum (what we teach), (2) sound lessons (how we teach); and (3) far more purposeful reading and writing in every discipline, or *authentic literacy* (integral to both what and how we teach)” (p. 2).

#### ***Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation***

“Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation” developed in this year’s study reflecting 58 references to this topic. Kouzes & Posner (2007) explained in *The Leadership Challenge* that leaders must “mobilize others to want to get extraordinary things done in organizations.” (p. xi) They explain that leaders must develop a climate and culture in which people turn “challenging opportunities into remarkable successes.” (p. xi)

A female elementary teacher recognized this,

I’ve realized that leadership is probably the most important thing about a school, for the teachers. For the students, the teacher is everything! I am a better teacher because of my principal. She has solidified why I do the things I do, and I think we needed a really strong principal to change the teachers, and the teachers to change the students!

A female elementary administrator explained how leadership involves thorough analysis of the depth of instruction and targets conversations to impact student learning,

Unless you ask the hard questions, or keep asking deeper and deeper questions, you don’t figure out where it begins. I don’t know a district office person that can figure it out, a building principal has to figure that out. You have to push past where it ends to get to a deeper level. The other thing, I would say, is people rise to the expectation that you have

for them. Sometimes it's not even about having high expectations; it's about being really clear about what the expectations are.

Effective leaders create the conditions for continuous school improvement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Teacher evaluations were referenced 46 times during interviews with educators, and emerged as an effective strategy to improve teaching and learning.

### **Creating Conditions for Continuous Improvement**

Administrators and teachers shared how new evaluation procedures and appraisal instruments were being re-designed to reflect deeper expectations for instruction. Student engagement and the use of research-based teaching strategies are also linked to instruction, and positively impact learning as explained by this male elementary administrator,

I totally redesigned the appraisal instrument K-12, for teachers and specialists based upon the Charlotte Danielson Model as we went into this year . . . teachers were involved, they collaborated. It's student achievement, not just assessment, but understanding educational processes, and reflecting on those practices, and are they effective or not. "How do you know? Are you designing lessons and teaching to the objectives?" "Are your students making adequate progress, and based upon what?"

Another female elementary administrator explained how the appraisal system is organized at her school,

The focus plan is organized around classroom management, instruction, planning, and formative assessment. So those are the big four areas that basically are used for coaching, so coaching is very integral to this plan as well. It's more detailed than the School Improvement Plan is, or at least, more reader friendly. It's a one page document that NWEA MAPS out the different elements that are going to come under each of those areas and what would be our priority first. They are all tied to something that we can observe. So, I think that is where it differs from the full scale Title I plan, its finite enough that we can observe something, then it all gets tied into the appraisal plan as well. It's fairly cohesive when all the pieces are connected.

### ***Parent and Student Expectations/Goals***

Research suggests that parental expectations may be more important than parent involvement in association with a student's educational outcome (Child Trends, 2010). Additionally, literature suggests that parents can make a difference when they set high expectations for their children's education, despite social and economic obstacles (Bronte-Tinkew & Moore, 2005).

Schools are trying to change the culture of expectations to impact learning. Student goals and expectations are also impacted when the culture of expectations change. There were 26 interview quotes that were linked with "Parent and Student Expectations." Eight of these referenced student expectations and/or goals.

A female secondary teacher described their efforts to change the concept of education for students,

I think we're moving more towards accountability of students, trying to get them to believe that education is important. We really focus on with juniors and seniors ACT

prep. We are getting ready for the John Baylor. So we're really trying to focus the students, "Your education is important and you can go on and do things." We've had more kids take the ACT this year than they have in the past; we're succeeding in that aspect. We have more juniors that are getting excited about it. There are a lot of college visits going on that our school is physically taking the kids to see. Not just four year colleges, but we're taking them around to local community colleges; I think the culture is really pushing the students to think beyond high school.

### **Building Student and Parent Expectations**

A female elementary teacher talked about how she helps educate parents to better understand student learning expectations,

The standards were sent out at the beginning of the year, to every parent, with the reading standards. I don't remember whether the math standards went out or not. Also, for the parents, there are expectations of what the schools' expectations are, and what the teacher expects of the student. I sign it, the parents and student sign it, and then the principal signs it and its sent back out to the parents.

A male elementary teacher explained the change in student culture,

I think it has big effect on our kids. Here's why I think it affects them, for some reason, with the (community) culture here. Some of the students feel that people don't think that they should succeed. So, when our kids do get a little bit of that success, they're not accustomed to accepting that success. It hurts us . . . that's why we want to get a (resource) teacher in here, to get those students even up further along than where they're at, to reach that success level. Just like with graduating and going on to college. . . . Culturally, in the educational aspect, that's probably the toughest thing to deal with. It's hard to get them to see that. If you go on to school, whether it's a two year school, four year school, specialized school, whatever you do, that's going to better your opportunities to have an easier life.

A female secondary teacher explained how raising expectations has raised their own teaching expectations,

I think it has caused us to also teach at a higher level. Okay, this is what our kids are doing . . . if we're pushing them to go to college; we're going to have to rise to what we expect them to do in the classroom. I know that I give them more research articles, especially because that is a lot of what they'll see on the ACT. . . . They're also looking at more what is happening around us and how that is affecting us, instead of read this and regurgitate it to me. I think it's also raised our classroom instruction.

A female secondary teacher talked about students who change their own expectations through the Title I Improvement Process,

I have some students who came in as a freshman saying, "I just don't know what I want," then seeing them walk across that stage saying, "I'm going to cosmetology school" or "I'm going to tech school." It may not be that four year college, but at least they're continuing their education in some way. I think Title I plays a big part in that.

### ***Consultation Support***

In this year's study, a new theme emerged, "Consultation Support." Nineteen quotes are referenced under this category. Schmoker (2011) explained that research strongly suggests reasonably coherent curriculum (what we teach) and sound lessons (how we teach) are essentials to improving student learning.

Researchers found that schools working to improve student learning have engaged in strategies that reflect the elements outlined by Schmoker (2011). This includes consultation as a vehicle to provide support for teaching that is focused on using research-based strategies to engage students. Schools are utilizing consultation to improve their own teaching as shared by a female elementary administrator,

We debrief with (the consultant), every time (the consultant) is here, which is every two weeks. We discuss what is going on, we set up plans, and we do a lot of observations in the classroom. If they have any questions at that time, any administrator can ask; . . . So if (the consultant) has any need for clarification, that's a good time for that. I will tell you, (that is) mostly my focus.

### **Consultation Focused on Teaching and Curriculum (What to teach)**

A female elementary administrator shared,

I think if we truly focus on the right things; but deciding, sometimes on what those right things are . . . That's where (the consultant) came in, they helped us decide that. I see some of the other schools doing a LOT of things, way more than we are. I think it sets up confusion.

A female elementary teacher talked about the role the consultant played to focus her teaching, "The consultant who came out was right there; making suggestions, making sure that everything made sense. She worked all of the problems out and made sure they met the standard."

### **Consultants Making an Impact**

A female elementary administrator explained the impact outside consultants can have,

We have a different (consultant) also, and I think that has made a big difference also. (The new consultant) is actually from here, so she understands the rural culture much better than the (initial consultant). I think that has helped immensely. . . . I think it brought a focus to the program; listening to others, we have a better focus.

### ***Teacher Leadership***

"Teacher Leadership" is another theme that emerged in this year's study. Lambert explains teacher leadership in "Building Leadership Capacity in Schools" (1998) as,

The habits and conditions that allow staff to work well as a unit and contribute to a "professional community." Such, communities are places in which teachers participate in decision making, have a shared sense of purpose, engage in collaborative work, and accept joint responsibility for the outcomes of their work. These dispositions and skills . . . can be understood as leadership skills. (p. 11)

There were 17 interview responses suggesting Teacher Leadership is emerging within “Needs Improvement” schools that support both teacher and student learning.

### **Formation of Teacher Leadership**

A female elementary teacher explained,

We have a leadership team that meets with the principal. We go out to the other groups; there are three smaller groups that go and meet with us as a PLC and in a collaborative group. We have two extra meetings where we discuss our learning communities, and we also discuss other data that needs to be discussed with the other teachers. Occasionally, we have a large staff meeting if there is something that we need to get together on.

### **Teachers Emerge as Leaders**

A female elementary administrator shared how a novice teacher emerged as a leader through her knowledge of instructional strategies,

There’s the kindergarten team leader, and the teacher has really done amazing things. The teacher is one of the least experienced; (some teachers) felt the kindergarten teacher was just tagging along. Now they are saying we have the kids who are reading at first grade level which we haven’t worked with, but you have so what do you know?

A male elementary administrator shared how a teacher emerged as a leader at his school,

Our biggest problem that we have is the sixth graders (are) at the fifth grade level. We’re fortunate we have a great teacher over at the junior high that can juggle the two levels. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to do that. We wouldn’t attempt that with most teachers, but she worked in our at-risk program . . . with at-risk kids all that time, and got great reviews when she decided to look at something different. She has been everything that the review said that she would be. We’ve been very fortunate there, that’s helped us a bunch.

A female secondary teacher explained a form of teacher collaboration facilitated by teachers, “There is a group of three leadership teachers. When there’s a problem with something, that need is clarified, brought to them, and forwarded on to the principal.”

### ***Student Engagement***

In order to meet student goals and higher expectations, educators emphasized the need to engage students in their own learning. Katy Ridnour (2011) explains, “Every teacher strives to achieve the goal of student engagement – which I see as the moment when students’ understanding meets the lesson plan and shakes hands . . . when distractions and outside concerns recede and students are focused on their learning.” (p. 11)

There were 14 comments from educators on the urgency to re-think and re-develop teaching strategies in ways that incorporate student engagement as discussed by a female elementary administrator,

We’ve been working on student engagement, with math, really getting them engaged and relating it to their lives. So, we’re trying to find a conference that really fits that. It’s about the memory and getting students engaged. We struggle with, the kids have it one day, and then the next day it’s like they have no idea.

Another female elementary administrator explained that engagement and relationships go hand in hand,

Relationships with students, building those relationships with students, and knowing it's not about content. Content is important, but it's about kids first. Engaging all students! You can use engagement strategies until the cows come home, but you can also still not engage all students. So, it's not about the strategy, it's about how they're doing with it. So, relationships and engagement!

A third female administrator explained that engagement must also be purposeful,

I think we have really engaging, purposeful lessons, but engagement can't just be silly. It has to be purposeful. When I watch a master teacher who asks 40 questions in a ten minute period and every single one of them has a purpose, and she has those kids right here, and they are doing high level thinking, I know we can do all of those things. It doesn't happen by accident.

### **Monitoring Student Engagement**

A female elementary administrator discussed how engagement can also be monitored,

I think when you get more specific about the data, like with engagement, the last time I had somebody come in, she actually wrote down the names of the actual students, and said, 'I'm sure this doesn't surprise you.' I said, 'No!' She told me, 'You have great engagement, you've got 85%, but what's keeping you from 100% with these kids?' I know that, but once it's said to you, 'This is what I noticed; these are your only three kids.' Then you can make a plan with each one and work with them. Pinpointing the exact data, we talk a lot about what 'hides' in the data. I feel like they (the 3 non-engaged) hide in the data. You could always be working your way to 100, but it would always be the same kids every time you may need to tweak things for.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the implementation of Nebraska Title I Plans for improving student achievement in schools that have qualified and received a federal school improvement grant. As illustrated by the survey results and interview responses, findings indicate that Nebraska Title I "Needs Improvement" schools, overall, are incorporating new processes and implementing new strategies that potentially should impact student achievement. Administrators and teachers discussed the planning and progress of their School Improvement Plan and Title I goals, categorized by these survey themes: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Community Involvement, and (8) Overall Improvement. During the interview process, five new themes emerged: (1) Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation, (2) Parent and Student Expectations/Goals, (3) Consultant Support, (4) Teacher Leadership, and (5) Student Engagement.

This year's research project examining "Needs Improvement" schools in Nebraska found educators reflecting upon several commonalities from the previous years' studies (2009-2011). For the past three years, "Leadership" has emerged as a theme in each study. Additionally, "Teacher Evaluation" and "Student Engagement" have emerged for the past two years. "Teacher Leadership," "Consultant Support," and "Parent and Student Expectations / Goals" are new themes that emerged in this year's study (2011-2012).

Within the reform movement, specific schools have been targeted where achievement has lagged behind for *some* students in the past. These schools have been tagged “Needs Improvement” schools. Researchers have uncovered a new perception that is emerging, the label, “Needs Improvement,” later evolved into a branding that was perceived at first as a negative consequence. However, during the third year, researchers found that as faculty grew and became more collaborative, they began to create an environment that was more conducive for learning for *all* students and the “tag” of “Needs Improvement” no longer was negative as explained by this elementary teacher,

When this first happened, it was kind of a blessing in disguise. I think we were all in shock, not thinking that something like this can happen here. Our principal is changing? What? But, I think in all of this, I’ve realized that leadership is probably the most important thing about a school, for the teachers. For the students, the teacher is everything. I am a better teacher because of the (principal). The principal has solidified why I do the things I do, and I think we needed a really strong principal to change the teachers, and the teachers to change the students. I think we all have to remember it’s hard to think that every kid can do it. It’s not what I learned in college. It’s not picture perfect, it’s not like your practicum experience, when they send you to the best school, when it’s literally like all of the students sitting perfect. But I think, for me, to keep doing this, I have to remember, it’s not about being quiet, and sitting there. They have got to interact. I think our consultant said it “organized chaos,” which is exactly what I think. It’s good to keep in mind it’s not textbook perfect, what you think a good teacher would look like.

Grant financial assistance allowed for the needed professional development, curriculum and additional resources for teachers and administrators to produce new ways of assisting students to be successful over time. A female secondary teacher had a similar perception about the value of the funding from the grant and the branding of becoming a “Needs Improvement” school,

Well, the ownership of having the School Improvement Grant, I believe, has helped us as a faculty. I think it’s made us a little more aware of what we do and how we do things. It’s just not business as usual. It’s improved us as a faculty. I think we teach better. Of course we’re student oriented - but we’re more success oriented here.

Schmoker’s (2011) research to improve student learning suggests three essential elements: “(1) reasonably coherent curriculum (what we teach), (2) sound lessons (how we teach), and (3) far more purposeful reading and writing in every discipline, or *authentic literacy* (integral to both what and how we teach)” (p. 2). Becoming a “Needs Improvement” school empowered schools to better move in this direction as summarized by this female elementary teacher,

This is the second year of the grant and I think it has opened some doors for us as far as being able to purchase curriculum, to get trained in that curriculum, and to try something different, because what we were doing before, wasn’t working. . . I think that is a big deal!

## CONCLUSIONS

A new culture of improvement has emerged along with the addition of resources. Administrators and teachers are growing in their capacity to build processes to impact



teaching and learning through engagement of *all* students, but especially for students with the greatest learning needs.

Administrators have acknowledged that Title I status has provided the needed funding resources to improve student learning as shared by this male secondary administrator,

I really hope our school stays Title I. It's been a big help with the reading. Some students who struggled with reading and have gone through the new program have improved. Seeing my students improve is more important than anything. I want what's best for my students when they succeed; they have a sense of pride. They take pride in their school, pride in their education. I have some students who came in as a freshman, saying I just don't know what I want, then seeing them walk across that stage saying, "I'm going to cosmetology school" or "I'm going to tech school." It may not be that four year college, but at least they're continuing their education in some way. I think Title I plays a big part in that. They allow us some funding that we normally wouldn't have to help these students. I need professional development to help my students. I can't do it alone! *They say it takes a village to raise a child - it takes a village to educate one too!*

One of the primary ways that resources have been utilized is through the purchase of time and professional development. This has been used to build the skill level of teachers with coaches and consultants; curriculum experts who can follow up in classrooms over extended periods of time, aiding teachers in differentiating instruction for students and working to build the knowledge of effective teaching strategies. When there was a need for new skills to be developed amongst teaching and leadership staff, professional development, consultation and coaching were put into place. Emphasis continued to be placed on the use of research-based strategies and interventions, by both leadership and teachers in classrooms.

Resources have allowed additional professional development and consultation to impact student learning. A female teacher described this as, in her opinion, the most important element to impact change,

We have this person, (the consultant). (The consultant) has done the most. I'm going to be completely honest-when they first hired (the consultant), it was way easier to be negative than it was to be positive. I thought, "Geez, just one more person on the payroll." After I got to know (consultant), (she/he) is really cool, really fun to work with. The (consultant) was a middle school teacher, so I'd have the (consultant) come in and watch me teach and give me pointers. The (consultant) has enlightened me several times on "have you ever tried this, etc." It works just like that! The (consultant) understands the culture too, it's really been huge.

Teachers better understood the importance of research-based strategies that align with specific student learning needs as explained by this female elementary teacher, "The whole research-based process is really important. Nothing is more important than science to prove that something is working. You know in education, this is research-based."

The use of data continues to be an important aspect of improving student learning as shared by this elementary female administrator when asked the most significant aspect of the change process to improve student learning,

I'd say the data analysis and getting people to really use data to make instructional decisions. You know, we said we did it, but we really didn't do it. So, having the opportunity to look at data and delve into it - that's an issue even with the school improvement. This external visit I did, they tend to think they know what our kids are doing, but they really don't. You don't have to look at it with the required disaggregation, look at it from the standpoint of your rural versus your town students. It points out there are lots of things you can do to get to the bottom of it. That's what we have to do with our parent involvement; we have to do some data studies. The professional development and eventually the evaluation process (have also made a difference). Student achievement is tied to the evaluation. There's nothing like an evaluation to focus attention on student achievement (using data).

Schools continue to increase their use of data to help them impact instruction and instructional groups in the classroom and strategize on how to improve performance for groups of students who have not been successful in the past.

The culture has also impacted schools in a collaborative, positive manner as explained by this elementary teacher,

The biggest piece is being able to work collaboratively, take away that fear piece and be vulnerable. You have to be willing to take yourself out of that equation and put those students first. You have to be willing to trust your colleagues, it's a hard thing to do, to make sure you have that level of trust that you need. You have to be willing to put yourself behind and put the kids in front to be successful. You have to be willing to work across the building, and not be afraid to ask for help if you need it, or find someone who is more experienced. You have to be willing to be able to take the risk for things to be successful. It's not always going to be a simple "this plan will work." It will not work for everyone, it will not work for every building, it may not work anywhere else, but you have to be willing to try.

The survey category of "Overall Improvement" took on a new dimension this year as educators expressed their excitement about changes in student achievement being made and how this has impacted the overall culture in schools. Data is revealing that hard work is paying off, as expressed by this female elementary teacher,

I think the biggest thing that helps us embrace it is . . . its working! We are seeing progress in our children! It's a lot of stress sometimes! It's not always feeling real positive, but when you actually see your students - and that's one thing about keeping track of the data - when you see that progress in the students, maybe all of that was worth it!

A female administrator summarized the hard work and student improvement, "It's exciting to see the kids achieve, and I guess that's what we're here for!"

High expectations by administrators, teachers, students and parents were evident in this year's study. Stakeholders were seeing results and buying into the School Improvement Process, as explained by this female elementary administrator,

We have a new curriculum at K-2, and it is not antiquated. Our K-2 math curriculum is VERY up to date, and it has really, really tapped into the potential that kids have to see

themselves as mathematicians and to master numbers. I'm very excited about what those kids are going to do when they move into the testing grades, because they have a really strong foundation in math. There is a part where the kids are supposed to lead part of the math learning each day, and daily math routine. At the beginning of the year they said, "Our kids won't ever be able to do this, they don't have that kind of language," and now they do! The teachers are just amazed at what the students were able to do; what they didn't think they could do at the beginning of the year. We need to tap into the potential of that team who now knows that their actions have resulted in some really amazing things.

Progress is being made in building student and parent expectations. A female secondary teacher explained how student 'buy in' is impacting their role in their education,

I've seen more students take more responsibility for their education. They're not slacking off on homework. I've had parents and kids ask, "When are these kids going to start ACT prep?" Former kids or kids who have older siblings say "I wish that had been here when I was in school." So, I think the parents and students both are realizing that yes, the school is trying to make improvements.

Building the capacity to impact student learning must include strong Leadership. DuFour and Marzano (2011) explain in "Leaders of Learning" that effective school district leaders take a bottom-up versus top-down approach. Superintendents must work "with the board of education, other central office administrators, and principals to articulate clear, *nondiscretionary* student achievement goals for the district as a whole, for each school, and for subgroups of students. These districts also establish a common framework for research-based strategies for achieving these goals." (p. 29)

Leadership emerged as a theme in the Title I studies over the past three years; evidence that this is seen as a critical element among educators to impact learning. Effective leaders know how to constructively change the culture, build a collaborative focus on the mission and gain community capacity towards the common mission and vision. "Effective leaders recognize that they cannot accomplish great things alone. They also recognize that the ability to lead is not the private reserve of a few extraordinary people or those in particular positions of authority." (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 2)

This year, a new leadership theme was added: "Teacher Leadership." A female elementary administrator explained how she selected teacher leadership for her school,

Leadership team members (facilitate the meetings); they are generally intermediate teachers, the resource teacher and the counselor. I selected them for leadership because they needed to understand, that they were doing the high stakes tests. They needed to focus on where they were at, where students were at and where they needed to go, so I needed to get them up and going first. We needed to bring the (parent liaison) into the picture to help lead the process of parental involvement. We have a resource teacher, so I needed to bring her into the picture as we moved into inclusion to help facilitate that process. You need to start building that leadership capacity. They go out and meet with people in teams.

## **Leadership Promotes Teacher Growth**

This year, leadership was found to utilize data within the teacher evaluation and appraisal system with the goal of improving both teaching and student learning. Kouzes and Posner (2010) described the best leaders as those who empower others, assisting their efforts to be successful in their work. A female elementary administrator described how the Title I process has allowed them to re-design the teacher appraisal system to support teacher growth,

We redid our evaluation process; (it) was redesigned to incorporate student achievement goals and goal setting with the teachers, incorporating that into a new evaluation system. So, it's in there - the student achievement, and the goal setting - is in there, but it's not discussed Title I, per se. It's just creating goals appropriate to classrooms and teachers that promote growth. The success of their evaluation is tied to how they accomplish those goals, and how well their students achieved.

The "Needs Improvement" process has also helped in the development and implementation of a new teacher appraisal process as explained by a female elementary administrator,

But, the principals have not fully embraced that process yet. The superintendent and I talked about that, and he knows that, and I think he will be addressing it through his process in the future. It's a learning process; it's a whole new way of looking at teacher evaluation. Very growth oriented - for them (teachers). It's the Danielson Model, essentially. We redesigned it a little bit to fit our needs here, but essentially it's the same thing. They don't feel threatened by it; I think the principals may be more threatened by it than the teachers are. It's a good process, and that was probably one of the best things that we've got out of the SIG grant, is the resources to do evaluation. The (consultant) has been really phenomenal in his help in working through that process with us.

Parent and community involvement continues to be a challenge for "Needs Improvement" Schools. It appears families of students in Title I schools are overwhelmed with providing for the basic needs of children and families, making it difficult to be engaged in schools in a committed way or to understand the essence of what it means to be a "Needs Improvement" school. A growing trend is arising which indicates families may not attend school functions purely for educational purposes. In contrast, families may attend if education is offered as an adjunct activity for an event such as a school picnic, carnival, or other fun, social event.

An elementary female teacher explained how integrating educational elements for parents with other activities have proven to be successful for them,

In the fall and spring we have a night to invite families to come in and we share kind of what is going on, and I think attendance varies in that. But, we offer it for families and students to come in and know what is going on in the school.

The teacher continues to comment regarding a question on the turn out, "I think it varies, I know we have a better turnout when we offering food and childcare, which is going to be an impact for anywhere."

A male elementary administrator explained his perception of why community and parent involvement may be limited,

I think that the community that you have now, that send their kids to school here, I think we go back to the same issues that we had previously, generations before. Community members didn't know what success was; and you do. When you talk to community

members that come to school for parent teacher conferences, or they come here to pick their kid up, you can sense that they really want what's best for their kid, granddaughter, or grandson. But, to get to that point where the community members also buy into it, that's a tough thing to do. . . . To get community involvement is tough! That's probably one of the things that we need to really figure out how we can get that community involvement.

Researchers found many schools discussed parent/community involvement as a challenge they were willing to take on. Many schools were targeting parent involvement as a primary Title I goal in the upcoming year. Due to the extent of limited parent and community involvement, schools may need additional support and training in this area.

The largest mean discrepancy (0.63) in the "Community Involvement" category was "Community members are involved in identification of the Title I Goals." Teachers rated this item closer to "undecided" at 2.78 while administrators rated this item closer to "agree" at 3.41. Three additional items had relatively large mean discrepancies at 0.52:

- "Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals."
- "Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed."
- "Community members understand why our school has a Title I School Improvement Plan."

This discrepancy may indicate that information related to the Title I School Improvement goals and plans may not be communicated to all teachers in all schools or there is a misperception by teachers about how parents are engaged in the Title I School Improvement process. A female elementary teacher shared her perception of this when asked about the extent of parents and community members understanding why the school is in Title I Improvement, "This is how it is, they (parents) don't understand why or what is going on, or what it all means."

Another addition that was noted by researchers this year included the integration of the School Improvement Plan, the SIG goals and the school-wide Title I plan. Schools are integrating the plans in order that staff and parents can better understand how goals and objectives are focused to meet the many diverse needs of all students as explained by a female elementary administrator, "With the school wide plan, we build on previous experiences. The grant is separate, but you know as well as I do that those components all meld together because it is what we need."

In last year's study, the change in processes and culture were seen as significant elements within schools. Change of structure and change of culture carried over into this year's study that flowed deeper within the organization. This process of change was now impacting students and their perception of learning, the engagement of their own learning and that of their teachers. Although student engagement emerged last year as a theme, the interviewers perceived a greater emphasis on this, as students this year were even involved in monitoring their own level of learning engagement as explained by this female secondary administrator, "Buy in" of students. We talk to them about setting goals with kids, and creating this thermometer, and I think the kids thought, "Okay, last year we set goals" . . . but I think

they saw that we weren't doing too much. The ESU (told the teachers), "You need to tell your kids you're at 121, let's go to 131." So, maybe the teachers told the kids they could do it, and the kids thought, "Well, my teacher thinks I can do it, maybe I can do it." We had a student that was mad at her score and looked at her teacher and said, "I need to take it over!" She improved her score!

Student engagement is impacted by culture, which is impacted by student and teacher "buy in." This, in turn, has a large impact on overall improvement as explained by a female elementary school administrator,

School culture is everything. It's really important. It's a very, very touchy subject. We need buy-in. It's very similar to how we are working with our kids right now. We need them to buy-in, to know that their performance on, for example, the NeSA is important to us. It matters, and we need all of our teachers to know that it matters. We've had a difficult time with teachers believing their kids are capable of performing, and having those high expectations. I think this year we've seen a HUGE growth in that. Teachers believe that their kids are capable. They've seen small successes here and there. Our team, that has THE greatest understanding of high expectations, is our kindergarten team. It's because, for them, I flat out said, "If your kids were sitting on their couch watching TV this whole time, instead of being here, what do you think you would have seen?" And so they're able to get that efficacy piece, we did that. If our kids weren't here, they wouldn't know what they know, and they have moved their kids beyond expectations. One of the really exciting things to talk about is what we do when our kids are reading at this level, because we haven't dealt with this before. So they are accessing some of the first grade knowledge of those teachers to be able to say, "Okay, what do we do when our kids are reading this well? We haven't taught it before." Those are the exciting pieces, and so we have had to grab on to those little wins here and there, and those celebrations to say, "We've done it!"

Overall, change in culture was seen as a significant factor within schools for the past three years. It was noted that the transformation seen in the schools reflects those necessary elements needed for change, as noted by Fullan (2004), "it means producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices - all the time, and inside the organization as well as outside it" (p. 53).

Researchers found a tendency in Title I schools to be highly focused in the specific curriculum areas of reading and math. Encouraging student engagement strategies in *all* curriculum areas is critical for the development of creative, analytical, and problem solving skills for all Title I students, especially beyond the primary grades.

In summary, based on the data collected in the 2012 Title I study, leaders and teachers now appear more focused upon change elements within their organization. The need to provide professional development for leaders on the development of new teacher appraisal systems, teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and creating an enduring culture so changes that have occurred will remain intact were seen as essential elements of improvement and vital for improved teaching and learning. These are critical elements in increasing student performance in Title I schools as described by these administrators:

Professional development is HUGE, whether it's for the good of the kids, or the confidence of the teachers. Also, measurement of that development within an appraisal tool to provide support for teachers, supervision, remediation or affirmation. There's no doubt in my mind that it all falls into curriculum. It holds people accountable. Supervision always does. That's always huge, I think accountability- it doesn't mean that I'm going to be jumping down your throat, it just means that you're either doing a great job according to effective school practices and what you've been trained to do, etc. We're on the same team.

A Male Elementary Administrator

I think, it's kind of a broken record, but I think the data teams process helped us to be more specific, and really helped us to be more specific about instruction. Lots of things helped to support that; coaches, appraisal, all of those things, but we are more specific about instruction than we ever have been. I don't know how you can make gains without focusing on instruction, but they won't last, and you'll plateau really fast. I learned that (before) . . . because we did a lot of things but we didn't talk a whole lot about instruction, because I assumed a lot of things I shouldn't have assumed. I learned and I got burned on that. So we didn't do that, in anything; I want it to last long after me. I think the only way you do that is (through) instruction, you create a culture about instruction.

A Female Elementary Administrator

## REFERENCES

- Bronte-Tinkew, J., & Moore, K. (2005). *Logic models and outcomes for programs serving parents of adolescents*. Retrieved from [http://www.childtrends.org/Files/DC\\_Trust\\_Parent\\_Report\\_Adolescents\\_June\\_23\\_2005.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/DC_Trust_Parent_Report_Adolescents_June_23_2005.pdf)
- Child Trends (2010). *Parental expectations for children's academic attainment*. Retrieved from <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/366>
- DuFour, R., & Marzano, R. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Fielding, L., Kerr, N., & Rosier, P. (2007). *Annual growth for all students, catch-up growth for those who are behind*. Kennewick, WA: The New Foundation Press Inc.
- Fullan, M. (2004). *Leading in a culture of change: Personal action guide and workbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2010). *The truth about leadership: The no-fads, heart-of-the-matter facts you need to know*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). (2012). *New 2011-2012 NeSA test results report: Reading, mathematics, science*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.ne.gov/nesainitial/>
- Reeves, A. R. (2011). *Where great teaching begins: Planning for student thinking and learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Ridnour, K. (2011). *Everyday engagement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Schmoker, M. (2011). *Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- United States Department of Education. (2012). *Change is hard: Remarks of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at Baltimore County Teachers Convening*. Retrieved from [www.ed.gov/news/speeches/change-hard](http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/change-hard)
- Zhao, Y. (2009). *Catching up or leading the way*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.





## **Recommendations**

The third year research study again focused upon examining the implementation of the Title I plans in Nebraska Title I Schools identified as “Needing Improvement.”

### **Evidence of Improvement from 2009-2012 Studies**

Evidence was provided in the 2012 study that positive changes were occurring based upon the 2009-2011 Recommendations that were cited last year.

**Recommendation #1:** Encourage schools to monitor classroom instruction to ensure implementation of the school’s Title I Goals.

A female elementary administrator shared how the school improvement plan, the SIG grant goals and the school-wide Title I plan meld together in order that staff and parents can understand how goals and objectives are focused to meet the many diverse needs of all students,

I’m not sure if the state understands this - they probably understand it a lot more than I do. We have the school-wide plan, but the SIG grant - and I’m not saying - the SIG initiatives are the focal point. We want to make sure that it’s married with the school - wide Title.

However, continued communication is important as shared by this female elementary teacher,

I just think that teachers need to be informed more about the Title I program. Even if it were to come out in a memo that this is what was discussed at the meeting; do we have a heads up as to what’s being discussed.

**Recommendation #2:** Provide technical assistance for leaders on the connection between teacher evaluation, teaching effectiveness, and student engagement.

The Nebraska Department of Education’s efforts to develop a new model for teacher evaluation have reached many public school districts as evidenced throughout the 2011-2012 Title I interviews. Many educators substantiated how existing systems for teacher evaluation had already changed or were in the process of changing. In some instances, student achievement was included as an element for evaluation based upon regularly monitored student data. A female elementary administrator explained how the new appraisal process is supportive of teacher growth,

It's a learning process - it's a whole new way of looking at teacher evaluation. Very growth oriented - for them - It's the Danielson Model, essentially. We redesigned it a little bit to fit our needs here, but essentially it's the same thing. The teachers reported, "I've taken care of the staff development myself through the ESU," and they like it. They don't feel threatened by it. I think the principals may be more threatened by it than the teachers are. It's a good process, and one of the best things that we've gotten out of the SIG grant, is the resources to do evaluation.

**Recommendation #3:** Encourage administrators to involve all teachers in the disaggregation of student data and the identification of Title I goals so they are actively engaged in improving student performance for all students.

A female elementary teacher shared how data is a natural part of their daily work, We are all aware of what our scores are. We've taken the information that came from the NeSA, the high areas and the low areas, and we work toward those. The low areas we go with the NWEA MAPS, and then we work with those. We have set aside time, when we are going back and reviewing and reteaching in those areas so the students have the background knowledge and the extra practice. My data tells me that we're going to do well. They have had more background in math than they have in a long time because we're hitting power standards. And, as long as they stay relaxed, I think they're going to do well.

**Recommendation #4:** Provide technical assistance to enhance the degree of understanding and knowledge about data; how to use it effectively for improvement of student performance, and at what time intervals it is most appropriate to use data.

Schools who participate in any number of Federal Title I programs are provided limited financial resources with which to build the capacity of their school as they work toward improvement. These (SIG) financial resources have allowed schools the ability to engage consultants, coaches, and interventionists in conversations and partnerships. These outside individuals can then utilize their subject matter expertise to assist in providing recommendations to enhance the level of teacher understanding regarding the use of data to improve student performance. This was explained by a female elementary teacher,

With the interventionist, we look at monitoring often, and say:

- "Are the students meeting their goals?"
- "Which part are they not meeting their goals?"
- "What do we need to practice more of?"
- "What do we need to focus on to get them to meet those goals?"

It sounds like that's just doing the goals, and nothing else, but it's not . . . because the goals that they have are the reading skills that we want them to have, so the fluency, the vocabulary, the word skills. That's something we've really worked (on), both of us, and that was the nice thing. I work with the interventionist and we work really well together. Both of us were working with a little guy who had no word skills . . . now he can sound out, words, he can put a sound with those words and knows some of the rules, but, it took the two of us working together to do it . . . so, it's a good skill for me to learn from her.

## **Continued Recommendations from 2009-2012 Studies**

Evidence was provided that some improvements have been made during the 2009-2012 studies, but continued efforts are needed.

### **A Call for Technical Assistance**

**Recommendation #1:** Provide technical assistance for ensuring a standards-based cohesive instructional program that is aligned between and among grade levels to provide a continuum of expectations for student learning.

A female elementary administrator explained, “That was one of our goals to work on: alignment of curriculum. So, we developed and worked on math, in particular.”

However another female elementary administrator stated,

As far as the curriculum that we have available to us from publishers, it’s not very well aligned. It would call it antiquated, and I think our curriculum directors would call it antiquated as well. We have very old text books, very old material available to us. We’ve had to do a great deal of work with our teachers to make them realize that the state standards are really our guide, and that’s what we teach, even if it’s not represented in our text book. If it’s not in our text book, we have to supplement. We absolutely have to use those standards as our guide. That’s been a challenge.

**Recommendation #2:** Provide technical assistance for both the value and strategies for implementation (ways to schedule) of observation of peers in classrooms at grades at, above, and below their assigned grade level that supports a continuum of Pre-12 learning.

A female elementary administrator shared how peer observation and coaching are encouraged for teachers,

We chose for teachers to go out and peer coach and peer observe each other . . . .

They (the teachers) have to choose once a quarter one primary grade classroom and one intermediate classroom to see what’s going on in other classrooms. It’s a great opportunity to create support, it’s not an evaluation, it’s a support. If I’m a teacher, and maybe it just didn’t click that day, you (the peer) might see something as a peer in helping with that. So, we want to encourage those crucial conversations. So, we have that area, and then (how they) use formative assessments. So, how do they elicit and check for understanding? We script all of that. They have a little sheet, there is a copy they can use to converse with their peer.

One school discussed an option for allowing teachers to observe each other as a male secondary administrator shared,

They implement those goals in the classroom; I suggest to the teachers that instead of having me go monitor their goals, have your peers monitor them, and bring back what works for you in the classroom. That’s a reference point they can use.

### **Parent and Community Involvement: A Challenge for Schools**

**Recommendation #3:** Provide suggestions and guidance to help schools increase parents and community members in Title I planning and decision making.

**Recommendation #4:** Provide technical assistance to schools on how to engage the school and community in developing shared beliefs and values.

**Recommendation #5:** Provide professional development for Title I schools about the research - based models of parent involvement and ways they can engage parents of diverse cultures in informal processes within their school.

A female elementary administrator explained some of these challenges,

The parents we really need to reach we're not reaching. They wanted me to develop that trust between the school building and parents. I did, on an individual basis. I think the overall perception that the school is okay, is maybe a little better now. But, there's been a lot of work that had to be done, and had to change. I think we're in that flux, it is interesting; the sociology of this community is very interesting. I listen to the other (communities) at meetings, and they're doing phenomenal things, and working very well. Those same things, they just don't work here. I don't know what works. Informally, we're talking about next year, as our final year in the SIG grant, that (parent involvement) will be our focus.

A female elementary administrator from a different school district discussed similar challenges,

That's been a difficult piece. We've had the meetings, we've pulled them together, and we've said the things that we need to say, but . . . they trust us. So, the school being in need of improvement is NOT at the forefront of their thinking. I feel very little blame from them. Few parents really take advantage of the tutoring services. They think their child is getting everything they need in the classroom. They don't want an outsider coming and tutoring their kids.

A female elementary teacher from a different school district offered an explanation of parent and community member understanding as to why their school is in Title I Improvement,

I think they understand a very shallow level of it. I don't think they understand all the reasons behind it, but at the same time, you have to think, did we understand it before we went through the process and someone told us? A lot of them, it's nothing against them . . . they have bigger issues in their lives. They are worried about work, and eating, and you know, they do what they can.

### **Celebrating Small Steps to Success**

**Recommendation #6:** Encourage classroom teachers and schools as a whole to celebrate the small steps to success so stakeholders recognize improvement as a result of the Title I plan.

A female elementary teacher explained how incentives and student goals have proved to be a powerful tool to engage students,

We have a thermometer; with that thermometer, we want to raise our writ points on our NWEA MAPS score; we can't do this with the NeSA because we don't get the data until way too late. But, they're working toward a goal; they know that they need to get scores up and if they do they earn free time. They're working toward those goals. Its non-educative incentives, but they really buy into that, we sit down individually with each of the children and discuss their low areas and high areas.

A male secondary administrator discussed how small celebrations can involve the entire community,

We changed that this year. We have kids on the Honor Roll every nine weeks, we have an awards ceremony at night, and we have the parents come in for the meal. . . . We've had three of these; we're having more community and family members coming in for this. It lasted just over an hour which is a good time frame. It gives the kids a chance to be recognized, and we shared a meal with the community. That's been a real positive thing.

## **Develop Networks and Collaborative Efforts Among Schools**

**Recommendation #7:** Develop a network for sharing Title I schools' successful strategies and interventions with other schools across the state.

A female administrator explained to the coach the process for her work in order to model quality instruction. This model can be shared with other schools,

I have to be the heavy on some things and say, "this is my expectation, these are the actions I'm going to require you to take, I need you to provide the support of how to do that." So, I'll set up all of the actions before you come, you'll be the one to help them figure out how to do it. It's the same model we use with the coaches. I'm the heavy, they're the release valve. So, in a lot of cases, I set the expectations, the required actions that I have for them, and I give them (teachers) options for how they are going to make that happen. They can work with coaches, they can do this, they can go here, they can work with anybody, here are the ways you can go at it. We started talking about what I mean when I say "three formative assessments in second quarter." One has to happen by the third week, one has to happen by the sixth week, and one has to happen by the eighth week. They have to be common, and you have to show me how you are using the data. When you come back for your second quarter instructional conference, these are the questions I'm going to ask you. You have them now, nine weeks ahead of time, be ready to talk about them when the nine weeks are over. So then, the consultant comes and helps them see . . . by that time they would have done one or two for the quarter, so she was there to help them finish the third and help them talk about what they are going to do next. We knew pretty early on we didn't have a handle on the black box of classroom (assessment) and we needed a way to find out.

**Recommendation #8:** Engage all Title I "Needs Improvement" schools in collaborative efforts to share research-based strategies and interventions that have proven successful in their schools to positively impact student achievement.

A female elementary administrator shared her desires to support on-going efforts to improve student learning,

I want to know what some of the other schools are doing. How to change the culture of learning, (change so) that learning is really valued? We really want our kids to be college bound in some capacity, and then how do we get them there? How do we support them through that? It's a cultural shift.

## **Improving Grant Processes and Providing Timely Results**

**Recommendation #9:** If possible, reduce the amount of time that schools wait to receive NeSA results as they desire to use results for planning for the new school year.

**Recommendation #10:** Communicate to schools applying for Title I grant funds why they did not obtain their grant as teachers and administrators spend an extraordinary amount of time working on grant applications.

### **New Recommendations Based on the 2012 Study**

- 1) Measure and recognize progress of Title I goals, even if it doesn't meet the goal because this is a process and which takes time.
- 2) In small schools, it is difficult to impact students needing improvement without the designation of the entire school as "Needs Improvement."
- 3) Provide information about Title I that is in a one page, concise, easily understandable format so that schools can see if the information is relevant to their goals. Be sure that it has an emphasis on quality rather than quantity of information.
- 4) Provide schools with assistance and resources to help students, parents and communities understand the importance of seeking continuing education after high school, especially for populations that traditionally do not seek further education beyond high school. This must start in the late elementary years in order for students and families to be prepared for higher education.
- 5) Resources to support student engagement strategies should be shared with all Title I schools to ensure engagement of learners in all subject curriculum using the strategies implemented in Reading and Math.
- 6) Examine the limitations Title I schools appear to be placing on curriculum, as Reading and Math appear to be the primary focus.
- 7) Allow more time for SIG grant proposal submission as well as Title I plans as some schools that are changing administration, need additional time to get acquainted with the school and its' needs. Additionally, allow new coaches and other administrators the time to add input into the plan and grant. Allow administrators, especially new administrators, the time to look at data, gather the research information and appropriate strategies, needed to attack the specific areas needing improvement.
- 8) There needs to close attention paid to the mobility rate of teachers serving in Title I schools and its impact upon student achievement.

# Bridging Gaps to Improve Teaching and Learning

## Section III: Research Studies

### Study 1: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress of Title I “Needs Improvement” Schools



*“The great thing about teaching is that it matters, the hard thing about teaching is that it matters every day!”*

A Nebraska Title I Administrator (2012)

### Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress of Title I “Needs Improvement” Schools

Jody Isernhagen, Ed.D., Associate Professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Jackie Florendo, Doctoral Candidate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

#### INTRODUCTION

Excellent leadership, excellent initial instruction, and excellent data systems have always been essential pieces of high performance schools. . . . Diagnostic testing, proportional increases in instructional time, focused teaching to the deficient sub-skill, and retesting to assure that learning has actually occurred are common-sense strategies and central to how we catch up students who are behind.

Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007, p. 19

Nebraska schools are addressing education reform mandates to increase student achievement for *all* students. The education reform efforts in the United States are intended to bridge the disparities in two types of achievement gaps: one within the subpopulations in the United States, the other a globalized gap between the U.S. and other countries (Zhao, 2009).

The “achievement gap” within the United States is, “often used to refer to the performance gap between minority students, particularly African American and Hispanic students and

their white peers and similar disparities between students from low-income and well-off families in a number of areas: standardized test scores, grades, dropout rates, and college completion rates” (Zhao, 2009, p. 7). Additionally, closing the achievement gap between the United States and other countries aligns to the “well-being and future of the U.S. economy” (Zhao, 2009, p. 7).

Closing the achievement gap formed the basis for the education reform movement, “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). Within the reform movement, specific schools have been targeted where achievement has lagged behind for *some* students, specifically a significant number of students school-wide who have not scored at the “Met” level of proficiency on Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) tests. These schools are known as “Needs Improvement” schools. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education began to identify schools as “Persistently Low Achieving Schools” (PLAS) based on assessment data.

The education reform movement “raises academic standards to the highest level in history with common core standards that are so rigorous and include such challenging cognitive demands that they align with the highest international benchmarks . . . no generation of educators in the history of the United States has ever been asked to do so much for so many” (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 5). All schools, including schools in “Needs Improvement” status are being asked to accept the challenge – and succeed!

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the implementation of Nebraska Title I Plans for improving student achievement in schools that have qualified and received a federal school improvement grant. This research provides Nebraska educators and the Nebraska Department of Education, the State Board of Education, other policy makers, and all other stakeholders with the information to assess the implementation of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This mixed-methods research study focused upon the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans. Administrators and teachers across the state were surveyed using an online instrument regarding their perceptions about the Title I School Improvement Process.

Only those schools which have been awarded a School Improvement Grant (SIG) for the 2010-2011 or 2011-2012 school years were eligible to participate.

### **Instruments**

Ten schools in seven districts agreed to participate in the survey; for a total of 88 teacher and 17 administrator participants. Administrators responded to a 78-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers responded to an 82-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored 8 themes: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Community Involvement, and (8) Overall Improvement. Some items on the teacher survey were not included on the administrator survey. Where this occurs, it is noted in the results. Participants responded to survey items using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The



reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for this instrument was .971 for administrators and .975 for teachers.

Second, open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in six public schools in five districts. Detailed perceptions were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix D) that gathered qualitative data. These six interview school sites were selected based on geographic area, district Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate, and student ethnicity. Twenty-two (22) individual interviews were conducted statewide during the spring of 2012. The interview protocols were structured around the same eight themes used to structure the survey: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Community Involvement, and (8) Overall Improvement. Additionally, five new themes emerged from the interviews: (1) Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation, (2) Parent and Student Expectations/Goals, (3) Consultant Support, (4) Teacher Leadership, and (5) Student Engagement.

The interview protocol (Appendix D) asked for participants' demographic information and posed nine questions about their perceptions of their school's Title I School Improvement Plan. Interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in elementary and secondary settings in five public school districts. A minimum of four interviews were conducted in each district. Probes were identified for use with each question. Interviewers were provided a Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Manual and received training prior to conducting interviews.

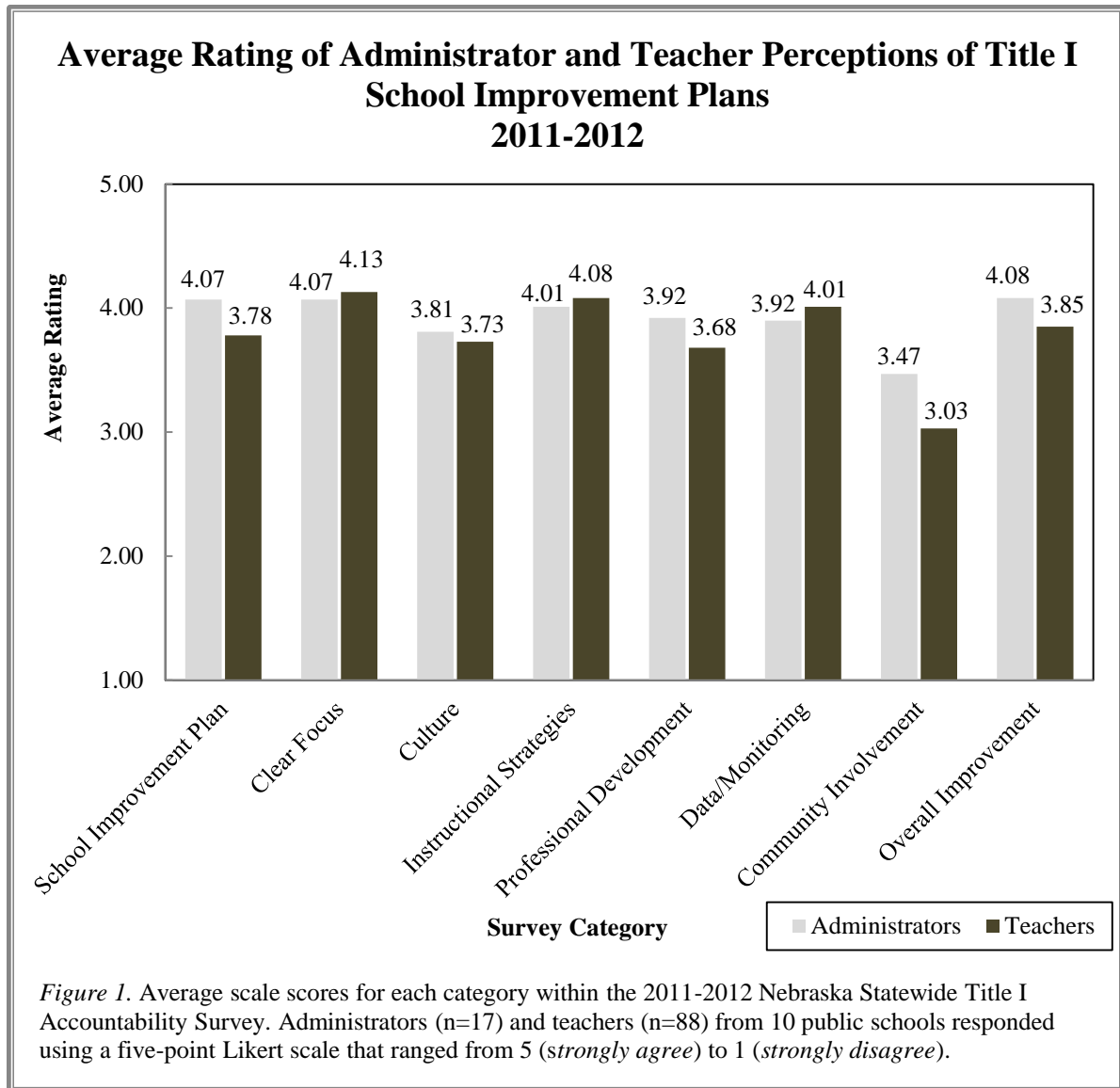
Quantitative data was disaggregated into percentage of English Language Learners, free and reduced lunch rate, mobility, and type of school using the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) State of the Schools Report for 2010-2011, the most recent data available (NDE, 2012). For these categories, teacher and administrator response rates are combined. The state average for English Language Learners was 7% of the overall school population (NDE, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the schools were divided into two groups: those with a population of English Language Learners less than 5% and those with a population of 5% and higher.

Within the state of Nebraska, free and reduced lunch rate is a statistical measurement referring to the percentage of the population who, by income, qualify for free or reduced rate school lunches. The average percentage of free and reduced lunch for the state is 43% (NDE, 2012). For the purpose of this study, schools whose free and reduced lunch rate of less than 55% are being compared to those with a rate of 55% and higher.

Mobility rate refers to the rate at which "students move in or out of a school" (NDE, 2012). In this study, data is disaggregated to compare schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% with those schools with a rate of 25% or higher. The average mobility rate for the state is 12% (NDE, 2012) only one participating school reported a mobility rate lower than the state average. The final type of disaggregated data is by level. Responses from both teachers and educators who identify an elementary school as their primary work location are compared to those who identify a middle or high school as their primary location.

## SURVEY RESULTS

As shown in Figure 1, administrator and teacher perceptions were categorized by eight themes: Title I School Improvement Plan, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent/Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Administrators and teachers responded to survey items using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*).



### Theme 1: Title I School Improvement Plan

**In the category of the Title I School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7), the average response of all administrators was 4.07. The average response of all teachers was 3.78.**

Both teachers (4.41) and administrators (4.67) gave the highest rating in the Title I School Improvement Plan category to “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” On the other hand, administrators gave “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals” the lowest rating in the category (3.67). Teachers rated “I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals” primarily “undecided” at 3.15 as the lowest item.

The item with the largest mean discrepancy (.91) between teachers and administrators in the category was “I was/Teachers were involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” Teachers rated this item lower at 3.15, while administrators rated it higher at 4.06.

**Table 3**  
*Title I School Improvement Plan Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.67 “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.”	4.41 “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.”
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.67 “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.”	3.15 “I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.”

**Administrator** responses in the category of Title I School Improvement Plan ranged from 3.67 to 4.67 with an average of 4.07. Female administrators rated this category 4.00, while male administrators rated it higher at 4.21, a discrepancy of 0.21.

**Teacher** responses in this category ranged from 3.15 to 4.41 with an average rating of 3.78. Female teachers rated this category 3.81 while males rated it similarly at 3.77. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience gave this category a rating of 3.65 while teachers with 10-20 years of experience gave it a higher rating at 3.90. Teachers with 20-30 years rated the category 3.55 while those over 30 years of experience rated it 3.92.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this category 3.73 while those from a school with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated it higher at 3.85. Educators in schools with an English Language Learner percentage of under 5% rated the category of School Improvement Plan at 3.56. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners rated it higher at 4.07 for a discrepancy of 0.51 for the category. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% rated the category 3.64 while educators from schools with a mobility rate of 25% or higher rated it 3.90 yielding a discrepancy of 0.25 for the category. Educators from elementary schools rated this category at 3.91. Middle and high school educators rated it at 3.69.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category Title I School Improvement Plan was .769 for administrators and .856 for teachers.

**Title I School Improvement Plan Discussion**  
*Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 1: “I was/ Administrators were involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.” This item was rated 3.67 by administrators and 4.19 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item similarly for females at 3.82 and at 3.83 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item similarly at 4.21 for females and 4.10 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.07, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.29. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 4.00 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.57.

- A female elementary administrator discussed how their data helped inform teachers about Reading and Math, “Something that we actually did this year through the data team was, using the MAP (test) in the reading area and the math; we set a district wide goal. Now, at the end of the year we can look and see, did we, overall as a district, (achieve) it. So that will be something that we’re following up on. They looked at the information from what we had last year and said, ‘this is our goal for that.’”
- A female elementary administrator talked about how data is used to identify and monitor achievement, “We meet every week and set both long term and short term action plans related to the improvement plan, and the data that we receive. For example, when the coach gathered information about the instructional practices, we looked at that and identified some priorities that we wanted to gather additional information about so that we would know more specifics. That same kind of action happens with our PLC leadership group, and that leadership team goes through similar types of activities looking at the implementation of the plan and professional development needs for the building.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.09, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.14. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.98, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.28. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.90, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.23. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.22, those from middle and high schools rated this item lower at 4.00.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate shared how their administration is involved, “Administration is highly involved. Our administrator wrote the grant, I came on shortly after that. The teachers are involved; their input was gathered with the development of the program. We have documentation and collect a lot of data. Teachers give a lot of input about what direction to go next. In the first year of the grant, we developed a focused plan, and typically, that is our playbook. Everything has to tie back to that plan. It’s not absolute, if we saw a great need to change the plan that would definitely happen. But, so far, the focus plan is based on areas of instruction, classroom management, content planning, and formative assessment. So, everything, really, has fallen into the plan,

right in line with what we thought we would do from the beginning. Teachers have quite a bit of input about what direction to go. After we've reached a benchmark, we're looking for the next step. They give some input there."

- A female elementary teacher with a lower free and reduced lunch rate discussed her involvement in identifying Title I plans, "I was actually on the continuous improvement (team). . . . The Title I (plan) that is currently in place, we worked on that, making sure we had that transition piece that was solid in there and exactly what we were doing for that transition from preschool to kindergarten and then on up through (the grades). So, I believe teachers and administration have all worked on it. We had parents and students, because we had our Parent Title I meeting, and had input from parents."

**Item 2: "Teachers were/I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals." This item was rated 4.06 by administrators and 3.15 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower for females at 4.09 than 4.33 for males. **Teachers** rated this item similarly at 3.14 for females and at 3.20 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 2.73, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.37. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.17 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.43.

- A female elementary teacher shared how her school team worked together, "We have worked with the administrators to decide what things we wanted to focus on as a building, and put forth so that we were taking ownership of it. It wasn't something that was just said 'you're doing this.' They wanted active participation and support and buy in with the project and everything that we're doing to make sure that we are actively involved in this. Not just something that is being done *to* us. We have heart in it; we are putting our effort into it."
- A female elementary administrator focused on involvement of her staff, "They're highly involved. I would say, the building administration and the leadership team that work with the principal, those are the ones that are the most involved in it."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.36, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.30. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.06, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.56. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.23, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.35. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.30, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.34.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate discussed the involvement of teachers in identification of Title I goals, "I think the teachers and administration were very involved in it. The consultation program that we had, also gave a lot of guidance and update. The administration is very involved, of course. Then we have a leadership team in the elementary, and they're very aware. The classroom teachers have also been aware of (this), maybe not as much with the development, but they're definitely looking at it and seeing what needs to be done."

- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate shared, “I think our administration is very much involved as we move forward; continuing to modify our school improvement plan, gather data, and implement some of the strategies. Our teachers are involved primarily because of the requirements that have been given to them.”

**Item 3: “All teachers in my school were/I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Goals.” This item was given a rating of 3.83 by administrators and a rating of 3.22 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item at 3.73 for females and at 4.17 for males, resulting in the largest mean discrepancy (.44) between male and female administrators in this School Improvement Plan category. **Teachers** rated this item 3.17 for females and 3.60 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.00, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.42. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.83 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.43. There was a significant difference between administrator (3.88) and teacher (3.22) responses for this item ( $p=.027$ ).

- A male elementary administrator stated, “We do daily charts, and turn them in every week to our reading coach. She goes over the data. She sends it to our consultant, then they talk about it, then we get feedback that way. Then we either get little slips of paper or will discuss what we need to do. We might need to move back some lessons or just keep going at the rate we’re going.”
- Not all schools had involvement by all teachers. A female elementary teacher indicated no involvement by stating, “I don’t think I was involved. I don’t remember being part of it.”
- A female elementary teacher explained that although not directly involved, she understood the primary focus, “We want to improve our math and reading. That is the primary focus. Now, the biggest focus this year has been in math because our reading was higher than math. Not to say that we’re not using the strategies we learned last year to help improve our scores for reading, we are continuing to use those; we are also learning strategies for math.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item, focused on disaggregation of data at 3.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.35. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.00, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.63, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.005$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.07, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.43. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.41, those from middle and high schools rated this item lower at 3.20.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a high ELL rate shared the “bottom up” philosophy by stating, “Most of the ideas come . . . it may be a spark . . . maybe you’re a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, and I give you an idea of something, then if it goes anywhere it will come from the teachers. I think we have a bottom up (philosophy), I think most of the decisions are made from the teachers. It may be input a little bit from administration, but I think that, as a teacher, what comes from me, would probably work better in a classroom than something that comes from the top.”

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate explained they use PLC groups to share data, “We have 2 PLC’s; sometimes they (administrators) come to one or the other. So they come in and visit with those PLC groups, they also have meetings with us with RTI. They say, ‘how are the reading goals going, how are the kids doing?’ So we are checked in on often by the administration.”

**Item 4: “I have consistently/Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I Goals to teachers in my school.” Administrators rated this item 3.94, and teachers rated it 3.77.**

**Administrators** of both genders rated this item similarly at 3.91 for females and 4.00 for males. **Teachers** of both genders also rated this item similarly at 3.78 for females and 3.70 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.80, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.82. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.67 and over 30 years of experience rated this item lower at 3.57.

- A female elementary administrator shared how the administration communicated the progress of their Title I Goals, “Again, the results are communicated to the leadership team first. How that is disseminated sometimes, the effectiveness varies in that aspect. Just in informal conversations with the teachers, sometimes they honestly don’t know exactly what’s going on. It varies.”
- A female elementary teacher explained how Title I Goals are communicated in her school, “The principal has a newsletter that is sent out, I think about quarterly. The principal also shares with the leadership team and the leadership team shares with the rest of the staff.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item, effective communication of Title I goals, 3.55, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.87. This is the largest mean discrepancy between the free and reduced lunch groups in this category at 0.32. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.45, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.13; a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.50, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.92. This is the highest mean discrepancy in this category between lower and higher mobility rates (0.42). Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.91, those from middle and high schools rated this item at 3.63.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate stated, “We’re communicating specifically across (all) areas, because we did have concerns about communication last year, even staff members had concerns about communication; so we wanted to make sure we were at least hitting everybody and if we didn’t clarify, then we were figuring out how to clarify.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate shared, “There are lots of opportunities for weekly information, the face-to-face opportunities have been best for us, because not everyone reads their email in a timely fashion, so, we have difficult time giving information that way. We have to have those face-to-face opportunities.”

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate explained what she believed would increase the flow of information, “I would say the team that meets should have one person be a secretary that takes notes to be able to give to all staff after those little meetings. I think that if the Superintendent and Principal are making a decision about the Title I program, then that should be written down; it would (also) be nice to have a newsletter from the state to either know where our school is at for Title I, or where other schools are at.”

**Item 5: “Teachers in my school/ I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals.” This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.75 by teachers.**

**Administrators** of the female gender rated this item at 3.82; male administrators rated the item higher at 4.17. **Teachers** rated this item lower at 3.72 for females than for males (4.00). Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.70, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.84. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.86.

- A female elementary administrator explained how action plans are targeted towards Title I goals but look different, “While teams are doing similar actions, the way the action plan looks is very different. For example, the PLC leadership team may be focused on the data teams’ process and the implementation of the data teams process in each of the teams. That team, for example, identified the step . . . instructional strategies where we were struggling the most; so as a PLC leadership team, we focused on how to do that well. With the leadership team, we talked about some specific things we can do when we are coaching teachers, or when we are using the appraisal process to help teachers identify and understand the definition of what is an instructional strategy. So, we’re still working on the same thing, but we’re doing it from slightly different angles.”
- A female elementary administrator explained, “The school wide plan is a part of the SIG grant as well, and our targeted goals. So, we look at our data, we look at our needs, we look at our professional development, we look at the overall picture of where we’re at and where we need to go. For instance, we go through the pieces of the school-wide plan but all of those components are exactly what fit into our targeted goals for the SIG grant. So, we have targeted goals, targeted instruction that has several benchmarks with it as well that we are working on. We are also looking at alignment of curriculum and collaborative teams.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.77, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.78. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.41, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.13; a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). This is the highest mean discrepancy between the two groups (0.72) for the category as well as the survey overall. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.67, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.83. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.91, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.59.

- A male secondary administrator from a school with a low ELL rate emphasized the school’s overall goal, “It’s student achievement. It’s actually our overall goal. We’re



doing a strategic plan as well, and we're looking potentially for a 3 - 5 year plan. What we keep coming back to in every facet of that plan, is student success. So we know that at some point that's going to become our little logo or something. Because everything that we do is (about) student success; that drives us! If it promotes student success, we're going to do it!"

- A male elementary administrator in a school with a high ELL rate described their goal emphasis, "In a nutshell our goals are: we have to improve reading comprehension, we have to improve math computation skills, and then it's imperative that we continue to provide for rigor. All of those fit into the mission statement which we're designing now. That's an ongoing process."
- A female elementary teacher in a school with a high mobility rate discussed their goal targets, "Math and reading. Comprehension and vocabulary is a strong point for reading. They are both strong, '10's (on a scale from 1 to 10)' because we are really low on our reading. As for the school, where they would place the importance on comprehension and vocabulary, I'm unsure of that. With having extra money, we've been able to get teacher assistants in here to help out the lower levels. We've been able to purchase programs, activities, and things to help improve the learning aspect. I don't know if it's more the D.I. (Directed Instruction) programs that are making the difference, or if it's the assistance and resources bought with Title I. Our test scores came up from last year, but they're still not at the level that they want them to be at."

**Item 6: "Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified." This item was rated 4.33 by administrators and 3.94 by teachers.**

**Administrators** of both genders rated this item at 4.18 for females compared to 4.33 for males. **Teachers** of both genders also rated this item similarly at 3.94 for females and 4.00 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.93, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.95. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.83 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A male elementary administrator shared his schools' primary focus for the year, "Our primary focus this year is math. With the School Improvement Grant, last year the focus was on reading, this year the focus is to be on math. A lot of our training dealt with Saxon math. What our consultant, pays most of her attention to now is math. So, without a doubt, that's where we're at."
- A female elementary teacher shared, "Right now, improving our math is a major push; a couple of years ago it had been reading, because we were low in reading. So, although we're pushing to improve our math, we push just as hard to maintain our reading and push it because we still, probably are not reaching where everyone else is. Even though we've shown growth, we're not still probably up to other communities."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.91, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.01. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.76, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.20; a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25%

rated this item 3.87, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.04. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.06, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.88.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a low ELL rate emphasized, “Our focus is reading, it’s our main focus. I believe there is a counterpart to that. But, reading is the utmost focus, using graphic organizers, using engagement strategies to get them to do their best, so that everybody is involved.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a high ELL rate shared, “First, a little bit about the plan. I know when we talk to (the principal) about the plan, we have our “one pager” from our consultant; we have our instructional strategies which are part of our plan. That is how I’ll talk about it because that is how (the principal) talks to us about it. I would say that especially being part of the PLC leadership team, we discuss pretty much every single week, some part of this plan. With our consultant, we’ll take our one pager, and we’ve identified those main parts that we want to work on. We worked really hard, and we set a goal, and then, as the PLC leadership team, we discussed ways in which we could reach that goal and how to get it to the rest of the staff. Then it was taken to the rest of the staff. So, we work out the finer details in that team, before it’s brought to everybody.”

**Item 7: “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” This item was rated 4.67 by administrators and 4.41 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.45 for females and 4.67 for males. **Teachers** rated this item at 4.45 for females and 4.10 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.37. There was a significant difference ( $p=.003$ ) between teachers of 10-20 years of experience (4.61) and teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.83). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43.

- A female elementary administrator talked about the planning process for improving student achievement, “When we talk about the goals, and the teachers look at the goals, they’re looking at the structured targeted goals; they’re not looking at the school-wide plan. They’re looking at the targeted goals, because we have to keep those in focus, we have a timeline and at what point is that going to be completed and what do we need to get that done.”
- A female elementary teacher shared how the progress of the Title I Goals were communicated to teachers, staff, and parents, “We just looked at the Title I again, and reviewed what we’re doing on there, what kind of things we’re looking at. Also since reading is one of our major goals, we are looking at that all the time, we’re looking at the reading goals, we’re looking at whether or not it’s working. So I would say we keep very good track of it.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.48. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.25, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.59. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.27, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.49. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.56, those from middle and high schools rated this

item 4.22. This is the highest mean discrepancy between elementary and middle/high schools in this category at 0.34.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a low ELL rate explained, “I have a leadership team that meets weekly. We discuss our goals, and it depends on where we’re at in the year and what we are necessarily looking at. Pretty much monthly we are talking about all of our goals. We’re also talking about data, looking at data.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate shared, “I think that’s the biggest step for us - that we have those intermediate goals. Last year, the big shift we made was setting, what I considered high expectations related to student achievement and year end goals. We had some very difficult conversations about what that looks like. A silly, simple example is a grade level team that says ‘We think 75% of our kids are going to meet this target by the end of the year.’ I said, ‘give me a list of those kids that aren’t going to do it, and you think it’s okay for them to not meet that.’ Then, tell me when you’re going to call their parents and let them know. Of course, they don’t and we don’t, then we talk about it’s never okay to set 75% as a target. So, getting to 100% was an emphasis last year, and that’s always our target no matter what.”

## Theme 2: Clear Focus

**In the Clear Focus category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17), the average response of all administrators was 4.07. The average response of teachers was 4.13.**

The item rated strongest by administrators (4.65) and teachers (4.45) within the Clear Focus category was “My school engages in continuous school improvement.” The item rated lowest by administrators was “The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels” (3.88). The item rated weakest by teachers was “My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program” (3.91).

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the Clear Focus category was, “I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” Teachers rated this item between “agree” and “strongly agree” at 4.45. Administrators rated the item mostly “agree” at 4.00.

**Table 4**  
*Clear Focus Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.65 “My school engages in continuous school improvement.”	4.45 “My school engages in continuous school improvement.”
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.88 “The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.”	3.91 “My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program.”

**Administrator** responses in the category of Clear Focus ranged from 3.88 to 4.65 with an average of 4.07. Female administrators' rated the category at 4.10, while male administrators gave it a rating of 4.27.

**Teacher** responses in this category ranged from 3.91 to 4.45 with an average of 4.13 or "agree." Female teachers rated this category at 3.80 while males rated it 3.76. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated the category 3.84, while teachers with 10-20 years of experience rated it 4.42. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this category 3.81 and over 30 years of experience at 4.42.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this category at 4.15 while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated it at 4.14. Educators in schools with an English Language Learner percentage of under 5% rated the category of Clear Focus 4.02. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners rated it 3.87. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% rated the category at 4.05 while educators from schools with a mobility rate of 25% or higher rated the category 3.80; a mean discrepancy for the category of 0.25. Educators from elementary schools rated this category 4.21, while middle and high school educators rated this 3.67.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Clear Focus was .869 for administrators and .919 for teachers.

### **Clear Focus Discussion**

#### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 8: "My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program." This item was rated 4.24 by administrators and 3.91 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower for females at 4.09 than males at 4.50. **Teachers** rated this item at 3.95 for females and 3.60 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.67, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.18. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary teacher explained how important standards are to the process of learning, "I think we knew what the standards were, but we have become more aware of the standards we need to meet. We're teaching to the standards, and students know what the standards are and how they can use those in everyday life, and why it's important to learn those particular standards. This has definitely been a learning process for all of us. I thought our staff was really cohesive before, we're even more that way because of all of the collaboration and small groups that we're working in. It's not one person standing here and giving us the information and the rest of us sitting silently or off in our dream world. We have a protocol that is read at the beginning of every meeting that we do. If you are silent, silent means consent, so if you do not agree you need to speak up. I think there's a lot more buy-in with it now, too."

- A female elementary administrator shared how teaching must stay focused even though the targets move as students improve, “You meet the standard but the target moves, so you have to meet that target and up the ante. So, we did ask teachers to go a lot deeper in their discussions. We’ve asked teachers to develop small groups, to integrate, and to really not give lip service to differentiation, but to actually do it. We’ve also done a lot of work with inclusion and teaching all students at grade level. That was a mindset change.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.86, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.99. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.78, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.13. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.03. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.09, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.76.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a low ELL rate explained their school’s focus, and how it relates to the identified areas of need, “The focus was on using data to make instructional decisions. Making sure the curriculum is aligned to the standards, things that we’re measuring, and developing engagement strategies with students. That includes academic vocabulary instruction, they’re using TFS, Teaching for Success; which incorporates engagement strategies, academic language strategies, lesson planning and design in the classroom. That will be fully implemented next year.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a high ELL rate had another perspective on her school’s focus, “This is going to sound bad, but no, I don’t. Just because I think we pull them in too many directions. We’re really good about ‘let’s do this . . . that didn’t quite work, so let’s try something else.’ I sometimes wonder if we ever allow stuff to develop. I think sometimes we (administrators) pull them (teachers) in so many directions.”

**Item 9: “My school engages in continuous school improvement.” This item was rated 4.65 by administrators and 4.42 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item slightly lower for females at 4.55 and at 4.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item at 4.49 for females, males rated it higher at 3.90. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.40. There was a significant difference ( $p=.021$ ) between teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.55) and teachers with 20-30 years of service (3.92). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.71.

- A female elementary administrator explained how common language and common strategy keep teachers focused on improvement, “Having a common vocabulary and a common strategy. We had, for years, everybody doing their own thing for reading, which was kind of the nineties thing. That was when our scores were slipping. We did purchase a BASAL series, and went back to that. We were in the process of making a lot of those changes, but we still had these pockets of still wanting to do our own thing. I think the teachers have seen the value of not doing your own thing. Being

aligned with method, materials, and professional development. It's much less confusing for the students and parents."

- A female elementary administrator explained how their school engages the teachers in the school improvement process, "We are getting kids where they need to be by the end of the year sooner. So, that the end of the year benchmarks aren't just a 'great we got there' benchmark. But, if we push them past that mark, 'how much more ready will they be before next year?' There is much more of a mindset of 'what do these kids need for the next grade?' not 'what they need for the end of this year.' That's been a huge change, that's where the data is going. We've seen a LOT more kids getting farther earlier in the year than they have in the past. It came just from thinking at the instructional level. They lose over the summer - that summer slide happens. If we can get them past where they need to be at the end of the year, then that is much less likely to impact where they start. So, if we can get off to a good start next year, then we are ready to go. We can move on faster."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.27, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.51. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.37, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.54. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.27, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.53. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.61, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.22.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a low free and reduced lunch rate explained, "I'm better aware of all of the Power Standards. I know next year, what I'm going to hit first, and hit the strongest. I'm going to make sure I hit all of the Power Standards first, so I'm confident and the students have it before testing time. I'm using that with making sure the reading and, we're in science now also, so I have all of those. When I've talked with the third grade teacher and the sixth grade teacher, and I know they are doing it the same, hitting the Power Standards first."
- A female elementary administrator from a high free and reduced lunch rate school described their focus by stating, "I would say our focus, is kind of complex in some ways. I really do think you should have one focus but, the biggest focus to me, is to make our PLC process, our improvement process work better so that it is not an external process. It wasn't coming from this office, or the district office, it was coming from within teams. So, that took lots of different approaches, the data team process was big for us because we felt like teachers felt like they were collaborating, they were talking, they were talking about kids, and occasionally they would talk about data results. So they felt like they were collaborating and it was a PLC."

**Item 10: "There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need." This item was rated 4.24 by administrators and 4.10 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item similarly at 4.27 for females and 4.17 for males. **Teacher** responses varied for this item by gender at 4.15 for females and 3.70 for males. There was a significant difference ( $p=.037$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of service (3.83) to

teachers with 10-20 years of service (4.37). Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.75 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43.

- A female elementary administrator discussed how their school is purposeful in their actions for meeting identified areas of need, “It’s like parent involvement; it’s not one thing, its lots of little things. Some little, some big. Probably one of my more strongly held beliefs is that you act your way into a new set of beliefs, and you can’t wait for people to change their beliefs for them to act. So, we’ve been very purposeful about setting up those actions and giving them support, and professional development so they know what those actions are, even if they’re not totally sure it’s going to work, or be the right thing. Then, gently, and sometimes not so gently, helping them to implement those things. Being really clear, giving a lot of feedback about it, and helping them feel more confident in it, so eventually that will turn to a different set of beliefs. You know, the simple one is the goal.”
- A female elementary teacher described her focus, “I’d say our main focus right now, is student learning, and I would say to pinpoint that, the application of the learning. I think the data is telling us, the kids can do the skills, they can do the concepts, and they can do them independently of each other. They can tell us exactly what a simile is, what an alliteration is, what onomatopoeia is, but when you put it all together, and they have to apply it in a story, and make some sort of meaning from it, and say, okay, the author is saying, ‘her face was white as a ghost,’ What is this telling me? I think the application of it, is the big part that we’re striving for; *that’s* what we’re missing.”
- A female elementary teacher discussed her school’s focus, “I think we’re dedicated. People are willing to do the work. They are willing to take the time. I feel like it requires a lot of meetings, because you have to get together, and people are willing. I think we have the right people to do that. This is what we are all working towards. We have all adopted working towards the same goal.” The same female elementary teacher went on, “The hard work, however, is not easy. I think turnover hurts us big time. You can see it now for next year; the rumors are flying about who is leaving, why they are leaving, where they are going. I think that hurts the staff, there are a lot of people who say . . . ‘I get it, I don’t like going home, and being crabby to my family. I don’t want to do all of this that takes away from my son or daughter.’ I get it, but it’s also very hurtful . . . people hear that and it affects all of us. It kind of feels like we’re always starting over and re-teaching others and sometimes we don’t get the teachers that we need.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.10. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.00, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.24. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.17, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item similarly at 4.11. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.28, those from middle and high schools rated this item lower at 3.88. This item resulted in the largest mean discrepancy between elementary and middle/high schools in the category of culture at 0.40.

- A female teacher from an elementary school shared, “Our school’s focus is to make a difference in the community as well as in the school. We want to see these kids succeed. We want them to believe in themselves and know that they can do the work. We want to create leaders so that maybe sometime in the future, this will all make a difference to them both individually and as a community.”
- A female administrator from a secondary school described how the clear focus is impacting students, parents, and the community, “I think the kids have really picked up on it. I’m going to go back to our third grade group. I don’t know if I’m supposed to say that, but ALL third graders improved in math, and the NeSA scores were extraordinary. So, I believe that the kids are also buying into this idea of improving, and I don’t know how they are doing it, I’m not in the classroom, but something is happening. I think everybody’s on board. We are hearing from parents - we just heard it the other day that they want their kid to go here because ‘(this district) has really got it going.’ They’re more focused, they’re teaching more. People are asking to work here.”

**Item 11: “There is a clear articulation of standards in my school.” This item was rated by administrators as 3.94 and by teachers as 4.18.**

**Administrators** rated this item differently by gender at 4.00 for females and 3.83 for males. **Teachers** rated the item at 4.22 for females and 3.90 for males. There was a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of service (3.83) to teachers with 10-20 years of service (4.50). Also significant ( $p=.022$ ) was the difference between teachers with 10-20 years of service (4.50) and teachers with 20-30 years of service (3.83). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43. For this item, there was also a significant difference ( $p=.018$ ) when comparing administrator responses (3.94) to teachers responses (4.18).

- A female secondary teacher explained how their competencies align to standards, “At our district, we have our state standards, and what we call our competencies. These are aligned with the state standards. So, when I start a unit, I look at my competencies and my state standards, and then I gear my unit planning towards that. It flows. When we bought new text books, the junior high math teacher and I met together, and basically his books, in junior high, flow into my text books. Basically we made sure they all flowed together. When they’re in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, they’re either in general math, pre-Algebra, or Algebra I. Then, as a freshman they flow right into Geometry. . . . We’re trying to get aligned with the local community college, to see if we can’t get them a little college when they’re a senior. We’re working towards communicating also with the Community College here in town, so that our seniors can take dual credit classes.”
- However, a female elementary administrator from another school discussed the difficulty with curriculum alignment to the state standards, “As far as the curriculum that we have available to us from publishers, it’s not very well aligned. I would call it antiquated, and I think our curriculum directors would call it antiquated as well. We have very old text books, very old material available to us. We’ve had to do a great deal of work with our teachers to make them realize that the state standards are really our guide, and that’s what we teach, even if it’s not represented in our text book. If



it's not in our text book, we have to supplement. We absolutely have to use those standards as our guide. That's been a challenge.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.12. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.00, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.28. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.13, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item similarly at 4.15. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.23, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.00.

- A female elementary administrator explained how curriculum alignment to standards has helped student achievement, “We worked on that (alignment) but we haven't fully implemented it, and that was part of our problem. The consultants worked for two days in (one month), another day in (the next month), then they have two more days (at the end of the school year), aligning to the Power Standards - the NeSA standards that are tested. Then, (we'll) design formative assessments to bench mark those over the course of a year in reading and math.”
- A female teacher from a secondary school talked about the school's focus on curriculum and standards, “Each day of the week, we have a specific area designated. Either way, we're doing a character, or one day we'll just be completely devoted to math, one day is devoted to science, then we have one day that's just reading. Another day (we're) working on a different subject. I know we're encouraging to do more math work in class. But, also I would say reading is always one of the big things that kids all need. It's more instruction for them. So, the more that they're getting them (specific objectives), the more it's going to stick. They hear it constantly, and they're not just hearing reading from the reading teacher. They're hearing reading from the science teacher, reading from the math teacher. Same thing with, in the after school they're learning math from the English teacher.”

**Item 12: “Teachers in my school/I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” This item was rated by administrators at 4.00 and by teachers at 4.45.**

**Administrators** rated this item at 4.09 for females and 3.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item at 4.47 for females and 4.30 for males. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.37. There was a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of service (4.68) to teachers with 20-30 years of service (3.92). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43. There was also a significant difference ( $p = .003$ ) when comparing administrator responses (4.00) to teacher responses (4.45) for this item.

- A female elementary administrator shared what she believed was the key to school improvement, “Kids are the ones who give us that feedback. When you see them engaged, all kids engaged, then that makes the difference. I think those engagement strategies. Also, the curriculum development and the assessment development have been key because we had a lot of ‘Aha!’”
- A female elementary teacher explained the positive use of technology for student engagement, “Another strategy is lap boards, and I ran out of markers for the first

time in my life this year! Because we have used them so much, and they're so good at sharing with me in the manner that they need to. I love it because I can see right now whether they have the concept or whether they don't, and how much I have to go back through to work with a small group, while the rest of them are working on their assignments. But on those different engagement strategies, when they're engaged, they're also less likely to be distracted, less likely to be off task, they're definitely more on task, even my lower learners, having that chance of getting to have input, and also stay on task, I think that has really worked for them."

- A female elementary teacher discussed intentional instructional strategies that engage students, "We'll decide what is best to work on next. We talked (about) engagement as the next one that we were going to work on. We thought, we were trying to get the most out of it, what is going to have the greatest impact in the classroom, so then we went to engagement. 'What can we do?' We had to have those hard discussions on 'what is engagement?' 'What does it look like?' Even as adults, we have a hard time coming to it, because you see adults all the time who are doodling and stuff while they are working, but they know exactly what is going on, because they are engaged. So, we had to have those conversations and then that led us to instructional strategies. What kind of instructional strategies can get children more engaged? So we work out those finer details before it's brought to everybody, and I would say the administration definitely leads it, I'm sure in their meetings they kind of have those conversations of how they are going to bring it to us, and then (they) bring it to the staff. I feel like we've all had a big say in it. Our ideas, thoughts, feedback, guides where it's going to go next."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.45, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.36. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.20, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.56. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.40, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item similarly at 4.37. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.48, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.22.

- A female administrator from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate shared about engagement strategies at her school, "I think the majority of the kids want to be engaged. They like to do the partner work and turn to their partner and 'think-pair-share.' The primary team selected one of their engagement strategies as the 'quick-write-draw.'"
- A female administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate explained, "It's hard for me to know, because I think of my own kids and I think we have really engaging, purposeful lessons, but engagement can't just be silly. It has to be purposeful. When I watch a master teacher who asks 40 questions in a ten minute period and every single one of them has a purpose, and she has those kids right here, and they are doing high level thinking, I know we can do all of those things. It doesn't happen by accident."

**Item 13: “The curriculum in my school is supportive of the academic needs of students.” This item was rated 3.94 by administrators and 4.06 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.73 for females and higher at 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher at 4.13 for females and lower at 3.50 for males. There was a significant difference ( $p=.007$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (3.70) to teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.37). Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.90 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary teacher explained, “I think their growth is more rapid. Coming back into first grade I was going, ‘whew,’ when I had taught first grade way back, the expectations we had with them, and what they’re achieving now, is higher rigor. Definitely a higher rigor than maybe, even ten years ago. They’re meeting that. Not only that we’re expecting that, and pushing it on to them, they seem to be meeting it, and I’m interested to see how that keeps going through the years.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how curriculum is supportive of student achievement, “The focus was on using data to make instructional decisions. Making sure the curriculum is aligned to the standards and things that we’re measuring, and developing engagement strategies with students.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.00, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item similarly at 4.05. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.02, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it similarly at 4.06. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.87, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.11. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.06, similarly to those from middle and high schools who rated this item 4.00.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a high mobility rate explained the impact of good teaching to support student’s academic needs, “They are starting to buy into reciprocal teaching, and they think it’s powerful, but they do it once in a while. It’s now getting to the point where we have to do it every day. We may not do reciprocal teaching every day, but we have to do high quality, high value, and high return strategies each and every day. I just put it on my board ‘the great thing about teaching is that it matters, the hard thing about teaching is that it matters every day.’ It does, there is no day that we take off and say we can just fluff that today. It just doesn’t, particularly in a school like this. We have a lot of money, but it’s the time. I have 1,032 hours, I have to use every minute of 1, 032 hours. We have no margin for error, maybe at another school you can take a day off. We cannot. Everything has to be purposeful. That’s a huge hurdle that is yet to come with instruction.”
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower mobility rate explained, “We’ve also been doing some work on looking at those (standards) now, making sure we are meeting those standards and making sure the children are achieving those standards. We’ve done some work on some guaranteed standards within math to make sure kids not only had those standards, but met and mastered those standards.”

**Item 14: “The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” This item was rated 3.88 by administrators and 3.94 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this question 3.73 for females and 4.17 for males. This was the highest mean discrepancy for administrators in the Clear Focus category (0.44). **Teachers** rated this item differently at 3.99 for females and 3.60 for males. There was a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (3.33) to teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.34). In addition, there was a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (3.33) to teachers with 30+ years of experience (4.57) Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.83.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower mobility rate explained, “They’ve taken on a new reading series and a new math series. The standards were aligned per grade, but they were also aligned to the standards across curriculum, so there’s that flow. But we’ve also been doing some work on looking at those now, making sure we are meeting those standards and making sure the children are achieving those standards. We’ve done some work on some guaranteed standards within math to make sure kids have not only had those standards, but met or mastered those standards.”
- A female elementary teacher explained how curriculum is aligned between and among grade levels in her school, “It’s a tricky situation. In some of the discussions we’ve had, there is a big gap between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and it’s like what is the gap in the curriculum that makes it a hard jump for kids when they start to struggle where they weren’t struggling in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. So, I wonder if there is a gap in the curriculum there that they are missing. I think for K-2, since we got this new program. It’s really centered on math talk and talking about math, and explaining your thinking. I wonder if we’ll see bigger gaps in math. I think they’ll come into third grade with a better foundation, but I wonder if there will still be gaps because of the way instruction is happening from third graders, who haven’t had experience with the curriculum.”
- A female elementary teacher shared a similar view, “I think we’re very well aligned to state standards. We use Saxon math, and that’s readily available online, how the Saxon lines up with the state standards. Some wonderful genius fixed it up so you can see whatever the standard is that we can find at what point in the curriculum it’s taught, re-taught and assessed. In reading, the assessment, as far as state standards go, we know there are certain state standards that are met by these. I don’t go and reflect on these on a daily basis, but I’ve read through them, and I know that the phonemic awareness is met, the phonics, the sound, the segmentation, the reading, the reading criteria for words, we have looked at those, and I’m very confident that what we’re doing is meeting most of those standards if not all.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.86, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.95. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.06. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.77, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.00. Educators

from elementary schools rated this item 3.91, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.98.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with lower mobility shared, “We knew what the standards were, but we have become more aware of the standards we need to meet. We’re teaching to the standards, and the students know what the standards are, how they can use those in everyday life, and why it’s important to learn those particular standards. This has definitely been a learning process for all of us.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate stated, “I think for the most part, (alignment) is pretty good (between grade levels). But, if you talk about different subject areas, math in particular, we have seen some gaps that need to be squeezed down, and not have as big of a gap between grade levels. That’s one thing that we want to improve on.”

**Item 15: “The curriculum in my school is aligned with the state standards.” This item was rated 4.06 by administrators and 4.15 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.91 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.18 compared to 3.90 for males. There was a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (3.63) to teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.55). Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 4.00 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43.

- A female elementary administrator shared, “One of the things about whether or not the curriculum is aligned with state standards, I think I’m pretty fortunate to come in, after the principal before me; she pretty much had her ducks in a row with her teachers. It was amazing! Talk about the teachers using APL, there’s quite a lot of teachers that still write the learning objectives, and a lot of those learning objectives tie in directly with the state standards. We changed our evaluation tool to meet with the state this year. But in that particular evaluation tool, there are some elements in there that state directly, what are your teachers doing specifically with the state standards? Well, for me, that was one where it was like ‘whew,’ the teachers are doing it.”
- A female administrator discussed alignment to state standards, “I think we are, we have to do more tweaking. But, if you examined our curriculum, it’s more extensive than the state standards. I think our problem is, maybe we need to condense our curriculum and be more focused, but it’s real hard when we went from having all of these standards to having these few. So, I think maybe we need to get more focused. Give up some of the fluff within our own curriculum. But, the state standards are in the lesson plans, the teachers know what they are.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.36, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.07. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.16, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it similarly at 4.11. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.17, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.12. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.05, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.27.

- A male secondary teacher from a school with a lower rate of ELL shared, “I am absolutely positive it is.” An administrator from the school explained, “Our curriculum (aligns) with the state (standards) curriculum. Those are used by the teachers in their lesson plans to meet those state requirements. . . . We don’t have any special programs. The standards are set by the state. They (teachers) all have curriculum guides.”
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate shared, “What alignment? For Saxon (math) we found the standards fit Nebraska, and the alignment was there. So we took the vocabulary terms that was used on NeSA, and we’ve penciled that into the book so when we’re talking about a certain topic, we also say how the term is used on NeSA. For reading, I don’t see there being alignment whatsoever. It’s scary to know that. We use Reading Mastery, which is a Directed Instruction program. We level all of our kids. They’re at their reading level, which means I have sixth graders and some of them are reading at a third grade level, so they’re not getting four, five, six skills, because they’re reading at a lower level, same way for math. So, when it comes time to take the test, they’re not prepared for the test. I don’t know how to get them to be at the level.”
- Another female elementary teacher shared a different perspective on curriculum alignment to standards, “I don’t think it (our curriculum) does align very well at all. The last couple of years, we’ve said, ‘the curriculum isn’t doing what we need it to do.’ We’ve taught the curriculum reading/math and we’ve used our coaches, and our literacy leaders, and we always feel like the students do really great on the theme test, or the math test. Then we get to these NeSA Practices, and it’s not aligning. This year, we started at the beginning of the year, and we took a class this summer, about aligning to the standards. . . . With our consultant, we looked at the standards, the third grade standards. Our curriculum has way more for us to teach, than what is tested, or in the standards. Why are we doing all of this stuff, that is taking time away from what they need?”

**Item 16: “Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments are used to support instruction and enhance student learning.” This item was rated 4.29 by administrators and 4.15 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item similarly at 4.27 for females and 4.33 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.19 than males at 3.80. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.00. There was a significant difference ( $p=.027$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.34) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.75). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item the highest at 4.43.

- A female elementary administrator gave an analogy on the use of assessments, “One of the things they took on very early was formative assessment as a strategy and people have used that to differing degrees. One of the analogies that I thought of was on a clock, there are the hour hands that are our summative assessments, and then there are the minute hands that are our common formative assessments. Then there are the second hands which are our imbedded summative assessments that just are continual, and you’re using that information on the spot to change your instruction.

We have teams that are looking at all of those different kinds of assessments. Most (teachers) have moved into our common formative assessments, because we don't have enough information in between summative to make day by day decisions. Then, there are some of the higher functioning teams who have gotten to those minute by minute embedded pieces."

- A female elementary administrator discussed the use of assessments for learning, "We definitely use our AIMS web, a universal screener, three times a year. We're part of the RTI consortium; one of the pilot schools who started that. We do the AIMSweb, we look at our MAP scores, and we do the NWEA measures of academic process three times a year. That is with all of our kids from kindergarten up through 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The AIMSweb is K-8; we do that K-8. We really look at the NeSA scores at the beginning of the year, to help us from the previous year, that's how we use that. Then we just use the MAP as a predictor of how the students will do. NeSA provides interventions to students who go through the student assistance process, which is the RTI. Then, we also look at the students who are just above that, who could use that little extra push."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.16. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.02, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.31. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.10, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.20. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.23, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.07.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL population shared, "Because we want to benchmark, we want to assess, test, teach, reteach and so on. So that's what we did with our formative assessments in math that they created. Then, we also have the 'check for learning,' because we participated in that. We'll utilize that more effectively next year. I don't think every teacher utilized that as effectively as they could have, because there's so much. So, we have a lot of tools."
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate discussed the use of assessments at his school, "They do use MAP scores in high schools. They'll do it in the areas of reading and science; they've done it before but only twice a year. We wanted a winter benchmark, because I wanted to see growth. We're fortunate because every five lessons, or every two weeks, or three times a year, with Dibels, you're constantly on those benchmark scores."

**Item 17: "Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students." This item was rated 4.35 by administrators and 3.99 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item similarly at 4.36 for females and 4.33 for males. **Teachers** rated this item at 4.06 for females and 3.40 for males. There was a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (3.63) to teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.34). An additional significant difference ( $p=.042$ ) was apparent

when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.34) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.67). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary principal stated, “We looked at research, as part of the data team process, so that was helpful. The two big ones (research-based) we looked at were Marzano’s *Classroom Instruction That Works*, and Hattie’s work *Visible Learning*. The new book that came out in December, Hattie’s *Visible Learning for Teachers*, has been incredibly helpful for them to take that work and start to apply it to the classroom. Those have been good resources; ultimately, the big work was in the self-reflection, on what I’m doing in my classroom and whether I’m doing things deliberately and making a conscious choice about the instructional decisions I make. Or am I just doing what’s in the book or the teacher’s edition? That’s been very helpful for us.”
- A female secondary administrator talked about instructional strategies to meet her school’s Title I Goals, “We’ve implemented a lot of technology. We’ve emphasized doing the review on the Nebraska website for the NeSA, ‘check for learning.’ We’ve really told them to use those, but they can also use others. We’ve implemented BrainPOP and Timez Attack, because our kids have a lot of problems learning math facts. I would say the technology part, with the Promethean Boards, have really helped our kids.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.95, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.07. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.84, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.24. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.15; the highest mean discrepancy for mobility in the category at 0.35. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.11, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.95.

- A female secondary teacher from a school with a high mobility rate shared instructional strategies she is using and changes she has made in her classroom instruction, “We do the check for learning, which I think has helped the kids take more of the NWEA MAPS test on the computer. They’re a little more familiar, instead of just saying here’s your computer, take your test. We do have the interactive white boards upstairs at the junior high and the elementary does, too. We also have laptops, so there’s a lot more technology going on; which also helps that push for college, especially since there’s a lot of testing online and a lot of classes are online. Mondays we do a lot of grade checks with the kids where they show their grade so they are able to get online to look at their grades. They can get online to check what’s missing, if anything.”
- A female secondary administrator from a school with a low ELL rate discussed instructional strategies and changes in classroom instruction at her school, “The two specifically that they have been focusing on are questioning strategies and mental models. Some of that comes from Ruby Payne, that’s where our project manager also does the professional development. That is where she’s drawing from the most. We’ve also used Marzano; this year she tried to stick with this book, *Research Based Strategies* because every teacher has a copy. There’s a second one that comes with it-



everybody got the set of both of those. I know she does bring in a lot of Jensen’s work on poverty and Marzano’s work.”

### Theme 3: Culture

**In the Culture category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31), the average response of all administrators was 3.81. The average response of teachers was 3.73.**

The item “I am passionate about student learning” was rated the highest in the Culture category for both administrators and teachers as displayed in Table 5. Additionally, it was the highest rated item for all survey categories. Administrators (4.88) and teachers (4.84) both rated this item between “agree” and “strongly agree.”

Additionally, the item “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration” received the lowest rating in the category for administrators (3.41). Teachers rated the item “Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together” the lowest (3.30), between “neutral” and “agree.”

**Table 5**  
*Culture Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.88 “I am passionate about student learning.”	4.84 “I am passionate about student learning.”
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.41 “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.”	3.30 “Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.”

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the Culture category was “Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.” Administrators rated this item higher at 4.12 while teachers rated it lower at 3.50.

**Administrators’** responses ranged from 3.41 to 4.88 with an average of 3.81. The female administrators rated the category at 3.72; male administrators rated the category at 3.95, with a mean discrepancy of 0.23.

**Teacher** rated the items in the category of Culture from 3.30 to 4.84 with a mean rating of 3.73. Female teachers rated this category at 3.72, for males the mean rating was 3.41. The mean discrepancy between male and female teachers was 0.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this category 3.53, while the category mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.93. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this category 3.34 and over 30 years of experience were rated 3.51.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower had a mean rating of 3.60 in this category; those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% had a rating of 3.73, for a mean discrepancy of 0.13. Educators in schools with an English Language Learner percentage of under 5% rated the category of Culture at 3.55. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners rated it

3.84 for a mean discrepancy of 0.29 for the category. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% rated the category 3.51. The mean rating for educators from schools with a mobility rate of 25% or higher was 3.78; the mean discrepancy for the category was 0.27. Educators from elementary schools rated this category 3.84. Middle and high school educators rated it 3.50 with a mean discrepancy of 0.34.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Culture was .931 for administrators and .935 for teachers.

### **Culture Discussion**

#### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 18: “The culture of our school plays a dominant role in exemplary student performance.” This item was rated 3.59 by administrators and 3.69 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item 3.64 for females and 3.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item lower for females at 3.64 than males at 4.10. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.57, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.89. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated it at 3.57.

- A male secondary administrator discussed how culture has impacted student performance, “I’ve seen a change in our ACT test scores, just looking at the baseline data, and they’ve gone up. One of the reasons they’ve gone up is that we’ve really put a focus on that. Our guidance counselor has been working with our English teacher, and we’ve been bringing kids to the ACT testing sites. We’ve been reviewing how to prepare for the ACT test. We’ve made it a major focus.”
- A female elementary administrator discussed how the culture impacted challenging environments, “It’s significant! Our most successful teachers are those who understand who they are and where they come from and what keeps them grounded. They’re the ones who establish the best rapport with their students, and build trusting relationships. That would be true not only with teachers, but our administrators, our paraeducators, ‘if you know who you are, if you know where you come from, what makes you who you are, then you’re more in tune with understanding how to work in a culture that’s not your own.’ That’s why some of us have been here forever, because we love it! It’s a challenging environment. Students come to us in kindergarten behind so we work with closing the achievement gap from the very beginning. One of the most important things for student success is that our students know us, trust us, and know we care about them. That is what is significant! That is what helps out kids learn!”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.86, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.63. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.49, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.85. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.63. Educators

from elementary schools rated this item 3.80, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.49.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate explained the change in culture that occurred to impact student achievement, “We needed to change the mentality here that *all kids can learn*, because it wasn’t always that way. It was we *think* all kids can learn, so it’s been a mindset change to include all children. I think we’ve seen a lot of progress with that. Kids are the ones who give us that feedback and when you see them engaged, all kids engaged, then that makes the difference.”
- A female administrator from a school with a low ELL rate shared, “When you work with children from minority populations, from low socio-economic status (SES), sometimes even in the highest SES schools you have more struggles. Our kids are grounded. In order to be accepted, you have to have that trust relationship. I’ve taught in schools that aren’t multicultural, and it’s not such a big deal; it wasn’t such a big deal at the time. When we interview people, we ask for them to describe themselves culturally and it’s a big indicator.”
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a high ELL rate shared the impact of demographics on school culture, “As far as the culture of the school, there’s very positive interaction between the staff, I think because of our demographics, our parent involvement is a little shaky. But we expect that. We don’t like it especially, but we deal with it. The kids can learn two different behaviors in two different places. We see it all the time. We love these kids, we love each other.”

**Item 19: “Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school.” This item was rated 3.76 by administrators and 3.41 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item slightly lower for females at 3.73 than males at 3.83.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.47 than males at 2.90. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.23, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.61. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.33 and over 30 years of experience rated this item at 3.14.

- A female elementary administrator shared, “We really want our kids to be college bound in some capacity, and how do we get them there? How do we support them through that? It’s a cultural shift.”
- A female elementary teacher discussed the culture among the staff, “We have a pretty strong teacher network; everybody’s working pretty hard to get the kids up to where we want them to be. Everybody has a good buy in as to wanting to improve, which is usually a high part of getting everybody on the same wagon. Seems like we’re always looking to see if there’s something that would better fit our kids? Our students are not typical, your ‘normal’ classroom kid. . . . We’re trying to implement a program K-12 to help our kids with their writing process. Our SPED, elementary aides (were also trained) . . . everybody’s working towards the same goal.”
- A female elementary teacher talked about the school culture and student demographics, “Well, as far as the school culture, as far as the student demographics, I think it’s very conducive. Most of the kids are from here; they know each other. One problem is we have a very high mobility rate. The morale among the staff members

seems to be high. We're all really confident that we're all doing the very best that we can. We're all open to suggestions or to take suggestions."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.53. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.45, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.48. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.27, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.55. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.55, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.34.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate shared, "When we have trouble, it's a culture change; being responsible is not important, being to school on time, doing the work, finishing the work, following through, those really aren't valued by many folks. So, trying to help change that culture is something that we need to work on."
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate discussed the difference teachers have made for students, "The teachers that have realized that they are the difference; they have had a huge impact. There are still some teachers that haven't experienced that success, so we have to find a way for them to tap into the success that others have seen. It might result in some movement; I think that people who have been at the grade level for a long time and haven't felt the success, maybe they can get into a team that has felt it. There are just pockets that we are working with now."

**Item 20: "Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together." This item was rated 3.65 by administrators and 3.30 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item slightly lower for females at 3.64 than for males at 3.67.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.37 than males at 2.70. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.20, while the mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.50. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.17 and over 30 years of experience rated this item the lowest at 2.86.

- A female elementary administrator shared, "I've had a couple of kids, when their parents are involved their level of ownership goes up big time. Even, I'll be the first to say, parents petrify me, most of the time. In the past, I haven't had a ton of good interactions with them, more 'what are you doing?' But, I feel like the more we stress 'it's about the students learning,' instead of their behavior . . . or if we say the behavior interfered with the learning, parents care about that. I've had parents I would NEVER think; basically chew out their kids in front of you. You know they care and they're starting to buy in to what we are saying. Before it would have been more negative, where this time, it's 'this is what I'm worried about.' Sometimes you have to reframe that in your mind, because you could still be upset about what happened. I think it's good for teachers to kind of step back from it, too and say 'this is why it's ultimately a problem.'"
- A female elementary teacher talked about the close knit community within the school, "We have teachers here before school and we have teachers here after school. We are

really trying to get that out so the kids can come in. More like, ‘it’s an open door policy, come in and talk to us.’ I know students are taking advantage (of this). I send progress notes home for a couple of students weekly . . . ‘take these to your parents, have your parents sign these, and bring them back.’ So I know that they’re seeing the results. Parents can also get online. I have parents who I email with progress, so they do know. There is constant contact, even if you’re not on the phone, there is that contact.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.18, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.40. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.25, while those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.44. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.10, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.45. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.44, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.22.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate talked about how shared values are passed from the school to the students to the parents and to the community, “I don’t think we’ve had a parent that didn’t support that, or didn’t support where we’re going. There were a few changes this year that did bring out some problems with some parents. We had to look at time on task, time in the classroom. What are we giving? What can we afford to give time to out of the classroom, and what can’t we afford to? For instance, we didn’t celebrate Halloween this year; we had a science day all day. That was a big change. But, the kids are the ones who are the sellers. They are the ones who came back and said ‘that was the greatest day I ever had.’ So they (students) make the difference within those changes.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate discussed the change process that occurred resulting in a shared belief that all students can learn, “School culture is everything. It’s really important. It’s a very, very touchy subject. We need buy-in. It’s very similar to how we are working with our kids right now. We need them to buy-in, to know that their performance on, for example, the NeSA, is important to us. It matters, and we need all of our teachers to know that it matters. We’ve had a difficult time with teachers believing their kids are capable of performing, and having those high expectations. I think this year we’ve seen a HUGE growth in that. Teachers believe that their kids are capable. They’ve seen small successes here and there. Our team has THE greatest understanding of high expectations. One of the really exciting things to talk about is what to do when our kids are reading at this level, because we haven’t dealt with this before. Those are the exciting pieces, and so we have had to grab on to those little wins here and there and those celebrations to say, ‘we’ve done it.’”

**Item 21: “Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.” This item was rated by administrators as 4.12 and by teachers as 3.50.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.00 for females than for males at 4.33. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.53 than males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.40, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.84. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.00 and over 30 years of experience rated this item the lowest at 2.86. This item had the largest mean discrepancy in the category of Culture for administrators (4.12) and teachers (3.50) at 0.62.

- A female elementary administrator shared how teacher data teams impacted the culture and student achievement, “I think data teams that were implemented have really helped. I think it’s helping us pinpoint the real areas of need. It’s really easy to focus on students that aren’t making it, but then we have a handful of kids, that always get it. What are we doing for them? I think in general, as far as building the culture of our school and how we work together, that has helped. As a team, we can decide to do this . . . what’s good for kids. I think it’s just good for the whole staff, to feel successful.”
- A female elementary administrator shared, “Respect and confidence, we want to have respect for one another and the things that we are doing. We want to promote a confidence in each student that ‘hey I can do this, I may struggle, and there may be things affecting me from the outside, but I can do it.’ . . . I think we push it, and want them (students) to believe it, and for those kids who attach to it, we see that success and confidence built in understanding respect for one another and what we are doing.”
- A female elementary teacher shared how outside factors can get in the way of common goals, “I think we really promote the idea of working hard and working together to reach a common goal. Sometimes it’s hard, with behaviors, I think they sometimes get in the way and it makes it more difficult, not only for the kids with the behaviors but for those around them. I think that is a bar that we have to try to get over to make sure that it’s not in the way of what we want.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.50, while those from schools over 55% rated this item 3.63. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.37, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.81. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.43, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.67. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.73, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.39.

- A female secondary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate shared the impact of culture on student learning, “I think we’re moving more towards accountability of students, trying to get them to believe that education is important. We really focus on this with juniors and seniors ACT prep. We’re really trying to focus on them, that your education is important, and you can go on and do things. We’ve had more kids take the ACT this year than they have in the past, so we’re succeeding in that aspect. We have more juniors that are getting excited about it. There are a lot of college visits going on . . . our school is physically taking the kids to see (colleges). Not just four year colleges, but we’re taking them around to local community colleges. So right now, I think the culture is really pushing the students to think beyond high school.”

- A male administrator from a secondary school talked about an increase in community involvement to support student learning, “The kids on the Honor Roll have an awards ceremony at night, and we have the parents come in for the meal, which we cater. We’ve had three of these; we’re having more community and family members coming in for this. It gives the kids a chance to be recognized, and then again, we share a meal with the community. That’s been a real positive thing to help with the culture.”
- A female teacher from a secondary school shared, “Atmosphere is a big thing. Now, we all have different personalities, and we all have our little conflicts, but we’re all geared towards one goal that is to see our students succeed. Even though we may have our little differences, we move on, and we gear our focus toward our students and their success! It’s very important that we get our students to see education as important. . . . It’s a big focus on seeing education as a priority. We try to build relations with the community through activities.”
- A male teacher from an elementary school talked about the focus at the elementary school, “When I tell people that I’m an administrator at this school, a lot of people start getting that ‘Ooooo! That’s a pretty tough school, do kids learn there? Or do you guys get any education taking place?’ You know what, I’ll invite anybody to come here any day and you see education taking place . . . when I was a high school teacher, at (another school) there were periods where if you go into a high school room, they may not actually be studying, or working on what they were supposed to be working on. Here, any portion of the day, you’re going to see teachers teaching and students learning!”

**Item 22: “The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning.” This item was rated by administrators at 3.82 and by teachers at 3.76.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.64 for females than 4.17 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.80 than males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.57. There was a significant difference ( $p=.018$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.13) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.08). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item at 3.57.

- A female secondary administrator talked about the focus at the school and the desire for all to be a part of this, “I wish there was more of it. To be honest, there are a few bad naysayers. The teachers and the staff want the best for the students, and do what we can.”
- A female elementary teacher explained the extent of the school culture being conducive to successful school improvement, “I think we have good programs; we have teachers who have been well-educated in our programs. So, I feel we’ve got the knowledge to help our kids; it’s a matter of getting our kids caught up to level.”
- A female elementary administrator shared, “I think if we truly focus on the right things, but deciding, sometimes on what those right things are . . . That’s where (our consultants) came in, they helped us decide that. I see some of the other SIG schools, and they’re doing a LOT of things, way more than we are even. . . . We have the advantage. Before, I’ll be the first to admit, it wasn’t focused.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.59, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.82. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.51, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.02, a significant difference ( $p=.019$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.57, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.85. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.00, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.41. There was a significant difference ( $p=.014$ ) when comparing elementary responses (4.00) with secondary schools (3.41).

- A female teacher from an elementary school shared the extent of the culture being conducive to successful school improvement, “We hear a lot of talk about school improvement. Not necessarily those words, but we are definitely focused on meeting AYP, that yearly progress; we have a huge focus on that. We hear a lot about getting ready for the testing we’re doing next month, with NeSA and we also take the NWEA MAPS. Actually first grade just does NWEA MAPS, others do NeSA. But, getting your child ready to take those, and setting them up for success and hope that you know working as hard as you can so we can have that school improvement, that yearly progress. We hear a lot of talk about that, a lot of push, in a positive way, I mean, obviously. I always say, ‘it’s for the best of the students. We have to do as many things as we can for them to achieve.’”
- A female teacher at a secondary school shared, “I think it has caused us to also teach at a higher level. This is what our kids are doing . . . if we’re pushing them to go to college; we’re going to have to increase what we expect them to do in the classroom. I know that I give them more in science, like research articles. Especially because that is a lot of what they’ll see on the ACT, pick out this information, what do you make out of this. I know in English they write more, they’re also looking at more what is happening around us and how is that affecting us instead of, ‘read this and regurgitate it to me.’ I think it’s also raised our classroom instruction.”

**Item 23: “The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation.” This item was rated 3.71 by administrators and 3.97 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.45 for females compared to 4.17 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.09 than males at 3.00; the largest mean discrepancy for teacher gender in the Culture category (1.09). In addition, there was a significant difference ( $p=.031$ ) when comparing male teachers (3.00) to female teachers (4.09). Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.73. There was a significant difference ( $p=.004$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.32) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.17). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item the highest at 4.29.

- A male elementary administrator shared, “I think for the most part, teachers want to do what’s good for kids. I don’t think they just look at this as being a job, and they have to be here. That’s probably my biggest thing that I’ve gotten out of this year. You’re always going to have teachers that have concerns about what’s going on here, and what’s going on down there, but, they care. Just like the Title I stuff, we care.



They care about what they do, about what their kids are going to do once they leave their classroom every day, and once they leave their classroom for the year.”

- A female elementary teacher discussed the school’s focus and how it relates to identified areas of need, “Our school’s focus is to make a difference in the community as well as in the school. We want to see these kids succeed. We want them to believe in themselves and know that they can do the work. We want to create leaders so that maybe sometime in the future, this will all make a difference to them both individually and as a community.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.73, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.98. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.65, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.19; a significant difference ( $p=.009$ ) as well as the largest mean discrepancy in this category (0.54). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.67, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.03. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.16, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.56; resulting in the largest mean discrepancy between them in this category (0.60) and a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ).

- A female administrator from an elementary school talked about teacher expectations, “They (teachers) didn’t think that the kids could do it. There is a part where the kids are supposed to lead part of the math learning each day, and daily math routine. At the beginning of the year they said ‘our kids won’t ever be able to do this, they don’t have the kind of language,’ and now they do! The teachers are just amazed at what they (the students) were able to do that teachers didn’t think they could do at the beginning of the year. We need to tap into the potential that their (teachers) actions have resulted in some really amazing things that the kids have been able to do.”
- A female teacher from a secondary school shared how high expectations are also reflected in teacher performance, “This year, our professional learning community (PLC) focus was on the Danielson (model), our rubric for performance in the classroom, our evaluations. We’ve been using the Danielson, so we went through the rubric as a group, so we would know what we were being evaluated on, and what our administrators felt were important to them. We also had a voice as to what is important to teachers and what our focuses are in the classroom.”

**Item 24: “The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas.” This item was rated 3.94 by administrators and 3.85 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item higher at 4.00 for females compared to 3.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item lower for females at 3.90 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.77, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.11. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item the lowest at 3.29.

- A female elementary teacher shared, “We used to have everything planned: pages, stories, and everything we’re doing. Now it’s so much more about what do the kids need, let’s get together and talk about it, let’s look at the data, let’s change it. I feel

like I'm more intentional. I know that's a big word 'intentional.' But, I feel like that's exactly what it is. I'm more focused."

- A female elementary teacher shared the focus on time on task, "We focus a lot on student engagement and student needs. Our big focus has been engagement, and transition, so we are not wasting any time or minutes on dilly dallying. We are making sure that if we have 50 minutes, we are using as much of that time to get as much learning in, and using different methods to do so. We've done a lot of work with consultants to figure out and make sure we are doing everything we can to maximize our learning."
- A female secondary administrator shared the new strategies to help students succeed, "We've hired additional people to support us. We have a (new) parent liaison. We've hired an aide to get the kindergarten group going. We believe if we get them started, if they're on level in kindergarten, they'll be more successful up the road, so, we've hired more aides. I think we have a real team support thing. I think we're all really involved in getting these kids' scores up."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.82, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.88. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.61, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.11, a significant difference ( $p=.005$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.57, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.99, a significant difference ( $p=.050$ ). Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.00, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.66.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate shared, "There are so many strategies that we're using now that we haven't used before. Direct teaching of vocabulary is one I think would be very strong. The think-pair-share, which makes all students become responsible. . . . We use a lot of lap boards and learning logs. I know (this) has really impacted their learning because they are doing a lot of the discussion before they even come to my area. The formative test that we're doing for math now, it has shown me the weak areas that I need to go stronger with so the students feel confident."
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate discussed additional strategies to enhance student learning, "We try to do some additional pull outs and enhancements with sounds, etc. That's one of the things our paraprofessional really helps us with; she'll pinpoint some of those. If not from Core Phonics, then her task analysis works."

**Item 25: "The culture of our school initiates caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff and students." This item was rated 3.88 by administrators and 3.82 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.82 for females compared to 4.00 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.85 compared to males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.63, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.08. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item at 3.71.

- A female elementary administrator shared, “It’s better this year, much better this year. The culture to me is a huge part of the school. None of us like to see where we are on those standards; and we all knew there were changes that had to be made. The principal applied some of those strategies, such as the leadership team . . . . Change is not bad; sometimes you need to have those things. Culture probably took the biggest hit. . . . That’s probably the thing that needed to happen, so that’s okay. It’s much, much better this year.”
- A female elementary administrator emphasized the difficulty of building culture in a school in respect to parents, “I think the trust level, to get people to be comfortable coming in the building and visiting about things. . . I’m not sure they feel that. I think they feel it’s a little more business-like, where before was parent friendly. It’s just one of those things, kind of goes back to the culture again. There are some wonderful things going on, you see really good things around the country. Some really phenomenal parent involvement programs in schools that have profiles quite like this one. So, I know it can happen; I just don’t know what it is.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.68, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.87. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.76, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.89. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.57, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.93. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.83, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.83.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate discussed how change in tradition impacts culture, “We lost a day the year before for a (special event) day, where everybody (all students) participated, so we changed that to only K-2. That really became a bigger issue. So, we had to have help from the board and superintendent on that. It’s the little things that we have to tweak. We have to look to change the culture. School really has to be a priority. Learning really has to be a priority, and everyone needs to understand that.”
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate discussed the change in culture, “They want to change a culture, and the only way to do that is to start at the top; I don’t have any problem with that, I agree . . . . Then you bring in me. Do you know how hard that is? They go behind my back, and they probably should, because I’m hard on them. They don’t want to hear that. Now, the really professional ones, they have no issue, but it’s confusing, because they’ll tell you, ‘Who’s the boss?’ . . . I say ‘Well, follow the plan. Teach, teach, teach and follow the curriculum. We’ll just do the best we can and I’ll take care of the rest.’ When you get back to that other part, I think all of us know why we’re here, what needs to get done, what needs to occur?”

**Item 26: “The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among staff.” This item was rated 3.47 by administrators and 3.27 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item 3.27 for females compared to 3.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item similar for females at 3.27 compared to males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10

years of experience rated this item 3.07, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.58. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.83 and over 30 years of experience rated this item at 3.00.

- A female elementary administrator stated, “The leadership team members are the ones to facilitate the meetings. I selected them for leadership because they needed to understand they were doing the high stakes tests. They needed to focus on where they were at, where students were at, and where they needed to go. I needed to get them up and going first. We have a resource teacher; I needed to bring her into the picture as we moved into inclusion to help facilitate that process. You need to start building that leadership capacity.”
- A female elementary administrator shared, “Last year, when we developed the focus plan, it was a representative group of the staff, representing all of the grade levels, ELL, SPED, and interventionists. As part of the grant, one of the stipulations was to reward teachers, so part of the choosing of the people who would serve this year, came from that reward piece; it is also tied to student achievement. When we looked at the people who would be offered those paid leadership positions first, as team leaders, we looked at the people who had the better achievement.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.18, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.34. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.22, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.39. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.07, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.40. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.42, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.12.

- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate discussed teacher leadership, “We had two teachers go to a workshop, and they came back and they said, ‘can we order this, because we really want to do this program.’ I said, ‘do you want to talk to anybody else?’ ‘Well, we’ll get it going.’ Pretty soon another teacher came to me, and she needed enough for this grade, then we needed enough for this grade, pretty soon we had high school people wanting it. If I would have said, when I was the elementary principal, ‘we’re going to do this writing program,’ what do you think would have happened? We’ve told them to go to RTI; we’ve told them there’s a math thing this summer that we’d really like them to go to. So, sometimes we do that. But this writing thing was theirs. Then we had another teacher, I don’t know how she heard about Study Island, or if somebody was using it, or how it came about. But that’s why she claims (grade level) are so successful.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate shared how the culture was impacted by making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), “This year has been SO much smoother. The process has been much more natural. Once the students met AYP at the end of last year there was this (audible sigh), ‘it’s going to be okay.’ It’s good! We’re going in the right direction!”

**Item 27: “The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.” This item was rated 3.65 by administrators and 3.52 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.36 for females compared to 4.17 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item 3.54 for females, but lower for males at 3.40. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.37, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.74. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.17 and over 30 years of experience rated this item at 3.43.

- A male elementary administrator shared, “We had a big emphasis on trying to get our students to a point where they can do better on their scores - not only the NeSA state tests, but also the NWEA MAPS. We worked on that. We did the work with math, and then we also have done a lot of work with our reading. As far as our reading strategies, our different interventions for both areas. Obviously, those are two of the big keys to any school district.”
- A male elementary administrator discussed the emphasis for student learning at his school, “It is a K-12 focus. We’re together, as far as a school building, it’s not like we’re working differently than the high school is as far as what our goals are. Everybody’s focused on the same goals.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.27, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.61; the highest mean discrepancy in the category at 0.34. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.29, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.78; a significant difference ( $p=.020$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.23, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.67; the largest mean discrepancy between mobility rates (0.43) for the category. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.72, those from middle and high schools rated this item lower at 3.27.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher mobility rate discussed the effect the school culture had on student achievement and her own instruction, “I think it’s had a major affect. We’ve now gone to Promethean Boards, which help our kids tremendously, because they are such visual, hands on learners. I use my board from the time school starts until we are done, unless we are doing independent reading. They know certain flip charts when they come up, ‘oh, I’m out of my seat because it’s going to be my turn to move something on the board.’ They are very involved, very active. It’s not just ‘sit back and let the teacher teach, then I get to do a worksheet.’ I think that has helped everyone’s teaching, because you can have everything prepared, ready to go. You don’t have to take the time to erase your board, set up your next item. You just click the button and it’s ready. You can have all the bells and whistles on it that you want to grab your student’s interest. Teachers are pretty willing to help each other with the boards; to learn the new things to engage the kids in the learning.”
- A male secondary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate shared how incentives and celebrations impact culture, “Last week was our seniors last week. (I saw) in a large school district where the Parent Advisory Group would come in every day, the last week of school and give the students some type of present. I thought that is one of the most positive things I’ve seen. So, this year, for the seniors last week of

school, we provided some food. In other words, we had an activity each day for the seniors to honor them. It turned into a very positive experience. The last day we had a dessert for the seniors congratulating them on their success at school. It was very well received; it was very positive, just a really good feeling. Build the culture, that type of thing. Other students see that and say ‘hey, we appreciate you.’”

**Item 28: “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.” This item was rated 3.41 by administrators and 3.56 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item at 3.36 for females and 3.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.60 compared to males at 3.20. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.37, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was lower at 3.82. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.25 and over 30 years of experience rated this item at 3.43.

- A female elementary administrator shared how collaboration builds other’s strengths, “There are some people who have really great data, but they still are lacking that confidence. ‘Your data looks great! Talk, speak, tell us what you know.’ So, we’ve had to draw out a lot of things. We’ve had some team leaders who have been really successful; they are the ones who have been able to really draw that out. They almost, it’s amazing, how they put their own needs in the background to be able to pull out somebody else’s strengths. Just really set them up for ‘you are so amazing at this, so please tell us what you know.’ They have really tapped into the experience that each of them have, and their strengths. That piece of knowing what everyone brings to the table is really powerful.”
- A male secondary administrator explained, “We have (a) program to work with individual students and family members. Then we have a college that came out and shared their programs with freshman, and told them about qualifications to work at the college . . . what they look for in their employees out there. The students brought up some recreational activities like the Boys and Girls Club, and got some feedback from the students. The community also stressed how important (this is), we’re working on this, and how important the community activities are with the students, to get more service for the students.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.45, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.55. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.47, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.59. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.33, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.61. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.67, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.32.

- A female administrator from an elementary school shared a response from another teacher when discussing a student, “Really? They always listen to me, I really have a good relationship (with the student), and so I’ll talk to them about it. Now, I’m not sure if it followed up, because I left it between those two. But, I think just having the

opportunity to sit down and talk about things has helped. We (also) do some summer workshop trainings, or attend conferences.”

- A female elementary administrator discussed communication with parents, “We probably haven’t been as good at communicating progress along the way with parents. We meet a couple of times a year in formal ways, and so we try to let parents know what we’re doing, what we’re seeing, they like to know data, but I’ve also learned about how much data is meaningful to them, and what that should look like, and can look like. The biggest thing we’re doing, I think, is helping parents know more about where their kids are in relationship to that target. Another great thing we’ve done is helping kids know where they are in relationship to that target. We do a lot with goal setting, and having kids be really clear what the targets look like and really clear about where they are. So, they know what they need to do to close that gap. So, communicating that with parents is that much easier because the kids can talk about it and are aware of it. It’s amazing to hear kindergarteners talk about it. It’s any grade level can do that. But, we haven’t done a lot systematically in a really formal way. To do that, is probably something that needs to be coming more in the future. Parent involvement looks very different at a school like ours.”

**Item 29: “The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” This item was rated 3.47 by administrators and 3.40 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item similar at 3.45 for females and 3.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.42 compared to males at 3.20. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.13, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was higher at 3.63. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.25 and over 30 years of experience rated this item the highest at 3.43.

- A female administrator from a secondary school talked about the forms of teacher collaboration that are in place at her school, “They have PLC’s at least once a month. I think it’s more like twice a month. As the year goes on, maybe second grade needs to talk more to first grade, ‘did someone do that in your grade? What worked with him?’ The lower elementary, K-2, has a rotation of their planning time. They are all in planning together, so that’s their meeting time. Then the upper elementary, which is third through sixth, has a planning time when they can meet. I don’t know if they would actually watch (each other), but they would talk about it. If Mrs. (teacher) was in here and her Promethean Board wouldn’t work, or she couldn’t find something, then she might say, ‘Mrs. X I can’t get this to work,’ and she would run over and help her or vice versa.”
- A female elementary teacher discussed communicating with parents, “We have a little get together at the beginning of the year. We just had one last week for the community, but run by the school. Before the activity starts, they (community/parents) were told how much of a percentage our goals have been met thus far which presupposes they were told what they were in the first place; I don’t see as much parent involvement as I would love to see. We have several parents that are always involved and want to know how their children are doing, and open communication. Then, I guess it’s probably the same as anywhere - they don’t answer the phone when they see the school is calling, because they don’t want to know

what's going on. Sometimes I leave them a message saying, 'hi, just wanted to let you know we had a great day.' They don't call back for that either. A lot of them work; a lot of them have issues, other things going on. I would like to see more positive parent involvement. In my particular group . . . as far as academic involvement, there seems to be a pretty strong relationship between the parents who are interested in their child's education, and the children that do really well."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.32, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.43. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.29, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.52. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.17, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.51. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.56, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.17.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate talked about improving their communication, "We're communicating specifically across those areas on those teams, because we did have concerns about communication last year, even staff members had concerns about communication last year. We wanted to make sure we were at least hitting everybody and if we didn't clarify, then we were figuring out how to clarify."
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate discussed various modes of communication, "I think it's got to look a lot of different ways. I don't think you can just assume that you can send out an email to everybody and that's going to work, or you can send home something in the backpack and that's going to work. Even just having a meeting, and that's going to work. You have to come at it from lots of different ways, and lots of different angles. Recognizing there's lots of different languages, and lots of different cultural pieces that you have to make sure that you're aware of and sensitive to. The biggest thing I've learned is it's not one size fits all. I can't just say we have this way to communicate with parents; we have to have lots of ways to communicate with parents in an ongoing way. But one formal thing isn't going to do it; we have to have lots of different processes in place."

**Item 30: "The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts." This item was rated 3.88 by administrators and 3.69 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.82 for females compared to 4.00 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item similar for females at 3.69 and males at 3.70. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.57, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.84. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.33 and over 30 years of experience rated this item at 3.86.

- A female secondary teacher explained how changes in instructional strategies affected student learning, "I've seen more students take more responsibility for their education. They're not slacking off on homework, I've had parents and kids ask, 'when are these kids going to start ACT prep?' They want to know. Former kids or kids who have older siblings say 'I wish that had been here when they were in



school.’ So, I think the parents and students both are realizing that yes, the school is trying to make improvements.”

- A female secondary teacher discussed the difference for student learning, “I don’t know if it’s the consistency, or if they’re buying into their education. Maybe they’re seeing - ‘hey, the schools buying into it, they’re taking an interest, so maybe it’s my turn to take an interest?’ So, I don’t know if it’s the consistency of having the same teachers so they know what to expect.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.55, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.77. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.69, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.76. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.47, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.83. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.89, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.46.

- A female teacher from a secondary school shares how students are noticing the changes, “My students have noticed, the ones (students) that I’ve had before. They said ‘Wow! You’re doing more ‘hands on,’ you’re starting to see our needs!’ They notice the changes.”
- A female teacher in an elementary school discussed the difficulty of maintaining a positive culture, “Teachers in the building are down this year. It’s difficult to motivate us, along with us trying to turn around and motivate the kids. I know we all stress the importance of the tests to the kids. Our administration isn’t coming in and telling the kids. It’s always left in our hands to be the ones to tell them.”

**Item 31: “I am passionate about student learning.” This item was rated 4.88 by administrators and 4.84 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item higher at 4.91 for females compared to 4.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.87 than males at 4.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.87, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.89. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 4.67 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.71.

- A female elementary principal shared, “On the whole, I think they (teachers) are very positive. They know the tests are important, they are aware of their scores, with the NWEA MAPS test, and this year, the students who met or exceeded the standards were part of an awards ceremony. Those who exceeded the standards, met the standards or exceeded in both reading and math, were honored. Believe me, they were excited. They were happy, and knew it was because of their achievement.”
- A female elementary teacher explained, “I think the biggest thing that helps us embrace it is, ‘it’s working.’ We are seeing progress in our children; it’s a lot of stress sometimes. It’s not always feeling real positive, but when you actually see your students, and that’s one thing about keeping track of the data, when you see that progress in the students, you go, ‘well, maybe all of that was worth it.’”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 5.00, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.81; a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). Educators from schools with an ELL population of under 5% rated this item 4.71, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.98; a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.87, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item similarly at 4.84. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.94, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.71, a significant difference ( $p = .010$ ).

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, “Sometimes you can sit on your laurels a little too long. Teachers admitted that they had slacked, and weren’t as consistent as they should have been because they took a break, they took a breather. But the stakes are higher and the target changes, so we had to have those talks, it’s gotten more intense, as far as the expectations, and my discussion with teachers last spring was ‘it’s going to be a lot tougher.’”
- A female secondary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate stated, “Every year that I’ve been here, I’ve seen improvement. I’ve seen improvement in the students, and some of the kids I’ve had since they were seventh graders. I don’t know if it’s the consistency that they have with the teachers being here, but every year I expect more out of them. They don’t disappoint me. They are slowly growing. You expect them to grow - but they’re improving a lot. It may not show as big leaps and bounds; but they’re improving.”

## **Theme 4: Instructional Strategies**

**In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42), the average response of all administrators was 4.01. The average response of teachers was 4.08.**

The items rated strongest by administrators (4.12) and teachers (4.35) in the Instructional Strategies category, as illustrated in Table 6, were “Teachers/I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences” and “Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.” Administrators rated two additional items at 4.12; “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school,” and “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan.”

The item rated lowest by administrators (3.06) and teachers (3.61) in the Instructional Strategies category was, “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their/my performance.”

The largest mean discrepancy (0.55) between teachers and administrators in the category was item 34, “Teachers in my school use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” Teachers rated this item higher at 3.61, and administrators rated it lower at 3.06. The smallest mean discrepancy (0.06) in this category was “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school,” which teachers rated 4.18 and administrators rated 4.12.

**Table 6**  
*Instructional Strategies Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.12 “Teachers search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.”  “Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.”  “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.”  “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan.”	4.35 “I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.”  “Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.”
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.06 “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their/my performance.”	3.61 “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their/my performance.”

**Administrator** responses in this category ranged from “neutral” at 3.06 to “agree” at 4.12. The average rating in the category was 4.01. Female administrators mean rating in the category was 3.66; male administrators mean rating was 4.18, a mean discrepancy of 0.52.

**Teacher** responses in this category ranged between “neutral” and “agree” at 3.61 to between “agree” and “strongly agree” at 4.35. The average response for teachers in this category was 4.08. The female teacher mean rating in this category was 4.05, for males the mean rating was 3.63. The mean discrepancy between male and female teachers was .42. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience mean rating in this category was 3.90, while the category mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.19. Teachers with 20-30 years of experience rated this category 3.64 and over 30 years rated it 3.96.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower had a mean rating of 3.82 in this category; those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated it 4.02, for a mean discrepancy of 0.20. Educators in schools with an English Language Learner percentage of under 5% mean rated the category of Instructional Strategies 3.79. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners rated the category 4.15 resulting in a mean discrepancy of 0.37. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% rated the category 3.78. The mean rating for educators from schools with a mobility rate of 25% or higher was 4.05; the mean discrepancy for the category was 0.27. Educators from elementary schools rated the category 4.08. Middle and high school educators rated it 3.81 for a mean discrepancy of 0.27.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Instructional Strategies was .906 for administrators and .866 for teachers.

## Instructional Strategies Discussion

### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 32: “Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.” This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 4.07 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.82 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.12 than males at 3.70. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.93, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.32. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.75 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.86.

- A female secondary teacher explained, “Sometimes, when I look and see them (students) low, I reflect on that. Is it the computation, are they not understanding certain concepts? What do I need to do to change gears in my classroom to make sure they’re getting the concepts they need to perform on these tests? I have students that normally didn’t succeed very well in math, they improve. I don’t know about their NWEA MAPS scores, but in my classroom they’re showing signs of improvement. They were barely getting to 72 on a test. They are coming in, asking for help, they are working on it, they are trying. I’ve seen some of my ‘D’ students get to the ‘C’ range.”
- A female elementary teacher shared the degree of her involvement in monitoring the Title I Improvement goals, “On a scale from 1-5, I would probably say 4. We discuss our students’ progress and success when we have our floor meetings. Kindergarten through second grade meet together, third and fourth meet together, and fifth and sixth meet together as a team. At the high school, they’re split up into education teams also. We look to see what we need to improve, then we give each other suggestions, or if we’re struggling with something, we bring that to the team, and they can help us. (For example), when I had this kid, this is how I reached him, or when I had their family members, open communication like that. Then, whoever is the lead of our group, they meet with the administration.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.91, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.10. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.96, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.15. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.83, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.15. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.13, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.95.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate discussed how teachers collectively best meet students’ needs, “Every week, everybody on the leadership team and every staff member is on a PLC - professional learning community - so we have a primary learning community, an intermediate learning community, and then every week we have collaborative teams.”

- A female secondary teacher from a school with a higher mobility rate discussed teacher collaboration, “We have mentoring. All of our new teachers, not just new to teaching, but new to our district, are paired up with a veteran teacher for mentoring.”
- An elementary teacher from a school with a higher mobility rate shared, “The results we’ve seen, just get higher and higher the more we work together and collaborate and observe things.”

**Item 33: “Teachers in my school collectively reflect on instructional strategies used daily in the classroom.” This item was rated 3.65 by administrators and 3.93 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.45 for females compared to 4.00 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.97 than males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.70, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.11. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.83 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary administrator responded to the question of how teachers are ensuring the most effective strategies for student improvement are being used in their classrooms, “I think that’s done for them, by the principal and the administration. They note it by looking at the data, by looking at their lesson plans. They have a lesson plan design that they will be implementing next year. They are toying with it this year and getting people used to looking at it. The PLC’s look at those strategies and talk about how a certain engagement strategy is working, and the PLC’s are a big part of that, and the principal.”
- A female elementary administrator responded to the types of teacher collaboration in place at her school to improve student learning, “I know some do some planning together at lunch, I can’t tell you if there’s something specific. We did (have PLC’s), what we find usually go from about October to about February, because (after) then, it’s nicer out. From my notes, I look back through and send a monthly email, just about, ‘remember this is what the consultant said.’ I just sent one out about PLC’s. I send monthly, quick little four or five bullets notes about, ‘here’s a refresher of our conversations during the month,’ or if we had the symposium, ‘do you remember this’ type of thing.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.77, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.92. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.76, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.00. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.73, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.95. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.97, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.76.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, “As a group of teachers, we have PLC’s, (Professional Learning Communities) and we also have collaboration groups. Most of the data talk is done during the PLC’s. We get together and talk about what’s working for our kids, what’s not, what kind of scores

- we're having, and then we brainstorm what we can do for those children who are not raising their scores.”
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about the use of PLCs in her school, “In every PLC meeting, during the week, an administrator is always there. It's always the (principal) or (another administrator). That is part of the PLC talk. It is all of these other things we do in the classroom that get brought up in that meeting. So, I know they are finding out what is going on through our meetings, and through them being there.”

**Item 34: “Teachers in my school/ I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” This item was rated 3.06 by administrators and 3.61 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 2.91 for females compared to 3.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.68 than males at 3.10. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.70, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.66. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.17 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.57.

- A female elementary administrator shared how peer coaching is used to improve student performance, “We want to make sure that 85% or more of our students are engaged in learning. Using selected student engagement strategies, we chose for teachers to go out and peer coach and peer observe each other. So, these are the two areas that they work on. We also look at this when we're observing in the classroom. They (the teachers) have to choose once a quarter to observe one primary and one intermediate to see what's going on in other classrooms. It's a great opportunity to create support; it's not an evaluation, its support. If I'm a teacher, and maybe it just didn't click that day, you might see something as a peer in helping with that. So, we want to encourage those crucial conversations. We have that area, and then using formative assessments, that is how they elicit and check for understanding. We script all of that. They have a little sheet, there is a copy they can use to converse with their peer, and they turn in a copy to me. But, I won't keep those at the end of the year, they are not for evaluation. I'd like to see what they checked.”
- A female elementary administrator shared how changes through the use of coaching have impacted instructional strategies and affected student learning, “I think it's been a very, very positive thing. Because of our small size, and limited budget, even with Title I funds, we weren't able to really bring in staff development for everybody. We had to rely on a leadership type team, two or three teachers that were interested in a particular training, (to) go to the training and bring it back. The thing is finding the time, and they're not trainers of trainers yet. So, having everybody onsite doing the same staff development with consistency, and coaching. That was something we were not able to do without the SIG grant.”
- A female administrator shared how coaching is implemented to model quality instruction, “I have to be the heavy on some things and say ‘this is my expectation, these are the actions I'm going to require you to take, and I need you to provide the support of how to do that.’ So, I'll set up all of the actions before you come, you'll be the one to help them figure out how to do it. It's the same model we use with the coaches. I'm the heavy, they're the release valve. So, in a lot of cases, I set the

expectations, the required actions that I have for them, and I give them options for how they are going to make that happen. They can work with coaches, they can do this, they can go here, they can work with anybody, here are the ways you can go at it. We started talking about what I mean when I say ‘three formative assessments in second quarter.’ One has to happen by the third week, one has to happen by the sixth week, and one has to happen by the eighth week. They have to be common, and you have to show me how you are using the data. When you come back for your second quarter instructional conference, these are the questions I’m going to ask you. You have them now, nine weeks ahead of time, be ready to talk about them when the nine weeks are over. So then, the consultant comes and helps them see . . . by that time they would have done one or two for the quarter, so she was there to help them finish the third and help them talk about what they are going to do next. We knew pretty early on we didn’t have a handle on the black box of classroom (assessment) and we needed a way to find out.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.41, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.55. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.29, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.74; a significant difference ( $p=.031$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.33, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.60. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.72, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.22; a significant difference ( $p=.027$ ).

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, “Not only letting that teacher know that she’s meeting those strategies to meet those needs but also to give feedback. ‘I do this, and this helps me a lot to meet that.’ It’s a nice conversation.”
- A male secondary principal from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about the development of peer observations in his school, “(When) they implement those goals in the classroom, I suggested to the teachers, instead of having me go monitor your goals, have your peers monitor them, and bring back what works for you in the classroom. That’s a reference point they can use.”

**Item 35: “Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems.” This item was rated 3.53 by administrators and 3.83 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.27 for females compared to 4.00 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.86 than males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.63, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.05. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.42 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.00.

- A female elementary administrator shared how teachers are working together to impact learning, “The PLC’s have their own agendas and that flows into the collaborative teams, and then we bring the two together. Probably the area that we need to focus on is how to incorporate paraprofessionals more effectively. PLC’s are by grade level; collaborative teams follow the leadership team to relay information, share engagement strategies and best practices, and discuss district initiatives. They

are also studying a book called *Crucial Conversations* (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler, 2012). So, if you look, they are across grade levels, and different focuses. For example, in this group, we also have the interventionists teaming together. The PLC's are studying a book *Learning by Doing* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006) and they're also focusing on standard based learning, student data and instructional strategies. So, there are different purposes."

- A female elementary teacher discussed PLC's, "Each grade level has a PLC team. It includes ELL teachers, and SPED teachers. If some have multiple grade levels, they will be kept in the loop with notes through email. Each grade level meets once a week, and at the end of the month we also meet together as a building, to kind of share successes. The grade levels are responsible for getting the data, and talking about that. We've been following the Data Teams model, so it keeps us more data focused about students and their needs, not just getting carried away about a field trip or putting it away for another time. We are keeping it really data centered and about the kids' needs."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.55, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.84. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.69, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.87. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.53, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.88. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.81, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.73.

- A female administrator from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate shared, "The PLC's are studying a book *Learning by Doing*" (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006) and they're also focusing on standard based learning, student data and instructional strategies. So, there are different purposes."
- A male administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate explained, "The professional development has really been steered in that direction. We're moving toward some behavioral things. We've taken the PBIS training, not as a staff, just administration. We formed a team: three high school people, myself and two of my elementary called the BEST team, 'Behavioral Exploration Systems Team.' I had been involved in a workshop last summer with a (trainer) 'Safe and Simple Schools.' Some of PBIS is tied into that. We've all had Boys Town, Love and Logic, and those things, but this is APL training. The job of this team now is to take it back to the staff. We'll actually meet tomorrow morning with the late start and share (this) with staff. It's instructional, which complements behavioral, which complements instructional strategies. So, we'll see where we're going with that."

**Item 36: "Teachers in my school/I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences." This item was rated 4.12 by administrators and 4.35 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.91 for females compared to 4.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.40 than males at 4.00. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.23, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20



years of experience was 4.55. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 4.17 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.00.

- A female secondary administrator discussed classroom strategies drawn from attending a conference, “We went to an ASCD (formerly Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) conference. We have three teachers that are very comfortable using the Promethean Boards, so they were the experts that day, and they worked and trained with people (at the conference). So, hopefully, we can take some of their topics, and maybe we already have the experts, or maybe I’ll contact the Educational Service Unit (ESU), and work through them to come in and do more specific training.”
- A male elementary principal talked about professional development, “Professional development is HUGE, whether it’s for the good of the kids or the confidence of the teachers. Measurement of that development with an appraisal tool, because that is there to provide support for teachers, supervision, either remediation or affirmation. So, I think professional development, I think appraisal/evaluation of where you’re trying to go.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.18, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.35. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.18, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.44. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.17, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.37. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.36, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.24.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate talked about training for her staff, “Last year there was a tremendous amount of training on ELLA strategies. So this year I have been, along with two lead other teachers that went through that training have been teaching us those strategies. You know, vocabulary, ELLA lessons. We also do the engagement strategies, the different ones. Last year they brought in people and trained the majority of people. But, since we’ve had some movement, and got new teachers, they did some teaching just for specifically new teachers, where the rest didn’t need it. We’ve also had some group work where, everybody gets in on it, just a little review or whatever. It’s working.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate shared how they reduced the number of new strategies to better focus their improvement efforts, “I made a list of everything that we had done new this year, and said, ‘okay, I need you to vote for two.’ So we got it narrowed down from a list of ten down to two, now since March we’ve been working with mental models and questioning skills. Just talking about that, and trying to get it implemented through the research they’ve shown us. The day that we went and listened to Ruby Payne (training), they split us up, so the K-6 and the 7-12 got different information. From looking at my notes, and someone who went to the 7-12, I said, ‘okay, here are three things, here’s a couple from our consultant and here’s a couple of others. So, from those that we’ve all heard and had (training on), where do you want to focus, where do you want to continue?’”

**Item 37: “Teachers in my school/ I break down and examine student performance data by grade, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.” This item was rated 3.94 by administrators and 3.66 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item at 3.64 for females compared to 4.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.69 than males at 3.40. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.50, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.87. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.33 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.71.

- A female elementary teacher talked about how PLCs are used to examine data, “That was part of a PLC meeting, and it was part of a specific math meeting that we had. That’s the nice thing, those PLC’s, some day’s you’re going, ‘okay, today’s another meeting’, but it is nice when we get in there and actually get to have conversations about the students and our data. We really talk about specifics more so than just general conversations that you might have.”
- A male elementary administrator discussed how they disaggregate data into mobility groups, “What we’ve done with some of our data now, is we’ve been able to track that. When we look at the scores of our kids that have been here for more than three years, they’re pretty decent. When we look at our new kids that are just now being counted, the ones within a year of being here, they’re about half what our other scores are. The kids that move in here, we don’t get too many that we think are on the road to being valedictorians right away. We have a lot of work to do with them. We’re lucky to get about 25% of our kids being at grade level. The rest are significantly lower, so it makes it really difficult for us. We do have the background with the kids who have been here for a while, that they’re doing pretty well. We think the curriculum itself is functioning well, we’re just up against some pretty good odds.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.55, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.75. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.49, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.91; resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.017$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.47, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.80. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.84, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.49.

- A female secondary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate explained how data is analyzed and used, “I’m using the NWEA MAPS, and NeSA. We just finished with the NWEA MAPS, and I haven’t gone online to look yet at the raw scores. But, I’m able to see what they have improved from the beginning of the year until now. Also, I’m able to look at those winter scores. They are starting to fade a little bit and we need that pep talk, it’s been a long year, but we’re not finished yet, so kind of pick it up. Or even, the C4L (Check for Learning) data, so I can go back and look at the questions, and see ‘okay, I totally did not teach this the way I needed to teach it, because they didn’t understand it.’ That’s also for me so I can go back in and revamp it.”

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate shared, “We have an intervention time for grades 3-6, and that is at the end of the day, the last 45 minutes of the day. They’re using their data to help assess where they need to be instructing students; do they need to be re-teaching some skills and do they need to be enriching in other areas.”

**Item 38: “Teachers in my school/ I reflect and compare their/my actual teaching practice to what they/ I had planned and hoped to achieve.” This item was rated 3.59 by administrators and 3.90 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.36 for females compared to 4.00 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.94 than males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.77, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.03. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.75 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.00.

- A female secondary teacher explained how she uses reflection to make sure she is using the most effective strategies for student improvement in her classroom, “I go back and reflect, ‘did this work?’ ‘What can I do to change it?’”
- A female elementary administrator discussed how teaching is reflected upon, “We are all aware of what our scores are. We’ve taken the information that came from the NeSA, the high areas and the low areas, and we work on those. The low areas we go with the NWEA MAPS, in order to see low areas, we work with those. We have set aside time, called intervention time, when we are going back and reviewing and re-teaching in those areas so the students have the background, the knowledge, and the extra practice.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.64, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.90. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.65, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.04. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.60, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.95; a significant difference ( $p=.040$ ). Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.94, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.71.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate explained how students are a part of goal setting of what teachers expect to accomplish when working with students, “We use data a lot, students set goals from that. They know their RIT score, they know what the goal is supposed to be and so they set goals with their teachers on what they need to accomplish by winter, or what they need to accomplish by spring. We do that K-12, so we even started with kindergarten doing the NWEA MAPS testing. We saw it initiated in the (elementary school) and how they utilized it. I think I was told EVERY school uses it.”

**Item 39: “My teachers are/I am implementing research-based interventions and strategies to meet Title I Goals.” This item was rated 4.06 by administrators and 4.13 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.91 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.18 than males at 3.70. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.00, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.32. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.83 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.00.

- A female elementary teacher shared a classroom strategy developed through a consultant, “I think it’s the efficacy piece. Teams that can identify a strategy, even if it’s after the fact, ‘oh, we did non-linguistic representations when we did this’ . . . so those are the pieces, when it ties to efficacy, then they see that a researcher has taken all those meta-analyses and this is the effect size for this particular strategy and they say yes, that worked for us too, if that tie is there.”
- A female elementary teacher explained a discussion on strategies versus activities, “This has also been a big discussion in the building, looking at strategies vs. activities a lot. We’ve looked deeply at Marzano, and looking at what he said, what we can use as the biggest effect size. I’ve used comparing and contrasting, summarizing things, and just using non-linguistic representations of things where they can make those connections that know if we did this, they are going to connect it with something else.”
- A female elementary administrator discussed a collaborative professional development activity based on learning research-based strategies, “In our last class this semester, we read that book *Simply Better* (Goodwin, 2011). It has the five different categories, and just the conversations we have in class, have really helped solidify the things we are doing. Even the whole idea of who is doing the talking in the classroom, I mean it’s so hard for teachers. It’s hard for me because you learn in a quiet classroom . . . you don’t want the principal to come in and things to be going crazy; you don’t want them to think badly of you. But, if you can show them, it’s not crazy, it’s actually organized, this is what they’re talking about, and this is why they’re talking. But, I think that’s why we have those misconceptions about what it should be. So, the data team process has a whole section on strategies devoted to that, and I know that’s the thing most teams get stuck on, is the strategies. I feel like, just now are we starting to pull out the strategies. These are Hattie’s (strategies), these are Marzano’s (strategies), and what can we do? I feel like it helps, otherwise you just sit there and are like ‘We could . . .’ but it’s not effective.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.77, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.20; the largest mean discrepancy between the two at 0.43. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.82, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.39, the largest mean discrepancy (0.57) between the two groups in this category. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.24; the highest mean discrepancy for mobility in this category at 0.44. Educators

from elementary schools rated this item 4.25, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.90.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate talked about the use of Marzano's research to impact learning, "We would sit in PLC and plan word attack strategies, what we can do to get kids to realize what the initial consonant of a word is, and how to use that as a guide. I think what we've come to realize is that our teachers possibly think they are planning learning strategies when they are coming together, more so than broad instructional strategies. What we've had to do, is take some of the work through visible learning, and we've had to take Marzano's work, and all of the people who have talked about instructional strategies and the effect size that they have, and try to bridge that gap in learning between what learning strategies are and instructional strategies and how to apply the best ones. Then a lot of Marzano's work recently has been about the depth of implementation and to kind of say to teachers, if it doesn't work the first time, that doesn't mean give it up. It means you try to broaden your understanding of what that strategy is. So, we're looking at some deep implementation of these single strategies."
- A female elementary administrator in a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate talked about more classroom-based access to data, "We purchased a data warehouse system. That was one of our issues, we had data everywhere. I was the queen of data, but we didn't have it in a place where everybody could get to it. The data system everybody has access to- teachers have access to their class, administrators have access to everything."

**Item 40: "Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school." This item was rated 4.12 by administrators and 4.18 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.00 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.27 than males at 3.50. There was a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (4.23) to teachers with 20-30 years (3.33) as well as between teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.45) and those with 20-30 years of experience (3.33) at  $p<.001$ . Teachers with and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.00.

- A female elementary administrator shared how Marzano's research is impacting instruction, "So, we've taken Marzano's '9,' for example, teaching tech structure is really hard for kids. We've tried the whole graphic organizers; we've tried similarities and differences. I feel like every time something goes wrong . . . not wrong, but when we're not meeting our goal, instead of in other years it was easy to say 'let's do this.' Without any thought. But it wasn't a strategy. So when we look at those and say 'we've done this, and this, let's try this.' I think we've talked a lot about Hattie's (2009) strategies, in the back of the book there are visible strategies. It's organized from top to bottom, and a lot of those we do, but I don't think we do them as effectively as they should be. Like feedback and student graphing. Those are really hard, because it's really easy as a teacher to say, 'it takes too much time.' To give feedback to twenty some students, is time consuming. To have them actually track, and get something out of it, instead of just coloring in a bar graph. It's time

consuming, but in the end, you have to think, ‘if they do this the right way, this is the effect size.’”

- A female elementary teacher explained the increase in instructional strategies to meet the variety of student learning styles, “There are so many strategies that we’re using now that we haven’t used before. Direct teaching of vocabulary is one that is very strong. The think-pair-share, which makes all students become responsible. With the think-pair-share, you have student ‘A’ share this time, student ‘B’ share next time so that they both have to share, and they both have to agree. We use a lot of lap boards, the learning logs, I know has really impacted their learning because they are doing a lot of the discussion before they even come to my area. The formative test that we’re doing for math now, that we’ve learned this year is going to really . . . it’s shown me the weak areas that I need to go stronger with. So, I feel confident.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.05, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.20. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.92, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.41. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.03, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.23. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.36, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.88.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about instructional strategies that are versatile, “I think the idea of non-linguistic, maybe because that’s the most recent too. We had a conversation about that the other week. We use a lot of words, it’s always words, but if we can teach kids to associate a picture, or associate an action, that is going to click with them. They can hook, we talked about hooking, to the schema that they already have. I think the thought that really struck with me, was the two parts of the brain and how the one deals with the words, and the other, with the imagery part, and how as adults, when we think about it . . . When you think about how you associate words and pictures all of the time. But, I don’t think about it, until I had to think about it. It’s like when you’re in a certain part, you have a certain memory, when you go to a certain part of your classroom, and you’re like, this happened. If we can teach kids, to do that same thing how much better it will be for them to recall.”
- A female secondary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate talked about the importance of student analytic skills, “I know testing is important. In the classroom at times, I’m looking at a difficult concept, and I’m thinking, ‘I’m setting these students up to fail by taking this test.’ So, instead of taking a test, I do project based learning where the students planted a garden, for concepts for solving for X. ‘This is what you’re allowed in your garden, carrots take up this much space. How many rows of green beans? How many rows of carrots, how many rows of tomatoes can you have given this amount of area?’ They’re still solving for X, they’re still using the concept, and it’s just that they’re not given that-Algebra 1. I really struggle with systems of equations.”

**Item 41: “Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.” This item was rated 4.12 by administrators and 4.35 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.00 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item slightly lower for females at 4.35 than males at 4.40. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.27, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.55. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 4.00 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary administrator talked about students spending additional learning time in their additional learning program, “I didn’t talk about the (additional learning) program. Those are very valuable as well, but to me they reach such a small percentage of the students, as opposed to the other things. . . . The after school program happens after school, it’s the 4:00-7:00 p.m., and it’s for the students who are falling behind, who are at-risk, it’s kind of like a tutoring, they get extra help, we’ve had two to three teachers staffed through those evenings, they serve snacks, light refreshment. The additional learning program teacher works with the students who otherwise would not graduate on time. Actually, she’s worked with students who (have a delayed graduation date) but we’re of the mind that it doesn’t matter . . . because a high school diploma is everything! So our outreach teacher works with those students as well, and tries to work with some of the others to get caught up. Percentage wise . . . the students it effects, it’s been wonderful for them, it helped them graduate, so I don’t want to take that away. But the things I mentioned earlier are more of an impact for the greater number of students.”
- A male secondary administrator talked about an additional Reading program, “I’m going to go back to the Read Right. We offer three sections of Read Right for the high school students. Those programs are self-paced programs where they have to meet the different expectations; of course, the teacher would sign off on that, as the students advance. Also, our Read Right teacher has a Basic English class, where we have some at-risk kids in there and that’s a self-paced program. As far as reading goals, the teachers set the individual goals with the students, so they would see the baseline data on the MAP reading scores and the goals at the end of the school year. I mentioned earlier, they would assist students in their goal to improve that.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.34. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.10, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.52. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.23, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.35. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.30, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.34.

- A female secondary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate talked about the community involvement in schools, “We have some community members that are trained who come in and talk about healthy choices, personal, healthy choices. Trying to gear the kids towards positive behaviors; staying away from alcohol, drugs, and they talk about how music, the music and media influences, good and bad influences.

- We do have positive influences from our media as well. Recently they've been talking about self-esteem because they're in my room one day a week. So, they've been focusing on how self-esteem comes from within, and not from others. The gal who ran it last Wednesday, did a wonderful job on self-esteem. She had each one take a sheet of paper. The person who was sitting to their right, they had to write one positive thing about them. Then they read them, I know one student was, 'I never thought they thought of me that way.' He's kind of an outcast or something. He said, 'I never realized they thought I was kind, and smart, and sweet.' It kind of helped."
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about the resources from the grant supporting the after school program, "Part of the grant funding, has been able to provide us with our own (after school program) representative, the person who runs the program. We have our own site supervisor, that's what she's called. Having our own site supervisor has made this amazing connection between the (after school program) and the school. She listens to what the teachers say and takes it to the (after school program). She listens to what the parents are saying in the community and what the after school program teachers are hearing (from parents), and she takes that back to the teachers. So she is kind of the conduit in between that has been that connection, it's very nice. She has a foot on either side, and she's been able to communicate a lot that we probably wouldn't have known otherwise."

**Item 42: "Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school's Title I Improvement Plan." This item was rated 4.12 by administrators and 3.99 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.00 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.08 than males at 3.30; the largest mean discrepancy (0.78) between female and male teachers in the category. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.90. There was a significant difference ( $p=.013$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.21) to those with 20-30 years (3.42). Teachers over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary administrator shared, "We're doing (this) different than anyone else. Data is everything. It has become everything from students receiving interventions and how we look at that. This year we started out with not only the students who are in need, are at-risk, we also looked at the students just above that. Those that are really close, who don't usually get that attention, so we specifically included them into interventions this year."
- A female elementary administrator talked about the use of data to inform instruction, "When we tested students, we analyzed each item; we looked at the whole class for instance, to see patterns. You could see, for example, they all missed number 9, what does that mean? They didn't understand what perimeter was. Those rich discussions and analyzing student data. Not just the individual but the whole class."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.95, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.02. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.78, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.22. Educators from



schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.83, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.08. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.22, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.68; a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) and the highest mean discrepancy (0.54) between the two groups in the category.

- A female teacher from an elementary school discussed how data is continually analyzed at different levels and used to select instruction strategies, “Actually, that’s where our data team actually sits down and digs more into the data, and then they report back to us at our monthly meeting. We have the breakdown of the data. We do have a whole staff meeting where we looked at the data to see our strengths and weaknesses and what we need to improve on. I can’t remember if we’ve done it, or if we do it after we do NWEA MAPS testing, in the spring. We did it in the fall, and we looked at our spring scores. Then, I know we did it in January again.”
- A male teacher from a secondary school explained the extent of his involvement in monitoring reading through the use of MAP scores, “We go through the students that have not met the MAP scores for reading. We go through and arrange for the students who are almost on the bubble, almost on reading level, but not quite. There are two levels of Read Right. When you’re a poor reader, the student and instructor, I call tutor, read the book aloud, and the student will read the book back. . . . I’ve run into some fellows, and ladies, who have real reading problems, and I’ve had to use mp3 players, a normal day, you can only have groups of five. No groups larger than five. That’s a Read Right rule and we don’t break it. It would be physically almost impossible to do more than five, the way it works. It just wouldn’t work.”

## Theme 5: Professional Development

**In the Professional Development category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50), the average response of all administrators was 3.92. The average response of teachers was 3.68.**

The item rated strongest by both administrators and teachers within the Professional Development category was, “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices” as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7**  
*Professional Development Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.41 “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.”	4.10 “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.”
	“Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data.”	
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.47 “Teachers are encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.”	2.93 “I am encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.”

Administrators rated this item 4.41, while teachers rated this item 4.10. Administrators also rated an additional item the strongest in this category, “Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data” at 4.41.

The item rated weakest by both administrators and teachers was, “Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.” Administrators (3.47) primarily rated this between “neutral” and “agree;” teachers (2.93) mostly rated this item between “disagree” and “neutral.”

The largest mean discrepancy (0.89) in the Professional Development category was “Groups of teachers share (I share) planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.” Administrators were more likely to rate this item “agree” at 4.12. However, teachers were more likely to rate this item “neutral” at 3.23.

**Administrator** responses in the category of Professional Development ranged from 3.47 to 4.41 with an average of 3.92. Female administrators rated the category was 3.93, male administrators rated it 4.08, a mean discrepancy of 0.15.

**Teacher** responses yielded a greater range from 2.93 to 4.10 with an average of 3.68. The female teacher mean rating in this category was 3.74, for males the mean rating was 3.45. The mean discrepancy between male and female teachers was 0.29. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience mean rating in this category was 3.63, while the category mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.86. Teachers with 20-30 years mean rating for this category was 3.37 and over 30 years of experience mean rating was 3.84.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower had a mean rating of 3.64 in this category; those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% was 3.78; a mean discrepancy of 0.15. Educators in schools with an English Language Learner percentage of under 5% mean rating in the category of Professional Development was 3.59. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners mean rating was 3.91; a mean discrepancy of 0.31 for the category. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% mean rating for the category was 3.62. The mean rating for educators from schools with mobility rate of 25% or higher was 3.81; the mean discrepancy for the category was 0.19. Educators from elementary schools mean rating for this category was 3.95. Middle and high school educators mean rating was 3.45 for the category with a mean discrepancy of 0.49.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Professional Development was .895 for administrators and .846 for teachers.

### **Professional Development Discussion** *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 43: “Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data.” This item was rated 4.41 by administrators and 3.91 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item 4.45 for females compared to 4.33 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.95 compared to males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.83. There was a significant difference ( $p=.004$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.11) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.25). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary administrator shared, “We have a strong model in place for ‘needs based’ professional development. The research behind the experiences has been strong and also well-received by the staff. Shared planning periods are difficult to create in a small school but there has been an effort to create them for several adjacent grades.”
- A female secondary teacher talked about the assistance or training provided for educators focused upon instructional strategies, “From the Educational Service Unit (ESU), you can look on their website to see what all they have going on. A lot of time things are sent to us. Our principal and superintendent forward emails to us of different seminars that are going on that we can attend. We also attended a poverty seminar on how (Ruby Payne) that relates to how our kids are learning, or not learning. A lot of us walked away really enjoying that seminar. It made us stop to think, if they don’t know the rules, then they don’t know what’s expected.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.91, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.01. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.90, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.07. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.97, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.00. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.19, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.68.

- A female administrator from an elementary school talked about future professional development to enhance parent involvement, “We have continued with parent involvement, a focus on that. But, that’s going to be a more in-depth study next year, we have somebody coming from (an outside agency) next year that will actually work on professional development and with parents and staff to help us fine tune that and make that really smooth.”
- A female administrator from a secondary school shared, “They did this much in the writing, and (a teacher) said, ‘What is our next step? Now that we’ve implemented this much, what’s our next step?’ That’s why (the consultant) is here. We’ve gone to workshops for differentiated reading, we’ve done school improvement where the lady showed different ways of helping kids, like math vocabulary pages, and reading vocabulary pages, and there’s a whole book that we have. That will be re-emphasized this coming fall. We did a lot with evaluation, making sure they knew how to set goals with kids. We re-wrote our teacher evaluations with ESU, and part of that is student accountability. So, we taught them (teachers) how to write goals, they had to write goals for students, and we had (presenter) come in and help us with that. We did a lot with data; the Education Service Unit (ESU) came in at the beginning of the year and showed us how to read data.”

**Item 44: “Professional development was provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies.” This item was rated 4.24 by administrators and 4.03 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.09 for females compared to 4.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.06 than males at 3.80. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.03, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.18. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.00.

- A female elementary teacher talked about professional development for “Direct Instruction” (D.I.) curriculum, “As for training on how to implement things other than D.I, no, it’s all been D.I., and a couple of us went to the math academy this last year. It was five or six sessions. So that was a little more than D.I., and that was helpful. That was more hands-on math, how to teach math hands-on. We are unsure how to do that (implement hands-on with Saxon Math), because we keep hearing ‘fidelity to the program.’ We have to teach the program well. So, we’ve struggled with that, we visited with the principal, and he did say, ‘You need to teach (in a manner) to get them to understand’ and he would say back ‘fidelity to the program.’ So, we’re still in limbo as to how much we can use hands on training informally, or if more of that needs to be used during that test prep time.”
- A female elementary administrator discussed the professional development occurring to support their Direct Instruction curriculum, “Groups of teachers were sent to Reading Mastery D.I. workshops in other states; that continued in August. I think we had 4 days of Reading Mastery Direct Instruction, and we had two days of presentations: ELL Math and Saxon math. We had two or three days of Dibels training for our staff, a lot of professional development. ‘Coaches cadre,’ in other words, coaching the teachers, and supporting them.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.05, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.07. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.02, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.11. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.03, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.08. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.28, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.73, a significant difference ( $p=.003$ ).

- A female administrator from an elementary school talked about professional development to support PLCs, “Teachers felt like they were collaborating because they were talking, and they weren’t fighting, they were talking about kids, and occasionally they would talk about data results. They felt like they were collaborating and it was a PLC. In a lot of ways, all of those things are part of it, but they weren’t really as high performing and specific as they needed to be. We felt like we needed more structure in that team, the data teams helped give us more structure and more focus in that time. We had a huge emphasis last year on formative assessment, and that was very much a professional development growth emphasis. So, this year, I felt like we got more to the application level with that. Again, if you don’t have a process

for deciding what you're going to assess, and what you're going to do with the information that came from it, it doesn't really matter."

- A female teacher at a secondary school talked about professional development to support instructional strategies, "Every year we have professional development. This year it was based on the Danielson model. The year before, we did *Beyond the Bake Sale* (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). Before that we had different groups that we broke out to and read different books. Mine was on multi-cultural teaching. We're aware of their basic needs, not their socio-economic status or anything like that. Our PLC's are different every year. We've also been focusing on vocabulary; we've been meeting with one of our administrators one morning a week. It's a PLC of sorts. Vocabulary has been a big one; we have to turn in five vocabulary words a week on our lesson plans, and we must go through those and define them. I focus mine on the practice test for NeSA, and took my vocabulary words from that, and the NWEA MAPS test, and a little bit off of the ACT's and SAT's."

**Item 45: "Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices." This item was rated 4.41 by administrators and 4.10 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item 4.36 for females compared to 4.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.13 than males at 3.90. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.00, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.18. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.75 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.57.

- A female elementary teacher explained various professional development and training to support her teaching, "We (grades 3-6) are all doing the daily review (for math) in ten day cycles. All of the classes are working with Power Standards and the quizzes that go with those. We took four days in December, and went through, intensive study on how to develop our questions. With the use of their personnel, we used data to develop a lot of our questions. I find writing my own questions were a little easier than trying to find them on the data system."
- A female elementary administrator talked about the importance of professional development, "You can have fabulous assessments that are high quality, but if they don't help you do anything, then it really doesn't matter. Data teams are a way for us to make that kind of next leap. The other piece was that instruction piece. When we had (consultants) here a year ago, they gathered a lot of data about what was happening in our classrooms . . . I guess (we) really didn't know what was going on there. We knew the results, but we didn't necessarily know what was happening in between. So, part of that was designed so we could get a handle on it, and could get to work right away addressing those things, part of it was creating that sense of a common language so that when, ultimately, the coach is gone, and a number of people are gone, the teams can sustain that conversation and that ability to collaborate about what's happening."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.36, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.10. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.06, those

from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.24. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.23, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.12. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.42, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.73; a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) as well as the largest mean discrepancy (0.69) for this category and the survey overall.

- A female teacher from an elementary school shared information on various professional development offerings at her school, “We also are having a book study with the collaborative, crucial conversations kind of thing, then with the PLC we had, I’m terrible at titles, *Learn by Doing* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006), and we did a book study with that, in PLC. Just more getting that opportunity to have those conversations with co-workers, a lot of that was focused back on the things we’re working with regularly, in meeting the reading goals.”
- A male administrator from a secondary school explained, “We talked about the goals that we use for professional development. Of course, everything that we bring in for professional development is to improve instruction and engage the students.”

**Item 46: “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.” This item was rated 3.88 by administrators and 3.89 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item 3.82 for females compared to 4.00 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.92 than males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.83, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.05. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.25 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary administrator discussed teacher collaboration to support professional development at her school, “We’re not seeing as much of that used in decision making as I’d like to see, but it’s definitely being used more than it was a year ago. I think we’re not far from that flip, to where it is used to really drive the decision making process, but, I believe they have bought into the power of it, and how important it is to know those things now. They don’t always know what to do with it. Part of that, I think, is because they haven’t been as adept at talking about instruction. Instruction was kind of this black box thing that happened in my classroom, ‘I go, and I close the door and do things, and sprinkle magic dust and they get whatever score they get. I didn’t know how to talk about that with the teacher down the hall, and go in your room, and I don’t know what you do, and you don’t know what I do. When we get together, how are we supposed to talk about it when we don’t talk about it in the same way?’ Creating that language to be able to talk about it was one thing. I think that will help us to be able to use that data in a better way, because they’ll have more ability to do that.”
- A female secondary teacher discussed forms of teacher collaboration in place in her school, “Every week, once a week, the teachers are divided A, B, and C groups, and so once a week, on a day the A’s all meet. The next day the B’s, the next day the C’s. We are talking about students, ‘so and so is really struggling in this, they really need . . .’ or ‘some of the positives that we’re seeing . . .’ That’s also when we talk

about the data that's coming through. Every other week high school has staff meetings in the mornings, where we're collaborating, going over some of the things that have been sent to our principal weekly, through our A, B, C collaborations. Also, there is a group of three leadership teachers, where if there's a problem with something, that need clarified, it is brought to them, and forwarded on to the principal for collaboration."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.77, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.92. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.69, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.07, a significant difference ( $p=.032$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.70, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.96. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.05, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.63, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.038$ ).

- A female teacher from an elementary school discussed the time allowed to work with other educators, "We get a lot of time to collaborate with one another. We have to be willing to be open, share, work together and use our time so that when we meet, we are doing what we can to meet those student needs. Our collaboration with one another and outside resources."
- A female teacher from a secondary school talked about the advantages of working with other teachers, "You know, you're not going to have the same rapport with every single student. So, another teacher might have a better rapport with a student than you do, you can say, 'okay, give me some strategies of how I can reach this kid.' That works, also, like I said, if we notice trends, like a student hasn't been here in a while we ask, 'is there something going on?' so we can focus more on the student."

**Item 47: "Groups of teachers in my school have shared/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth." This item was rated 4.12 by administrators and 3.23 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item higher at 4.27 for females compared to 3.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item lower for females at 3.27 than males at 2.90, producing the highest mean discrepancy (0.37) between the two in this category. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.10, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.47. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.00 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 2.86. This item produced the largest mean discrepancy (0.89) between administrators, who were more likely to rate this item "agree" at 4.12, and teachers who were more likely to rate this item "neutral" at 3.23.

- A female elementary teacher shared how teachers discuss assessment results to improve on classroom instruction, "I know at the very beginning of the year, when we talked about our NeSA results, and what was lowest in all of the grades, we did some learning on those areas, how to better (instruction) . . . inference was one. That was actually our focus this year. I know we did some stuff with that. I don't know that it's necessarily school wide, maybe it is. I know they look at all the data, I'm not sure, I

feel like it's more within our team. I think school wide it's more like strategies or engagement, something bigger.”

- A female elementary administrator talked about the importance of teachers working together so all students can benefit, “The ongoing professional development, whether that's an external person, or whether that's me, or whether that's the coaches, has helped to move them forward. It's hard for me, because I did professional development differently here than I did a lot of other places. We have things that are more formal when the consultant comes for two days and meets with the teams. That's a pretty formal piece. We do stuff to follow up on that for 3 months in between the time that she's here.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.00, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.47. The highest mean discrepancy for these two groups was 0.47. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.06, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.67, again producing the highest mean discrepancy in the category at 0.61. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.03, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.51, producing the highest mean discrepancy (0.47) between the two mobility groups for the category. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.52, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.15.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate shared how she is part of teacher collaboration teams, “On my collaborative team, there are three of us. In our PLC there are five of us, I believe. It depends on who is able to make it that day. We take notes, and share our notes with both groups, and also with our coordinator for the grant.”
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate shared, “Once a month we have a building meeting, some of its RTI. They'll give our (coach) mostly feedback on what they see, what are the issues. They collaborate. One of the things I tried earlier is I took my K-3 people and met with them. Then I'd take my 4-6 because they're doing reading mastery, direct instruction, but they're different than K - 2 are doing. They don't want to sit there and talk about what you're doing in 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. Even in math, it's a little different, but not a lot. But those are opportunities, and I'm sure they have the teachers' lounge talks at lunch, and those things. But, our (coach) does a lot of collaboration. Our doors are WIDE open during the day.”

**Item 48: “Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.”**  
**This item was rated 3.47 by administrators and 2.93 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item higher at 3.55 for females compared to 3.33 for males. **Teachers** rated this item slightly higher for females at 2.95 than males at 2.80. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 2.87, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 2.92. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.92 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.29.

- A female elementary administrator shared how peer observations are emerging as teachers are now ready, “It's a simple thing; we've had them in other classrooms



- more. I don't think they were ready for that a year ago. I think they were ready for it more this year, they'll be ready for it EVEN more next year.”
- A female elementary administrator explained, “We also look at this when we're observing in the classroom. They (the teachers) have to choose once a quarter to visit one primary and one intermediate classroom to see what's going on in other classrooms. It's a great opportunity to create support, it's not an evaluation, it's a support. If I'm a teacher, and maybe it just didn't click that day, you might see something as a peer in helping with that. So, we want to encourage those crucial conversations. So, we have that area, and then using formative assessments. How do they elicit and check for understanding, we script all of that. They have a little sheet, there is a copy they can use to converse with their peer, and they turn in a copy to me. But, I won't keep those at the end of the year, they are not for evaluation. I like to see what they checked.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 2.95, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.04. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 2.96, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.07. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 2.97, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item slightly higher at 3.04. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.25, those from middle and high schools rated this item 2.66.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate explained, “Not only letting the teacher know that she's meeting those strategies to meet those needs but also to give feedback, ‘I do this, and this helps me a lot to meet that.’ It is a nice conversation, and I've had a couple of people come into my room, and I've been in a couple of others.”
- A male secondary administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate shared, “They implement those goals in the classroom; I suggest to the teachers that instead of having me go monitor their goals, have your peers monitor them, and bring back what works for you in the classroom. That's a reference point they can use.”

**Item 49: “Teachers in my school/I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.” This item was rated 3.82 by administrators and 3.90 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.64 for females compared to 4.17 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.94 than males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.73. There was a significant difference ( $p=.029$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.16) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.50). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.86.

- A female elementary administrator stressed the importance of facilitating PLCs and focused on the improvement of instruction, “This morning I was in a PLC meeting, and it was not what it was supposed to be, so we talked about it. ‘This is not what is supposed to happen here, this is not what you're supposed to be focused on. You're making a testing schedule; you're not talking about student learning and student

achievement, which is where your focus should be.’ That’s the expectation; I set the expectation, they knew the expectation. I really do think we’ve done a better job of making it a job embedded culture of professional learning.”

- A male elementary administrator talked about the importance of technical assistance, “We hired a full-time instructional coach, she is constantly collaborating with ‘here’s what I’m seeing on this score’ or ‘here’s what I’m seeing on this.’ We both do drop-ins with the fidelity form. We had forms made to check the explicit instruction component. I think there’s twenty some items on there, and so, we monitor those very heavily. The coach has close relationships with our staff.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.55, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.98. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.63, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.13, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.57, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.01, a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ). Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.02, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.68, a significant difference ( $p=.042$ ).

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL population shared, “The big part that we’re still stuck with is how to collaborate with specialists. How does that work with what we are doing? We meet so much more now, than we have ever in the past. It isn’t bad, sometimes you just want to be alone, but you can’t, you have to do it. I think sometimes there are those hard conversations that will come up, and not everyone is going to agree.”
- A female secondary teacher from a school with a lower ELL population talked about the use of support to better examine data, “We have a data team. That data team looks at not only the NWEA MAPS score; we also have AIMSweb, and NeSA. So, the data team looks at all of those. Every once in a while our meetings will be focused on the data that we have. We meet in different groups one day a month; each group is in charge; its school improvement. It’s how we’re accredited through the state. It’s our accreditation, AdvancED. The group I’m with, we focus a lot on data. ‘How can we use this to improve our school?’ and ‘How can we use these scores to encourage our students to perform at their level?’ Not necessarily do better, but perform at their level. Some students can’t perform at grade level, so we encourage our students to perform at your best level, your best ability. Some of our paraprofessionals are part of that as well our school counselor.”

**Item 50: “Teachers in my school/I collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity.” This item was rated 3.53 by administrators and 3.67 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.27 for females compared to 4.00 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.71 than males at 3.40. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.63, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20

years of experience was 3.79. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.17 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.86.

- A female elementary teacher shared the various assessments they collect from students to examine for student learning, “We write down a lot of data with the kids, especially in reading, but also in the Saxon Math. We write down; we assess them for how many words per minute. We collect data about their assessments, whether they’re oral assessments or written assessments. In language, we take that same kind of data, and math too. We just collect their scores, we do oral assessments, we do informal visual assessments, try to see where their needs are and if there’s a pattern that develops. Sometimes it’s a real obvious pattern; if there’s a weakness in an area of instruction that helps me to know that I need to go back and review because apparently I didn’t do a very good job on that. . . .”
- A female elementary administrator talked about “Checking for Learning,” “We’re focusing on planning and part of what we’re working on with teachers is lesson design. That was another focus this year, and we tie it in with the Teaching for Success model. So we’re looking at ‘what do I do as a teacher,’ ‘what do we do as a class,’ and ‘what are you going to do as an individual;’ much like the Madeline Hunter Model, so planning is important.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.50, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.69. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.41, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.87, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.030$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.43, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.73. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.84, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.34.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate talked about student buy-in with strategies that supported student learning, “I was not using learning logs at the beginning of the year because my students fought me on it. I was pushed to go back to them, because I had used them in previous years with good results. Once my students got the basic understanding they quit fighting about it. One girl told me the other day ‘oh- we get to do learning logs!’ They were excited about it because they are taking responsibility for their own learning. The learning log starts with the good old ‘what I know, what I think I’m going to learn.’”
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate shared, “In every PLC meeting, during the week, an administrator is always there. It’s always (principal) or (another admin). That is part of the PLC talk; all of these other things we do in the classroom get brought up in that meeting. So, I know they are finding out what is going on through our meetings, and through them being there.”

## **Theme 6: Data/Monitoring**

**In the Data/Monitoring category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67), the average response of all administrators was 3.92. The average response of teachers was 4.01.**

Items 64 through 67 on the Teacher Survey were not included on the Administrator Survey – thus, after Item 63, the item numbers for each survey no longer correlate.

The item rated strongest by both administrators (4.76) and teachers (4.43) in the Data/Monitoring category was, “Data are essential to our school improvement process,” as shown in Table 8. Teachers rated the item, “I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data” the lowest in the category with a mean of 3.36. The item rated weakest by administrators (3.59) was “My teachers monitor students’ additional learning time to ensure success.” This item also had the greatest mean discrepancy (.43) between teachers and administrators for this category with administrators primarily rating it between “neutral” and “agree” (3.59) and teachers primarily rating it “agree” (4.02).

**Table 8**  
*Data/Monitoring Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	<b>Administrators</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.76 “Data are essential to our school improvement process.”	4.43 “Data are essential to our school improvement process.”
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.59 “My teachers monitor students’ additional learning time to ensure success.”	3.36 “I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.”

**Administrator** responses ranged from 3.59 to 4.76 in the category of Data/Monitoring, with an average rating of 3.92. Female administrator average rating in the category was 3.80, while male administrator average rating was 4.56, with an average mean discrepancy of 0.76.

**Teacher** responses ranged from 3.36 to 4.43 in this category with an average of 4.01. Female teacher average mean rating in this category was 4.08, for males the mean rating was 3.51. The average mean discrepancy between male and female teachers was 0.57. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience mean rating in this category was 3.94, while the category mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.19. Teachers with 20-30 years mean rating for this category was 3.48 and over 30 years of experience mean rating was 4.30.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower had a mean rating of 3.80 in this category; those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% mean rating was 4.04, for a mean discrepancy of 0.24. Educators in schools with an English Language Learner percentage of under 5% rated the category 3.82 on average. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners mean rating was 4.15 for a mean discrepancy of 0.34 for the category. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% mean rating for the category was 3.80. The mean rating for educators from schools with a mobility rate of 25% or higher was 4.06; the mean discrepancy for the category was 0.26. Educators from elementary schools mean rating for this category was 4.16. Middle and high school educators mean rating was 3.73 in the category for a mean discrepancy of 0.43.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Data/Monitoring was .935 for administrators and .931 for teachers.

## **Data/Monitoring Discussion**

### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 51: “Data are essential to our school improvement process.” This item was rated 4.76 by administrators and 4.43 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.73 for females compared to 4.83 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.49 than males at 4.00. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.43, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.50. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 4.08 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.57.

- A female elementary teacher shared how teachers enter classroom data to monitor student performance, “We have a big 10 page Excel spreadsheet that we’re supposed to be entering data on. I’m not sure everybody enters data. It shows what they got for writing, the reading level or DRA, and what they got on math – California Modified Assessments (CMAs), and if they (student) are in a math intervention. So I know that’s all on one page per kid; what teacher they had last year, did their parents come to conferences, did they come at the beginning of the year, it’s interesting. We always have this big discussion on is this the right thing to measure. I’ve had kids on ‘QRS’ (level of DRA) not pass NeSA, so that tells me they can read a story and just tell you answers, but can they really? I feel like NeSA is a lot more comprehensive. I think it’s monitored that way. I’m not sure what they do in the lower grades. I know the upper grades (monitor) CMA quarterly reading, NeSA practice, and I know they really look at that; if they (administrator) don’t have access to the data, they’ll ask you, ‘can you share this information?’ I know they (administration) are seeing what we’re doing, and I think a lot gets reported back from the coaches on what we’re doing. It’s a topic of PLC, so they’re always in there, taking notes, and seeing what we’re doing.”
- A female elementary administrator shared how school-wide performance is monitored, “We keep track of big pieces of data on a big spreadsheet for the whole building so that we are being able to track from the beginning in kindergarten, then to first grade we saw this, and if we wanted to see how fifth grade is doing on whatever we’ve asked for specific data pieces, it’s all listed.”
- A male elementary administrator shared his school’s use of data to monitor student literacy development, “For us, a lot of our interventions have to do with ‘how are our reading achievement scores going?’ ‘How are our Dibels scores looking?’ ‘How’s our reading fluency?’ ‘What’s going on with reading and fluency?’ . . . those types of things.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.36, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.52. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.37, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.59. Educators from

schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.40, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.52. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.67, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.20, a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ).

- A female teacher from an elementary school emphasized the importance of Power Standards as a marker for how students are doing, “We are very much aware of our testing scores. NWEA MAPS, we use those and apply the DesCartes to see where we are, and what areas we need to work on. We get our vocabulary from the DesCartes, with the Power Standards, being very aware of what the Power Standards are and how our students are doing on the formative tests.”
- A male administrator from a secondary school talked about how the high school principal and others help with data collection, “The high school principal is really involved in data collection through the whole school, so he probably knows all classes. He’s on the data committee. For AdvancED, you have a data group, and that group knows a lot. The data people might be a secretary, it might be paraprofessionals, it might be an administrator, and it would be teachers, then they would combine the information and pass it on.”

**Item 52: “Data are used to monitor and focus our school/district’s Title I Improvement goals and other successes.” This item was rated 4.59 by administrators and 4.34 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.45 for females compared to 4.83 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.38 than males at 4.00. There was a significant difference ( $p=.045$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (4.40) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.75). An additional significant difference ( $p=.029$ ) emerged when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.42) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.75). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.57.

- A female elementary teacher discussed what her data tells her about test performance, “My data tells me that I think we’re going to do well. They have had more background in math than they have in a long time because we’re hitting power standards. As long as they stay relaxed, I think they’re going to do well. Test anxiety is going to hit. They (The students) know what their scores are, and they know their high areas and their low areas.”
- A female elementary administrator shared how data informs teachers of student performance, “We don’t want to say, ‘I think my kids are doing pretty well. I feel like they’re doing okay.’ Those are banned words. We need to move to ‘I know because . . . .’ We’ve moved to a much more evidence based model, where they come to their team with their data, and they talk about their data with their team members. That’s the piece that brings everybody together.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.42. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.24, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.52. Educators from

schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.23, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.44. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.61, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.02.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate talked about sharing school-wide information and looking at the data through a K-6<sup>th</sup> grade lens, “We have had a couple different times when school-wide information has been shared at a couple of small in-services, we have looked at that . . . sat down and said ‘look at these scores!’ This is what we’re seeing in this grade, this is what we’re seeing in this grade that is across the board, across K-6.’ We saw a lot of growth here; do we see this in every class?”
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate discussed the new data team, “We’ve adding a data team now, that’s K-12 group. They’ll go to those workshops dealing with data.”

**Item 53: “The faculty and staff/Teachers in my school monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.” This item was rated 4.12 by administrators and 4.08 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.73 for females compared to 4.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.13 than males at 3.70. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.93, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.29. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.58 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary teacher discussed how data is collected in many different ways and used to examine student and teacher performance, “As a teacher, if we’re talking about transition or engagement, we’ll usually have somebody come in from an outside source, so we can continue our teaching, and get a baseline. Once we get our baseline, then, as a team, (we discuss) what you need to work on, because we do so much planning together. As a team, we’ll get together by grade and talk about, ‘this isn’t going well; what are we going to do?’ Engagement was a big one, ‘what we can do as a team?’ So we started implementing a lot more cooperative learning strategies, especially Kagan structures to keep kids more engaged. We monitor that, what we’re putting in there, and why we are putting it in there. They will usually come back and track us again, (for example), ‘this is your engagement time.’ So, we don’t necessarily do that ourselves.”
- A female secondary teacher explained how administrators are more engaged in collecting student data rather than teachers talking about data collaboratively, “School-wide, I would say it is more administration; I mean, I don’t know too much about elementary (data has), what their test scores. . . , it’s online, I could look it up, but I don’t.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.91, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.13. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.86, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.30, a significant

difference ( $p=.017$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.83, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.19. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.30, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.76, a significant difference ( $p=.007$ ).

- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate explained how teachers' planning periods support working collaboratively, "It's not across the hall collaborations, they all eat together, nobody goes home for lunch here. The teachers' lunch periods overlap, so there's at least 15 minutes, minimum, that all of the teachers are in the teacher's dinner area. So, they get a lot of interaction there. But, our teachers planning periods are centered around specials so that they are usually (together) . . . for example, the first and second grade teachers' planning periods - the kids are out at the same specials at the same time so teachers can interact then. Every two weeks we have an after school meeting that they (can) collaborate; for example, with math, second grade (may discuss) the number of lessons, so they'll know coming into third grade. They'll go through all of that. Then, we have a late start once a month on Wednesday mornings. We don't do as much collaboration at that, a lot of times that's the entire district meets together, but they get (together) on a fairly regular basis."
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate explained, "Both of us were working with a little guy who had no word skills. He looked at a word and would just say it. So, she worked with him, and I worked with him, and now he can sound out words. He can put a sound with those words and knows some of those rules. But, it took the two of us working together to do it. But we found that out from Dibels, looking at that data. I will admit (the other teacher) is much better at that; she analyzes that data very well. But, she's willing for us to get together and we work on it. It's a good skill for me to learn from her."

**Item 54: "Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated standardized test score data." This item was rated 4.24 by administrators and 3.92 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.00 for females compared to 4.67 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.00 than males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.83, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.08. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.42 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary teacher discussed examining and monitoring data, "Like the Dibels, we use that, we look at that often, and that's the one nice thing about it. It is not only 'do you have the three testing times?' But you can also do the monitoring. With the interventionist, we look at that monitoring often, and say, 'are the students meeting their goals?' 'Which part are they not meeting on their goals?' 'What do we need to practice more of?' 'What do we need to focus on to get them to meet those goals?' It sounds like that's (they are) just examining the goals, and nothing else, but it's not, because the goals that they have are the reading skills that we want them to have, the fluency, the vocabulary, the word skills. That's something we've worked on, both of us (both teachers), that was the nice thing. I work with (another teacher) we work really well together."



- A male elementary administrator discussed the use of normative data, “I just looked at some of our NWEA MAPS data, as far as our last testing for math, reading, and some tested in science. It also graphs as far as the median score of the students, how that compares from the spring to even last winter to last fall. It’s neat to see that, and even from just that one graphic, you can kind of get a picture of ‘why is this dipping down in this particular portion of the data?’ ‘What’s going on here that these scores are a little bit higher than in this area?’”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.91, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.99. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.78, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.15, a significant difference ( $p=.029$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.73, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.07. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.20, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.61, producing the highest mean discrepancy (0.59) in this category, a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ).

- A male secondary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, “As far as reading goals, the teachers set the individual goals with the students, so they would see the baseline data on the MAP reading scores, and of course the goals at the end of the school year. I mentioned earlier, they would assist the students in their goal to improve.”
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate explained how a consultant helps with data on a regular basis, “Our consultant is great about being able to put that stuff together for us. We’re very fortunate that our teachers are willing to sit down with the consultant, and we move kids a lot here. We know where they’re performing on a regular basis. If any of our kids are not performing at level, she tests them every two weeks with the Dibels or our reading.”

**Item 55: “Every classroom is implementing our Title I Goals.” This item was rated 3.82 by administrators and 3.70 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.45 for females compared to 4.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.73 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.60, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.79. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.33 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary administrator explained the extent that data is used to determine the achievement of the Title I Goals, “Very highly, that’s probably been our strongest area. Highly, highly utilized. The leadership team is highly involved in that. The other teachers who aren’t involved in that leadership team, they have a collaborative team process. Then leadership team meets with the other teachers.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how classrooms use data to implement Title I goals, “So many teams, particularly third, fourth, and fifth, set their measurement for their attainment on state tests that they then don’t get until six months after the kids are gone. It’s nice to have that expectation and to want that for

your kids, but you need to know before October of the following year if you met it or not. So, the data teams process for us is really helped teams understand the importance of incremental goals, and short term goals, and how to get there. We talked about that a little bit last year, but they couldn't quite understand it. So, this year they're making that transition to short term goals, and how to know all the way along, that we're making progress towards where we need to be, not just at the end."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.41, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.81. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.55, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.89. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.50, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.81. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.94, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.39.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate shared the extent they use data to monitor Title I goals, "Well, like the Dibels, we use that, we look at that often. That is the one nice thing about it. Not only do you have the three testing times but you can also do the monitoring. With the interventionist, we look at monitoring often and say, 'Are the students meeting their goals?' 'Which part of their goals are they not meeting?' 'What do we need to focus on to get them to meet those goals?'"
- A male secondary administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate explained, "We have (staff) that works in the office and monitors all the data, then brings the data to the teachers. That's part of her duties. That is done through meetings, and they have a data committee too. The information, of course, is disseminated by grade level that is given to the teachers. They know individual student scores. We have the home room set up every day for eighty to seventy-five minute blocks of time, and then we use fifty-five minutes for instruction and the last twenty minutes for homeroom when they can review the goals with the students and check their credits, assist students, that type of thing."

**Item 56: "Teachers in my school/I adjust my instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals." This item was rated 3.94 by administrators and 3.98 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.73 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.04 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.93, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.08. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female secondary teacher used data to select instructional strategies, "The teachers said, 'we want to try something like this.' Now, I think they're saying 'maybe we need to try something else.' The teachers said that with Study Island, it gives them practice on how an addition problem is written this way (for example). Kids look at it this way (the problem written in a particular format) and can't figure it out. The teacher walked by a student and said 'up and down,' and the kid wrote it on the piece

of paper, and knew how to do it. She said if she starts using more of the Study Island, which gives them practice in that (format), then she can be giving those clues in her classroom, and so when they go to the testing situation, they'll have that knowledge."

- A male administrator explained how the use of data helps to form instructional strategies, "We have our data committee; they meet and then they bring their information to the other teachers in the morning meetings. Of course, they want to make sure that the teachers have the individual goals with the students."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.73, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.04. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.76, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.17, a significant difference ( $p=.011$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.73, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.07. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.17, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.66, an additional significant difference ( $p=.003$ ).

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate explained, "When we have our data team meetings, we were talking about inference. We got on a huge tangent about it. It wasn't a tangent in the end. We all had thoughts about what they did or didn't understand about the story. What it basically ended up being is they didn't have background knowledge, and they didn't know the vocabulary, so they couldn't infer. So, we were thinking, is it inference, or when they are reading a story, how (students) can infer what a word means, or how to infer? You might not know what lacrosse is, but could you get an idea? What clues could you use?"
- A secondary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, "We use data all the time! It was because of data that I learned that some of my students weren't ready for Algebra I. Let's use that data to figure out (student progress); maybe they need one of the lower end math classes. Or sometimes you have a student in general math that I got his NWEA MAPS scores back, and we really need to move him to Algebra I! A bored child is a problem child. There's a difference between being challenged and struggling. With homeroom I go through the NWEA MAPS scores with students. So we look, and we set goals for them. 'Here's the scoring. You fell at a fourth grade level, you're in tenth. How do you feel about that? Where do you think you should be? Did you try? Or were you having a rotten day? . . . Maybe I need to think about this; I don't want to be pulled out of Algebra I. I want to stay there.' So, it encourages them too."

**Item 57: "Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school's Title I Goals." This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.92 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.73 for females compared to 4.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.97 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.80, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.08. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary administrator talked about the involvement of administrators to ensure implementation of Title I goals, “The high school principal is a part of the discussions, so we can try to continue the strategies and things that we’re using at the elementary to the high school level. The superintendent is really involved, and keeps track also.”
- A male elementary administrator talked about the role of monitoring classroom instruction when examining Title I goals and success, “So, now we have evolved to writing grade level student achievement goals, and we have a goal setting evaluation twice a year, we reflect on it. That’s counted within their (teacher) appraisal tool; we reflect on that and we look at those scores. ‘Where are you?’ So, if the teacher says, ‘88% of my kids were at or above the state average’ - or whatever it was a year or two ago, or above the proficiency level on their reading scores, I want to get to that. You see, we set them - we want to see growth.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.59, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.02; a significant difference ( $p=.050$ ) as well as the highest mean discrepancy (0.43) for lunch rates in the category. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.75, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.11, a significant difference ( $p=.018$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.67, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.04, a significant difference ( $p=.050$ ). Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.14, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.61, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ).

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate stated how she discusses student achievement data with teachers, “Since student achievement is part of the evaluation process, part of the evidence and artifacts of that are pieces of data from NWEA or data talks. Show evidence of those in the evaluation and talk about those. Now, unfortunately, it’s ongoing. We aren’t finished, so we don’t have any evidence as to the overall growth. But I do have to analyze and discuss with them, how students are developing and growing, and if somebody is not, ‘what’s happening, what’s going on, and what are you doing to make that happen?’ Or, ‘who is coming in to help intervene and what type of interventions are you having?’ I do have those conversations in the evaluation process.”
- A female secondary administrator from a school with a higher rate of free and reduced lunch shared how goal setting is a part of the teacher evaluation process, “We did a lot with evaluation, making sure they knew how to set goals with kids. We re-wrote our teacher evaluations with ESU, and part of that is student accountability. So, we taught them how to write goals. They had to write goals for students.”

**Item 58: “My teachers/I monitor students’ additional learning time to ensure success.”**  
**This item was rated 3.59 by administrators and 4.02 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.27 for females compared to 4.17 for males.  
**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.09 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.80, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20

years of experience was 4.29. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.67 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female secondary teacher discussed their program to provide additional learning time, “We’ve implemented things like (an after school program) so the students could come in to work on their curriculum if they missed a day, or missed a lot. I’m part of (book club).”
- A female secondary teacher explained how teachers collaborate with the other teachers to ensure quality additional learning time, “Hey teachers, who is working after school?’ They can say (to each other) which (student) really needs to focus on this (skill). The kids are pretty up front too, with ‘I need to work on this.’ It’s a wide range of kids, there are junior high kids that come in (to the after school program).”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.00; those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item similarly at 3.94. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.09. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.87, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.99. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.03, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.83.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate explained how resources have supported additional paraprofessionals who can provide extra learning time in needed curriculum areas, “With having extra money, we’ve been able to get a couple more aids in here to help out the lower levels.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate emphasized, “One thing I do know, we have the opportunity to have an outreach person, and this person basically, if a student is struggling or maybe the ordinary classroom doesn’t work for that student; they need one-on-one . . . this has given them the opportunity for it.”

**Item 59: “Changes in grade-level classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.” This item was rated 4.06 by administrators and 3.90 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.82 for females compared to 4.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.99 than males at 3.20. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.73, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.05. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.58 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary administrator discussed the various things they are doing to monitor implementation of Title I goals, “We’re doing a lot of things; we have a leadership team that meets weekly. We discuss our goals, and it depends on where we’re at in the year and what we are necessarily looking at. Pretty much monthly, we are talking about all of our goals. We’re also talking about data, looking at data.”
- A female elementary administrator talked about how they monitor goal setting with students, “We’ve been working on goal setting with the kids this year. We actually in

one of the weekly meetings just had a reflection- it was in March- about what's working, what's not working."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.59, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.01. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.69, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.15, the highest mean discrepancy (0.46) in the category. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.63, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.04, the highest mean discrepancy (0.41) in this category for mobility rate. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.14, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.59, a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ).

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate explained how she monitors student progress, "I monitor the progress to see how students are doing. I monitor the test scores. Generally, I don't have a hands-on job in that way."
- A female secondary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate shared, "We went to some professional development this winter. It focused on differentiated learning, which has helped me. I don't have kids that get pulled out for special education, so I have all kids in my class, so that really helped me in knowing how to set up. Okay, I know this kid's level; I know this kid is a higher achiever. I could change different aspects of what I'm doing so that they are all learning something, just at their own capacity."

**Item 60: "Changes in school-wide performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented." This item was rated 4.18 by administrators and 3.99 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.00 for females compared to 4.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.05 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.90. There was a significant difference ( $p=.036$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.13) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.50). An additional significant difference ( $p=.030$ ) was found when comparing teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.50) to teachers with 30+ years of experience (4.43).

- A male elementary administrator shared how he discusses student performance with teachers, "I discuss it quite a bit. When I go to visit their classrooms, I just find myself a lot of times, it might just be with an individual student concern and stuff, but I'll start talking to the teachers about a particular student, and then they'll get into dialogue with me about their grades."
- A female elementary teacher explained the extent the administration discusses classroom student achievement data for planning student intervention, "Quite a bit, I really think so. We have meetings where we get together with just the administration, like the principal. During RtI, we talked about everybody, and then we have our focus on a couple of children."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.82, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.07. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.22. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.11. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.20, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.73.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower mobility rate shared, “Our Title I goals are our reading and math. I think every time we have quite a few people come through to mini-observations. We’re supposed to go into each other’s’ rooms and say, ‘I see you are doing this particular strategy, this one and this one.’ Not only letting that teacher know that she’s meeting those strategies to meet those needs, but also to give feedback. ‘You know, I do this, and this helps me a lot to meet that need’ which is a nice conversation. I’ve had a couple of people come into my room and I’ve been in a couple of others.”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate explained how their new appraisal process has supported teacher instruction, “We have an appraisal process this year that is much more time intensive, but I also feel I have a better understanding of what teachers do. In the past when I’ve had to write up a lot of things they didn’t know. So, it starts with an informal observation, when they don’t necessarily know when I’m coming or what I’m coming to see. Then we have some conversation about that, and we set up the formal observation. I try to connect those two, if you want me to come to math when I was in reading this time, that’s fine, but let’s talk about what I saw here that you want me to focus on when I come in for reading. Whether that’s engagement, or whatever it is. I really try to make it be directed not only by what I saw, but what they want to get to feel better about. I think this process is more focused on growth for all teachers than this idea of rewarding and catching, and I think that’s what we had before.”

**Item 61: “Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.” This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.98 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.82 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.06 than males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.80. There was a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.24) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.25). When comparing teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.25) to teachers with 30+ years of experience (4.43), there was a significant difference ( $p=.007$ ).

- A male elementary administrator shared how data can be used to meet the challenge of closing the achievement gap for mobility students, “Data has been invaluable. Our biggest problem is trying to figure out how much we are raising our kids’ scores with the fact that our turnover (mobility) rate is high here.”
- A female elementary administrator shared how assessments are used to monitor growth for at-risk students, “We just use the MAP as a predictor of how the students will do. NeSA provides a second set of data to support interventions for students. If

we see them mentioned a second time, the at-risk group, will go through the student assistance process. Then, we also look at the students who are just above that, who could use that little extra push.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.86, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.01. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.75, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.20; the second item to result in the highest mean discrepancy (0.46) between the two groups in the category of Data/Monitoring. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.05. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.16, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.71, a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ).

- A male administrator from a secondary school talked about closing the achievement gap using student goals, “One of the things in the student centered goals is to increase reading scores in the MAP test. Then of course, when they come in with that goal instrument, mid-point, ‘where are you?’ ‘What is the data telling you at mid-point? Have they reached that goal or not?’ In some cases, the scores have improved, in some cases the scores have not improved. Again, that’s part of that discussion that’s new to everyone, very new to everyone. It’s new, but that’s the mindset we’re trying to develop. It’s a learning curve.”
- A female administrator from an elementary school explained, “I think it has a big effect on our kids. Here’s why I think it affects them, for some reason, with the culture, some of them feel that they should succeed. So, when our kids do get a little bit of that success, they’re not accustomed to accepting that success.”

**Item 62: “Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” This item was rated 3.71 by administrators and 3.36 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.27 for females compared to 4.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item similar for females at 3.37 and males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.13, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.63. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.83 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.57.

- A male elementary administrator shared, “That’s one of the things, as far as data, that I tend to stay up with because, as far as retaining students, that’s another fine line that we have, because obviously some of those ‘retains’ are attendance issues too, and if you start looking at it, we have to make a judgment here pretty soon whether a kid should get passed on, or retained for the year.”
- A male elementary administrator talked about the impact of student motivation and home environment on future student success, “It hurts us. That’s why we want to get a teacher to teach gifted students in here, to get those students even up further along than where they’re at; to reach that success level, just like with graduating and going on to college; We don’t have a large number of kids that go on to four year schools. I think it comes down to they’re scared to do better than what their parents did, do



better than what their grandparents did. Because then, they look like an outcast. You know what? That's probably the toughest thing, to deal with. It's hard to get them to see that."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.47. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.35, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.48. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.40, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item similarly at 3.43. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.39, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.46.

- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate shared, "Attendance has been a big issue. It was noted that it needed to be improved. Now that we've started monitoring it, keeping track of it, I wonder sometimes if we're improving. The legislature doesn't help us out much on that. They make the laws but there's nothing much that comes (out of it). About all they can do is just file, and then it's up to whoever does this or that. I see the legislature is probably going to put in another Item 'C' that principals don't want to (go along with it) if nothing is going to come of it. It just creates conflict. A lot of the parents, now and then need a little help because the child doesn't 'mind' them. But when the sheriff and I show up, then they have to go to the meeting. We can't teach them if they're not here."
- A male secondary administrator talked about the incentives used to promote student attendance, "Another thing that we're doing, started a little bit last year, when attendance was an issue with students. We recognized the students that missed three or four days of school each quarter. We'd have an incentive."

**Item 63: "Teachers in my school are/I am engaged in early identification of at-risk behavior indicators impacting student performance (i.e., attendance, behavior, etc.)."**  
**This item was rated 3.88 by administrators and 4.03 by teachers.**

**Administrator** rated this item lower at 3.36 for females compared to 4.83 for males, resulting in a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.08 than males at 3.70. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.03, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.18. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- An elementary female teacher shared how they were engaged in tracking data to meet individual needs of students, "Each PLC team is responsible for gathering data from their specific teams, and keeping track of what needs are met for their grade level, and what things need to be done to meet those needs so that we're on top of it. No shock at the end. We are actively on top of everything to make sure that we are being proactive, and if a child is behind in 'this,' we're putting things in place so we can get them where we want them at the end of the year."
- A female elementary administrator talked about the disaggregation of student data to track student performance, "We look at attendance data, K-12. Attendance data is critical. We actually hired a clerk as a truancy officer who has an office here in our

building. We also designated one of our secretaries (to help). Part of her job is to get on the phone and make calls in the morning when the kids aren't here. We also have an attendance clerk who is keeping track of that information. The teachers also have in policy, (after) 5 or 7 days or whatever they'll send letters out to parents. If the student has missed so many days, then they have to call and arrange a meeting between the parent, the principal and the teacher. So, that's all data driven."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.77, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.07. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.90, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.11. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.83, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.08. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.09, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.88.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a low ELL rate talked about attendance, "Attendance is an issue. We definitely look at the data. I think our average attendance, is reported on the state report. We are low (attendance) compared to the state. We have certain families that may have a few children, and it really impacts (attendance rate). It sends it up. I mean that's my perspective. Another one of our things in data that we look at, of course, is behavior. We look at behavior reports, which children are presenting the issues, is it across - the very same questions you're asking me is what we ask ourselves- or is it a certain group of children who have a high incidence. It's typically the same thing we see with the attendance, it's usually a family, and the students struggle. . . . When we identify families, then we have counseling referrals."
- A female secondary administrator shared how teachers engage in early identification of at-risk behaviors of students, "I think in our (goals in teacher evaluations) . . . there is something about involvement with parents. But we have five sections; one of them is about how they (teachers) get their classroom ready . . . how they (teachers) deal with kids . . . overall performance (of students), and then the fourth section is professional, and the fifth is student accountability. So I'm thinking one of them deals with attendance, one with parents, and the accountability piece would naturally (follow)."

**Item 64 [Teacher Only]: "I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students." This item was rated 4.22 by teachers.**

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.29 than males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.30, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.34. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43. There was a significant difference when comparing responses from teachers with 20-30 years to those with 0-10 years of experience ( $p=.002$ ), 10-20 years of experience ( $p=.001$ ), and 30+ years of experience ( $p=.015$ ).

- A female elementary teacher explained, "Sometimes, I did something because before, the curriculum said this is what you do today. This is what you focus on this day. But,

- now, I'm focusing on this because the data says this; it's all I'm focusing on. It's a little uncomfortable at times, but I think being younger, it's a bit less uncomfortable than for others who have been around for a while, which I could see how that would be hard.”
- A female elementary teacher shared, “I have been here for four years, and taught kindergarten the whole time. Right now we have readers that are right where we want them, and they are higher than what we have seen before, so we are having to rely on one of our teammates who has taught first grade before to find out what strategies can we pre-teach them, or what can we use now that is first grade based, that will help us continue to push them forward? The results we've seen, just get higher and higher the more we work together and collaborate and observe things.”

**Item 65 [Teacher Only]: “I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students’ performance based on data.” This item was rated 4.26 by teachers.**

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.35 than males at 3.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.27, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.47. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43. Significant differences were found when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience to those with 20-30 years ( $p=.003$ ), teachers with 10-20 years to those with 20-30 years ( $p<.001$ ), and teachers with 20-30 years to those with 30+ years of experience ( $p=.012$ ).

- A female elementary administrator discussed how the team makes instructional decisions based on data, “That’s happening at the team level, some of it’s happening at a more individual level, either with the instructional coaches, or with the assistant principal and me. A lot of the conversations I’ve had related to the appraisal process have been related to that. Talk about your instructional decisions, why you made them, how you made them, how you think it worked. So, that process, I think, has really helped to move us forward. It was nice that coincided with where we were; it was another tool that we could use. It breaks it down into a lot of different areas as well. The one we’ve talked a lot about is questioning. The instructional coaching group talks a lot about opportunities to respond, which is helpful, you have to have lots of opportunities for kids to interact, but we’ve dug deeper than that and talked about the importance of high level questioning, and what I think teachers have grown to understand, is the importance of planning those questions, you can’t get at high level questions on the fly, or it’s a pretty rare person that can. So, the importance of being really deliberate about the kinds of questions that you ask as well as just knowing that you have to ask them.”
- A female elementary teacher shared how informal data is being collected and acknowledged by coaches and administrators to improve instruction, “Just being able to have the conversations that we have, and also the fact that we’ve been looking at transitions, and engagement. We’ve had administrators and coaches in our classrooms more, so they are more aware and aware of what is going on through the informal observations from our appraisal process.”

**Item 66 [Teacher Only]: “I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students’ performance.” This item was rated 3.98 by teachers.**

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.09 than males at 3.10, producing the second largest mean discrepancy (0.99) in the survey overall. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.83. There was a significant difference ( $p=.032$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.24) to those with 20-30 years of experience (3.33). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary administrator talked about teachers’ use of data, “The data that we have that gets updated the most is our developmental reading assessment. Teachers have been picking that apart a little more, to figure out if it’s the accuracy piece, or if it’s just a simple mistake that kids are making in decoding or if it’s the comprehension piece. A lot of times we’re coming up against comprehension, just across the board with everything because that’s the goal of all of the reading work that we do, ultimately. Teachers are looking at a lot of ways to tie into comprehension through vocabulary instruction. We’re looking at functional types of vocabulary, and understanding vocabulary. So, teachers are looking at ways to teach vocabulary with books that they see with the picture walks, and all of those kinds of things to build that background knowledge. Once kids are getting that background knowledge, then we’re moving on. That’s been a difficult piece.”
- A female elementary administrator talked about the planned time for teachers to collaborate, “Once a month (we have) early release, we do weekly meetings with the teams in the mornings. On a specific day, the primary grades pull together, and on another day the intermediate grades go together.”
- A female elementary teacher shared, “I think data kind of surrounds what the needs are, what we want to find out more about. I don’t think it’s been planned for this year specifically what the data shows us from last year; this is what we are going to do. We’ve had conversations with people who have come in and done professional development and found that this is working, and these conversations are powerful when we are having them. So, we are going to continue that. I think that’s helpful with the data piece.”

**Item 67 [Teacher Only]: “I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data.” This item was rated 4.22 by teachers.**

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.32 than males at 3.40. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.27, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.42. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.33 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.43. Significant differences were found when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience to those with 20-30 years ( $p=.001$ ), teachers with 10-20 years of experience to those 20-30 years of service ( $p<.001$ ), and teachers with 20-30 years to teachers with 30+ years of experience ( $p=.009$ ).

- A female elementary teacher explained how the consultant uses data to help improve student and teacher performance, “The consultant who came out was making suggestions, making sure that everything made sense. She worked all of the problems

- out and made sure they met the standard. I had the one computer and flash drive that crashed (I did redo them). It gave me more focus, makes me understand better, I'm better aware of all of the Power Standards. I know next year what I'm going to hit first, and the (hit the) strongest so I'm confident the students have it before testing time."
- A female elementary teacher discussed consultant support for interventions, "She's the go to person, questions, and anything that we have that we want to deal with. She's given us ideas for interventions, very pleasant person to work with. She's in our classrooms, so she's seeing how we're working. She's very familiar with the intervention strategies that we are using. So, in a manner of speaking, she would be like a coach."

### **Theme 7: Community Involvement**

**In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-70, Teacher Survey Questions 68-74), the average response of all administrators was 3.47. The average response of teachers was 3.03.**

The item rated strongest by administrators and teachers in the Community Involvement category, as shown in Table 9, was "The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders." Administrators rated this item "agree" at 4.00, while teachers rated it between "neutral" and "agree" at 3.56.

**Table 9**  
*Community Involvement Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	<b>Administrators</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.00 "The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders."	3.56 "The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders."
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.24 "Parents are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed."	2.77 "Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed."

In addition, administrators (3.24) rated the item "Parents are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed" the lowest in this category. Teachers (2.77) rated the item "Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed" lowest in the category.

The overall mean rating in this category for both administrators (3.47) and teachers (3.03), was lower than any other category. The largest mean discrepancy (0.63) in the Community Involvement category was "Community members are involved in identification of the Title I Goals." Teachers rated this item between "disagree" and "neutral" at 2.78, the second lowest mean rating in this category. Administrators, however, rated this item between "neutral" and "agree" at 3.41.

**Administrator** responses in this category ranged from 3.24 to 4.00 with an average of 3.47. Female administrators mean rating in the category was 3.47; male administrators mean rating was similar at 3.48, a mean discrepancy of 0.01.

**Teacher** responses in the Community Involvement category ranged from 2.77 to 3.56 with an average of 3.03. Female teachers mean rating in this category was 3.09, for males the mean rating was 2.56. The mean discrepancy between male and female teachers was 0.53. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience mean rating in this category was 2.97, while the category mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.16. Teachers with 20-30 years mean rating for this category was 2.81 and over 30 years of experience mean rating was 2.96.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower had a mean rating of 3.11 in this category; the mean rating for those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% was 3.10, a mean discrepancy of 0.01. Educators in schools with English Language Learner under 5% had a mean rating in the category of Community Involvement at 3.20. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners were a mean rating was 3.01; a mean discrepancy of 0.19. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% mean rating for the category was 3.03. The mean rating for educators from schools with a mobility rate of 25% or higher (3.13), the mean discrepancy for the category was 0.09. Educators from elementary schools mean rating for this category was 3.17. Middle and high school educators mean rating was 2.99 in the category for a mean discrepancy of 0.17.

The highest mean rating in the category of Community Involvement was lower for both teachers and administrators than any other survey category. The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Community Involvement was .786 for administrators and .895 for teachers.

## **Community Involvement Discussion**

*Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 64 [Administrators]/Item 68 [Teachers]: “Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” This item was rated 3.41 by administrators and 2.89 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.36 for females compared to 3.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 2.96 than males at 2.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 2.87, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.05. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.58 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 2.71.

- A female elementary administrator talked about parents involved with their Title I plans, “We’ve had a meeting with parents to discuss the Title I plan this year. We also use our PIRC meetings, and those are twice a month. They don’t always come (parents); they’re not consistent in coming. There may only be one parent at the meeting versus four or five that signed up. That’s a problem we’ve seen consistently.

We need to work on that, how we can develop that? This is probably the biggest area of concern, is how to have parent involvement happen more consistently.”

- A female elementary administrator talked about parents involved with writing their Title I plans, “There was a parent when we wrote the SIG grant. At parent teacher conferences or at music concerts, we would have the Title I plan out and available for the parents, so they could take a copy home with them; and we were always asking if they had suggestions or anything. Do I ever get any responses back? No. I don’t know if they picked it up and threw it away, or if they picked it up and took it home and read it, whatever works. As far as the data, I don’t (know). I was going to say, they don’t look. I don’t think we ever shared the needs assessment. Maybe that’s something we can do next year at the parent meeting.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.00, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 2.96. Educators from schools with an ELL population of under 5% rated this item 3.10, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 2.85. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 2.93, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 2.99. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.02, those from middle and high schools rated this item 2.90.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate shared the personal contacts that needed to be pursued, “You can send newsletter upon newsletter upon newsletter, but I had to do a lot of face-to-face communication with parents (individually), and then there was one meeting in the fall, that I did have to do some talking, but generally, it was still individuals who didn’t understand, so I had to give those kinds of talks.”
- A female secondary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about parent involvement with Title I goals, “We’re really looking at our data. Then parent involvement we send it out; I think we have more teachers that just get on the phone and call. I don’t know if that’s as true for the high school; I was in the elementary building. I think the high school teachers kind of rely on working with kids, but I think if they think they need parent involvement, they’re not afraid to get it.”

**Item 65 [Administrators]/Item 69 [Teachers]: “Community members are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” This item was rated 3.41 by administrators and 2.78 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.36 for females compared to 3.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 2.85 than males at 2.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 2.70, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 2.97. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.50 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 2.71. This item produced the largest mean discrepancy (0.63) between teachers who rated this item between “disagree” and “neutral” at 2.78, and administrators, who rated this item between “neutral” and “agree” at 3.41.

- A female elementary teacher talked about community involvement, “We had a little get together at the beginning of the year. We just had (another) one last week, it was a

community night but run by the school. Before they (community) began the games, they (community) were told how much of a percentage of our goals had been met thus far, which presupposes they were told what they were in the first place. I don't see as much parent involvement as I would love to see. We have parents on the school board - and that's good. We have several parents that are always involved and want to know how their children are doing."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 2.95, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 2.87. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 2.98, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 2.80. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 2.83, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item slightly higher at 2.91. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 2.94, those from middle and high schools rated this item 2.80.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a higher mobility rate explained, "I think the partnership can allow students to feel that it's connected, it's not separate from home, and it's not separate from school. They all want the same things, but we need to work together more, and find a way so we are all supporting one another so that when they are at home and doing this, we can support them. When they are at school and doing this, it can be reversed. The parents are supporting us here at school. It's the support piece that needs to be in there, and working together, having a more active involvement in the educational experience."
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate explained, "The ones we really need to reach we're not reaching. When I was hired in this district that was my task given to me. They wanted me to develop that trust between the school building and parents. I did, on an individual basis. I think the overall perception that the school is okay, is maybe a little better now. But, there's been a lot of work that had to be done, and had to change. I listen to the other administrators and they're doing phenomenal things, and working very well. Those same things, they just don't work here. Informally, we're talking about next year that will be our focus. We'll be getting something going that's going to work for this community."

**Item 66 [Administrators]/Item 70 [Teachers]: "Parents are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed." This item was rated 3.24 by administrators and 2.92 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.09 for females compared to 3.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 2.97 than males at 2.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 2.80, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.08. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.75 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 2.86.

- A female elementary teacher talked about parent involvement with the Title I plan, "Parents and community members are on the committee that looked at the Title I Plan, and they were on the committee that developed it. I don't know so much about this year reworking it, but, I know when we put it together, they were there. Actually,



there were community high school students that helped the first time I was on it. The nice thing was we have a couple of school board members so that we have a hands-on approach to it.”

- A female elementary teacher explained that parents see data as an important part of the students’ learning, “I think they see the end result of that data, summative piece. I don’t think they see all of the formative work we do. That piece we’ve worked on a lot to be able to share that and celebrate that with the kids, and also celebrate with the families.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 2.91, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 2.99. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.00, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it similarly at 2.94. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 2.87, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.01, the highest mean discrepancy (0.15) in the category of Community Involvement. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.00, those from middle and high schools rated this item 2.93.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower mobility rate shared how a parent group at her school supports student learning, “I think we try to build a very positive test situation. The parent group got together, and made a packet for each of the students. There will be a little saying and something like ‘you rock’ and they got a piece of that real hard candy, a pencil ‘do the best on your test.’ I gave them an extra recess because they did so well on their testing.”
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher mobility rate explained, “We conducted two community, parent, student get-togethers; we called them Game Nights. The last one was a kick off for NeSA testing that window is opening. We talked about what is Title, why is the funding important to our school, and what is our status in regards to AYP, and why it’s so important that we do well with our kids. We had two community meetings which were specifically Game Nights. Basically it was a Title I/NeSA kick off night to inform the public. I think we’ve improved our committee membership. We now have three parents/community members along with teachers, our Title I person, and me.”

**Item 67 [Administrators]/71 [Teachers]: “Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.” This item was rated 3.29 by administrators and 2.77 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.27 for females compared to 3.33 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 2.82 than males at 2.40. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 2.70, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 2.92. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.58 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 2.71.

- A male elementary administrator discussed different strategies they have used to engage parents in decision making, “We’ve been able to do many more things when we bring parents into the facility for the open house. About half way through the

games, they are presented with something that is going on. So, we have a captive audience, and we get quite a few people, 50 people or better especially for our community because they are not real big about coming into our school. We have a really good turnout for our elementary parent teacher conferences, and at that time, we also have some literature available for them. We have a slide program - power point presentation that we actually put out in the hallway. We have a lot of people that will stop and watch that for a while. We've just done a ton of things. Our principal has been really good at getting that organized, and there's just more time for people to do those things, so it's helped a ton. I would tell you our weakest area is parental involvement, parental knowledge of what's going on."

- A female secondary administrator shared how a parent liaison helps to interpret the needs of parents, "Sometimes I get notes from kids, and I'm thinking that comes from something they heard at home, instead of their parent coming up here. They say that this isn't neutral ground that parents don't want to come up here. We have two people who work here that are parents, and they are also (relationship) people. A lot of times they will come up and tell us things that they have heard. We can take that (information) from them. It's probably going to come through one of our resources at school. Our new parent liaison has picked up a few things, too."
- A female elementary administrator discussed how she tried to work with her parents and community, "We meet a couple of times a year in formal ways, and so we try to let parents know at all of those times what we're doing, what we're seeing. They like to know data, but I've also learned about how much data is meaningful to them, and what that should look like, and can look like. The biggest thing we're doing, I think, is helping parents know more about where their kids are in relationship to that target."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 2.82, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 2.87. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 2.98, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 2.74. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 2.77, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 2.89. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 2.91, those from middle and high schools rated this item 2.78.

- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate shared, "I think, now, it's getting better; Number one, because there's no negotiation. But I need to do more to educate the community and help my staff, too. I think things are better but it's not negotiable. I don't care if it's a cook, classroom teacher, librarian, specialist, the kids, or their parents. We really try to emphasize to parents how much we need them. When I did my packets, I'd have two parents there in attendance; I wish it could have been better. It was too low, as far as I'm concerned. But, what I should have done originally, I was going to include some food, but I didn't. It was the first time I tried it this year. So, that gives me an opportunity to talk. So often the parents that you don't need to talk to, they're the ones that come, then I'm preaching to the choir."
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, "I know at some of the meetings, we looked at some data. In some meetings, we did actually sit

down and we looked at that. Parents were there, and encouraged to see and then at that time they looked at our scores, and our averages, and our yearly progress those kinds of things.”

**Item 68 [Administrators]/Item 72 [Teachers]: “The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders.” This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.56 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item higher at 4.09 for females compared to 3.83 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.59 than males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.43, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.76. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.25 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.43. There was a significant difference ( $p=.033$ ) when comparing all teachers (3.56) with all administrators (4.00) for this item.

- A female elementary administrator shared, “That’s been a difficult piece. We’ve had the meetings, we’ve pulled them together, and we’ve said the things that we need to say, but . . . they trust us. So, the school being in need of improvement is NOT at the forefront of their thinking. I feel very little blame from them. When we talk about NCLB caused the bussing to happen first. Nobody takes advantage of that. Few parents really take advantage of the tutoring services. They think their child is getting everything they need in the classroom. And, they don’t want an outside person coming and tutoring their kids. They will take advantage of the Community Learning Center program. That’s where our funding has been allowed to provide more academic programming through the after school program. When our after school program manager has so much of an understanding of what the teachers’ need, that she’s been able to provide that programming that really, really ties into what the teachers are asking for. So, her work has been really, really powerful in making all of that happen for the parents. But, when we pull them all together, they say things like, ‘Well we really should get more of the trash picked up around the campus.’ ‘Can we provide better lunch for them?’ ‘Can we make sure that there’s a decent cross walk going over the main street?’ They really haven’t gotten into some of the academic pieces. I do think one of the strengths of our school is that they very much trust us.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.59, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.64. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.69, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.57. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.57, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item slightly higher at 3.65. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.67, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.56.

- A female administrator from a secondary school shared, “That’s always the good question. You think you put the information out. We put the information out in the newspaper which goes out twice per month. We put information in there. I send out the State of the Schools Report, and I do all of our local demographic information, every year I send that out. We have a monthly newsletter; we try to put some of that

- information in there. When we have our annual Title I parent meeting, we share with them the data, the successes of our intervention programs.”
- A female teacher from an elementary school discussed their parent meetings where Title I plans and goals were discussed, “The parent group used to meet. I’m not sure when it has, because I’m not a part of it. They would discuss getting ready for the Title I meeting. Also, another parent group has parents that are involved. Our elementary counselor is really pushing to get those who really want to be involved to show up at the meetings and be helpful. With one event, we had good support. We have several who are real ‘go getters,’ which is what we really want to have on that team.”
  - A female elementary administrator shared a strategy they have implemented to involve more parents, “We did hire a family liaison coordinator, with limited success. She had been in a classroom prior, and she had her guidance endorsement. I know another school district has had the same position and they have had a lot of success with that. So, we are planning on maybe getting those two people together. Our consultant has some excellent resources too, for parent involvement that I know we will be accessing next year.”

**Item 69 [Administrators]/Item 73 [Teachers]: “Community members understand why our school has a Title I School Improvement Plan.” This item was rated 3.65 by administrators and 3.13 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item higher at 3.73 for females compared to 3.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.21 than males at 2.50, resulting in the greatest mean discrepancy (0.71) between female and male teachers in the category of Community Involvement. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.10, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.21. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 2.92 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.29.

- A female elementary teacher responded to the question of the extent that parents and community members understand why the school is in Title I Improvement, “I don’t think so. I don’t think it’s, I think it’s this school, this is how it is, they don’t understand why or what is going on, or what it all means.”
- A female secondary teacher explained her understanding of the extent parents and community members are engaged in the Title I Improvement process, “We have a Title I survey that goes out every year. We have seen an increase in parent-teacher conferences at the high school level. I know my nights are busy when we have conferences! It goes out community wide; parents and community.”
- A female secondary teacher from another school responded similarly on the extent of understanding by parents and community members of Title I Improvement, “I’m pretty sure they put it in the newsletter when we originally started this. Its public knowledge. It’s in the paper, isn’t it? Our school board addressed it to the public.”
- Additionally, a third female secondary teacher from another school gave a similar response, “That I’m not sure. They are aware, because we send out the Title I surveys. I know they’re aware, I’m not sure they understand why.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.18, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.22. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.37, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.06, creating the greatest mean discrepancy (0.32) between the groups in this category. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.17, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.23. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.38, those from middle and high schools rated this item 2.95; a significant difference ( $p=.017$ ) and the greatest mean discrepancy (0.42) between school levels in the category.

- A female teacher from another elementary school responded to the question of the extent that parents and community members understand why the school is in Title I Improvement as, “I doubt if they know.”
- A male administrator from a secondary school explained how parent involvement is a process of engaging in many different ways, “Every parent is given a survey. It would ask generally about, school environment type activities. Then, I believe there’s something in there about how is the school meeting the needs of the students. That’s given on a yearly basis. That information is available to the parents. That (the information) would be in a summative type form; this would be available for the parents at parent-teacher conferences, and other meetings they have at night. I think ideally, that’s what we want to do; I know we’re not there, yet because there’s a learning curve, this whole process.”

**Item 70 [Administrators]/Item 74 [Teachers]: “Community members have high expectations for student achievement.” This item was rated 3.29 by administrators and 3.15 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.36 for females compared to 3.17 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.22 than males at 2.60. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.20, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.16. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.08 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.00.

- A female elementary administrator shared how socio-economic factors impact parent perceptions, “It’s high poverty (the community) and there’s a different attitude about education. They want their kids to be at school, but maybe they’ll, if they don’t graduate or if they don’t go on to college, that’s okay.”
- A female elementary teacher discussed parent participation and expectations, “I wonder if it’s just because they’ve (parents) got a bunch of different things going on at home that they are not saying, ‘when I send him/her to school they are going to take care of the things they need to learn to be successful’; but I wonder if they truly know what our goals are and what we are working on and are kept up on it. I don’t think that they are.”
- A female elementary administrator talked about parent involvement and expectations, “We probably haven’t been as good at communicating progress along the way with parents. Another great thing we’ve done is helping kids know where they are in relationship to that target. We do a lot with goal setting and having kids be really

clear what that target looks like and really clear about where they are. So, they know what they need to do to close that gap. So, communicating that with parents is that much easier because the kids can talk about it and are aware of it. It's amazing to hear kindergarteners talk about it. But, we haven't done a lot systematically in a really formal way. To do that, is probably something that needs to be coming more in the future. Parent involvement looks very different at a school like ours."

- A female elementary administrator talked about community involvement to promote student achievement, "So we try to involve them as many times as we possibly can. We have events, and we'll do those twice a month, and they just came out, for instance, we had an 'event' last Friday. They came so as often as we invite them, as soon as they see that we're doing something, they want to be involved. They do a great job for us. It's not just us; it's the community and kids involved in the community. They monitor that, when kids are involved they are constantly giving kids that recognition. So, they're a big support for us as well."

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.32, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.13. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.27, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.07. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.10, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item slightly higher at 3.20. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.27, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.02.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a low free and reduced lunch rate discussed how the school's shared values and beliefs affect the community, "I don't think so. We've tried doing Game Nights here. (Principal) and (Superintendent) have talked about the Title I program during the event and how we use the money, and that testing is coming up. Then it's left at that. I don't feel our parents and community support everything we do here, and then turn around and help at home."
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a high free and reduced lunch rate emphasized how incentives provided by the community helped to encourage shared values, "We did newspapers, gave away subscriptions, a lot of our folks don't have computers, nor do they have subscriptions. So, our newspaper editor, he's tied into another newspaper and was able to provide us with a cut rate of several prizes being a newspaper subscription for six months."

### **Theme 8: Overall Improvement**

**In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 71-77, Teacher Survey Questions 75-81), the average response of all administrators was 4.08. The average response of teachers was 3.85.**

The item rated strongest by administrators (4.53) and teachers (4.27) in the Overall Improvement category was "Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement" (Table 10).

**Table 10**  
*Overall Improvement Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	<b>Administrators</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.53 “Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement.”  “The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement.”	4.27 “I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.”
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.65 “During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers about the way they are helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals.”	3.18 “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.”

Administrators also rated the item, “The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement” strongest with 4.53. This is also the item which yielded the greatest mean discrepancy (0.70). Administrators (4.53) rated it between “agree” and “strongly agree” while teachers (3.83) rated it between “neutral” and “agree.”

The item rated weakest by administrators was “During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers about the way they are helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals” (3.65). The item rated weakest by teachers in the Overall Improvement category was “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan” (3.18).

**Administrator** responses in the category of Overall Improvement ranged from between “neutral” and “agree” at 3.65 to between “agree” and “strongly agree” at 4.53 with an average of 4.08. Female administrators mean rating in the category was 3.97; male administrators mean rating was higher at 4.29, a mean discrepancy of 0.32.

**Teacher** responses in this category ranged from just above “neutral” at 3.18 to between “agree” and “strongly agree” at 4.27 with a rating of 3.85. Female teachers mean rating in this category was 3.91, for males the mean rating was 3.43. The mean discrepancy between male and female teachers was 0.48. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience mean rating in this category was 3.83, while the category mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.00. Teachers with 20-30 years mean rating for this category was 3.43 and over 30 years of experience mean rating was 3.86.

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower had a mean rating of 3.75 in this category; those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% mean rating was 3.93, for a mean discrepancy of 0.17. Educators in schools with an English Language Learner population of under 5% mean rating in the category of Overall Improvement was 3.80. Those from schools with a 5% or greater population of English Language Learners mean rating was 3.98 for a mean discrepancy of 0.19 for the category. Educators from schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% mean rating for the category was 3.75. The mean rating for educators from schools with a mobility rate of 25% or higher was 3.95; the mean discrepancy for the category was 0.20. Educators from elementary

schools mean rating for this category was 4.05. Middle and high school educators mean rating was 3.64 in the category for a mean discrepancy of 0.40.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Overall Improvement was .869 for administrators and .876 for teachers.

### **Overall Improvement Discussion**

#### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 71 [Administrators]/Item 75 [Teachers]: “Data shows that progress is being made in implementing our Title I Goals.” This item was rated 4.29 by administrators and 4.05 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.09 for females compared to 4.67 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.09 than males at 3.70. There was a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) when comparing teachers with 0-10 years of experience (4.10) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.42). An additional significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) occurred when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.18) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.42). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary administrator discussed the student achievement progress in her school, “We are getting kids where they need to be by the end of the year sooner. So, the end of the year benchmarks aren't just a ‘great we got there’ benchmark but, if we push them past that mark, how much more ready will they be for next year? There is much more of a mindset of ‘what do these kids need for the next grade,’ not ‘what they need for the end of this year.’ That’s been a huge change, that’s where the data is going, and we’ve seen a LOT more kids getting farther earlier in the year than they have in the past. It came just from thinking at the instructional level. The students lose over the summer, that summer slide happens. If we can get them past where they need to be at the end of the year that is much less likely to impact where they start.”
- A female elementary teacher shared how the hard work has paid off, “I feel really good about it. I feel REALLY good. I really feel like it all comes from the leadership we’ve had. I feel like that vision was put out there the minute the (principal) came. These are the steps, and even though we’re going to deviate a little bit from our plan, we’re going to come back, and we’re going to change. But, the ultimate goal is student learning. I have literally seen teachers have a different attitude about student learning. My first year, teachers might not have cared as much, but they care so much now. There’s nothing different in what’s been relayed to us, (it’s) the leadership.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.95, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.12. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.98, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.19. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.03, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item slightly higher at 4.11.



Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.30, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.76.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate explained the extent of how the overall Title I Improvement process improved student performance so far, “It has improved student achievement. It’s not that we’re totally there yet, but we definitely have seen an increase in achievement on their goals, and on our goals.”
- A female secondary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate shared the anticipation of achieving Title I goals, “I would think that maybe after we announced that we’ve made our goal then the teachers might want to see how we did it. Then next year, we may start the year by saying ‘this is what we did *this past* year, what do you guys think’ I think we’ll talk more, and I think (we’ll make it more) about getting kids involved, and teachers understanding it. Now, next year, maybe we’ll make hoopla (big deal) of it. So, I think we’re in a process.”

**Item 72 [Administrators]/Item 76 [Teachers]: “During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers/administrators discuss with me about the way I am helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals.” This item was rated 3.65 by administrators and 3.78 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item similarly at 3.64 for females and 3.67 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.83 than males at 3.40. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.80, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.95. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.25 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.86.

- A female elementary administrator shared how the evaluation process has been revised to reflect student achievement but not fully implemented, “We redid our evaluation process; it was redesigned to incorporate student achievement goals and goal setting with the teachers. So, it’s in there; the student achievement, and the goal setting is in there, but it’s not discussed Title I, per se. It’s just that creating goals appropriate to classrooms and teachers that promote growth. The success of their evaluation is tied to how they accomplish those goals, and how well their students achieved. But, the principals have not fully engaged that process yet.
- A female elementary administrator shared how students are involved in the evaluation process, “We are keeping track of, we’ve chosen five strategies: the primary grades chose five and the intermediate grades chose five. We are keeping an engagement log. The students are keeping those for us. Whenever they see a strategy used, they put a tally mark down. We also try to put all of our strategies in lesson plans. We’re handing in the enrichment strategy papers with the student tallies on them. The students know what the strategies are and the principal can see we’re using them.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.36, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.87. This was the greatest mean discrepancy between higher and lower prevalence of free and reduced lunch rate (0.50) for the category of Overall Improvement. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.51, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.00; the highest mean discrepancy (0.49)

between the two ELL groups for the category, and a significant difference ( $p=.007$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.37, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.92. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.94, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.49, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.019$ ).

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, “Now, this is the model we are using and we’re going to have two days of training on it. Here are the areas that we wanted to make sure that every teacher covered in selecting the standards and using the standards, and communicating the standards to all students. So, they have to have all of these components in order to be proficient in this area. Also, for making learning relevant, they had to engage students. They selected each primary and intermediate group; they had to select 3-4 engagement strategies that they were going to use consistently. They also tracked that weekly, they have posters in their classrooms, they track what engagement strategies they are using and they also turn in a document.”
- A female secondary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about teacher evaluation, “Probably through our evaluation tool. Probably making sure that they’re meeting up with things that we have set up. Are they doing more in math? What do they do for attendance? It depends. The principals walk around frequently and do walk-throughs, and the superintendent does, too.”

**Item 73 [Administrators]/Item 77 [Teachers]: “Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap.” This item was rated 4.06 by administrators and 3.92 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.82 for females compared to 4.50 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.97 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.93, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.03. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.42 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.14.

- A female elementary teacher shared her perspective on student achievement growth, “I believe our school is making progress toward meeting our Title 1 Goals. All the hard work the administration, teachers, and staff are doing is making a difference in student achievement.”
- Another female elementary teacher also shared her excitement for growth in student learning, “I think so, I think we push it, and want them to believe it. For those kids who attach to it, we see that success and confidence built in understanding respect for one another and what we are doing.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.86, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.96. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.78, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.09; a significant difference ( $p=.038$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.83, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 3.99. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.16, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.61, also a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ).

- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate talked about student achievement, “It’s immeasurable! I don’t know what we would do if we didn’t have a Title program. We would be back to being just classroom based, there wouldn’t be any ability level work, and we wouldn’t be able to do any of our extra work with the kids that we do. In other words, with our reading for example, our kids that aren’t at grade level, they get an extra 30-60 minutes per day according to where they’re at. That would go away. So, that would be a complete revamp. I wouldn’t even want to attempt to think where we would be if we didn’t have the Title program. I’m just not sure how you would even measure how far back we would go without it. It’s had a huge impact, a very positive impact.”
- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, “I don’t think it has changed any. No one wants to pull their kids out to go to another school because it would be better or anything. I think they want to see our school improve, and I think they rejoiced with us last year when our scores went up and I think that will continue. I think we have a supportive community. They may not come out as much as being supportive, but they are silently supportive.”

**Item 74 [Administrators]/Item 78 [Teachers]: “The use of our research-based interventions is leading to the attainment of our Title I Goals.” This item was rated 4.12 by administrators and 3.94 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.00 for females compared to 4.33 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.00 than males at 3.50. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.84. There was a significant difference ( $p=.017$ ) when comparing teachers with 10-20 years of experience (4.18) to teachers with 20-30 years of experience (3.42). Teachers with over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.86.

- A female elementary teacher discussed the benefits of working with a specialist on interpreting data, “I get the benefit of the interventionist. I have a couple of Dibels tests that we’ve looked at, the NWEA MAPS testing. We have found those children that we need to intervene with in small groups in the morning. Then the interventionist pulls the same children into her classroom in the afternoon. We’ve looked at our materials, our NWEA MAPS data, and said ‘okay, this student specifically needs vocabulary, site words, or maybe phonics,’ or whatever, we’ve been able to hone down on that as opposed to just trying to do a general overview of that child, because it might be a little overwhelming for a couple of those kids who are on the intervention.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.86, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.00. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.13, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.033$ ). Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.80, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.04. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.20, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.61.

- A female elementary administrator from a school with a lower ELL rate shared, “We are all aware of what our scores are. We’ve taken the information that came from the NeSA, the high areas and the low areas, and we work on those. The low areas we go with the NWEA MAPS, in order to see specific low areas, and then we work with those students. We have set aside time called ‘intervention time,’ when we are going back and reviewing and reteaching in those areas so the students have the background, knowledge and the extra practice.”
- A male elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate explained the use of research to support their use of interventions, “They adopted a research vertically aligned program in reading mastery/direct instruction. That’s new. I can’t remember if they were Open Court. They might have even started learning it before they had me here, but we really started training people very seriously last August. If you write more, and you do it correctly with 6 traits you’re going to get better. You know what we do? We have 190-230 minutes of reading and then you take a break. Then you come back and do an hour in language, reading, reasoning and writing skills, those types of things, and we actually should add another second reading, but it’s hard, but we’re going to try to.”

**Item 75 [Administrators]/Item 79 [Teachers]: “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.” This item was rated 3.41 by administrators and 3.18 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 3.27 for females compared to 3.67 for males.

**Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.22 than males at 2.90. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.23, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 3.21. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.08 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.00.

- A female elementary teacher discussed what data indicates about her school’s progress in meeting the Title I Goals, “Last year we made AYP, for the first time in quite a while. So, this year we’re trying to make it two years in a row; so we’re really focused, definitely!”
- A male elementary administrator discussed how the school’s shared values and beliefs affect the community and impact results, “I think that the community that you have now that send their kids to school here, I think we go back to the same issues that we had previously, generations before. I mean community members didn’t know what success was. When you talk to community members that come to school for parent teacher conferences, or they come here to pick their kid up and you talk to them for a little bit, you can sense that they really want what’s best for their kid or their granddaughter or grandson but, to get to that point where the community members also buy into it, that’s a tough thing to do.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.27, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 3.20. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 3.35, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 3.09. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.30, those from

schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item slightly lower at 3.19. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 3.27, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.15.

- A female secondary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate shared how her community encourages graduation, “The community has been helping. (A local company) has come in and told the students, we’re not hiring unless you have a diploma. Another has also started that. You must have your high school diploma if you want to work here. The employment agencies around the community have played a very important role in that. The students are starting to see that. We’ve been working hand-in-hand. We’ve even had community members who have been successful not only in high school, but they have degrees come in and talk to our students about ‘yeah, we had food on the table, but you should see the car I’m driving now’ or ‘I’m eating steak now- not ground beef’ or ‘I’m eating healthier because I have the money to eat healthier now. I’ve got all my fruits and vegetables in.’”
- A female secondary teacher from a school with a higher ELL rate discussed community involvement, “I guess the community conversations that we have, on trying to improve things. A big thing that we’re trying to work with in that area is the community involvement with the teachers, and the community at large. For example, we had earlier in the year an activity downtown where all the community gathers because that’s what they’re familiar with and more comfortable. All the staff participated in it.”

**Item 76 [Administrators]/Item 80 [Teachers]: “The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement.” This item was rated 4.53 by administrators and 3.83 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item similarly at 4.55 for females and 4.50 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 3.90 than males at 3.30. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 3.63, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.08. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.58 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 3.71. This item yielded the greatest mean discrepancy (0.70) between administrators (4.53) who rated it between “agree” and “strongly agree” and teachers (3.83) who rated it between “neutral” and “agree.”

- A female elementary teacher discussed the extent the administration discusses her classroom’s student achievement data with them, “I’m sure if I were really low in an area it would definitely be brought up. If the scores are good we’re going to know about it. If when we’re low in an area, I guess it’s more school-wide, or elementary wide. When we’re low in an area, we know what area we really need to work on. Our principal is really good at talking with us about it and sharing with us, we can go in and visit at any time.”
- A female elementary administrator shared the evaluation process in her school that is linked to expectations for teachers, “For the formal evaluation, there’s the pre-observation piece, and the observation piece. Both of us (administrator and teacher) fill out rubrics and then compare. Then we write a reflection based on our thoughts on the observation and we talk about that. I feel like we are having so much better conversations and we’re so much clearer about what we see. Probably the classic

example would be: a teacher fills out her rubrics, and I fill out mine. They see themselves as ‘distinguished,’ and I score her at ‘basic.’ The rubric allows us the language to see the difference between distinguished, and where the evaluator rated the lesson. . . . ‘What’s the gap between here and here and what would it take to get to that?’ As a result, I think it still feels nerve wracking for teachers, I mean I don’t know how to completely eliminate that, but I do think it’s so much better than what we used to do.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 3.73, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.00. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% as well as those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher, both rated this item 3.94. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 3.73, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.03. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.03, those from middle and high schools rated this item 3.80.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower free and reduced lunch rate explained, “I have not been in for an evaluation, I’m on the second year part of the evaluation process. I think that is very much a part of the discussion, ‘How we’ve done and how our students are doing.’ There’s a new evaluation form that we are working toward.”
- A male secondary administrator from a school with a higher free and reduced lunch rate explained, “One of the processes that I use is our evaluation tool. It’s a pretty comprehensive evaluation tool; we can take a look at the data points. That’s part of the artifacts that we use (for teacher evaluations). For example, the data, and we’re in a learning process; some teachers are pretty good at it. Again, when the goal is set up, what type of data are you using to drive your goal? That would be some of the things in here, because we want to improve the test scores and the instructional strategies. Again, that’s a new process; I’m more familiar with it than some, because I came from the state of Iowa, they were doing that back when I was there.”

**Item 77 [Administrators]/Item 81 [Teachers]: “Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” This item was rated 4.53 by administrators and 4.27 by teachers.**

**Administrators** rated this item lower at 4.45 for females compared to 4.67 for males. **Teachers** rated this item higher for females at 4.35 than males at 3.70. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience rated this item 4.27, while the item mean for teachers with 10-20 years of experience was 4.39. Teachers with 20-30 years rated this item 3.83 and over 30 years of experience rated this item 4.29.

- A female elementary teacher explained the new mind set for teachers, “The first is the one that’s on the top of our focus plan which is ‘every student, every opportunity.’ They don’t necessarily have that, but what they hear me say a lot is ‘I wouldn’t do that for my kids, so we can’t do that for anybody else’s kids’ or ‘I want this for my kids, so I want this for every kid here.’ They don’t all think that way, but enough of

- them do so that it's helpful. It's that idea that our expectations can never be high enough, and that we are always wanting more and better for our kids.”
- A female elementary teacher talked about the change in teacher's expectations for students, “Our teachers are starting to see that our kids can do more. The hard thing right now, is the actual testing environment, and what to do when they get to a road block. A lot of them want to give up, they want to just stop and quit. I expect great gains. I don't see any reason why we can't pass it. It's within reach - definitely within reach. Right now, I'm seeing that we need to stop making just passing the NeSA as our goal. We need to move on to what we can do beyond that, too.”

**Educators** from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 55% and lower rated this item 4.23, while those from schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of over 55% rated this item 4.34. Educators from schools with an ELL population under 5% rated this item 4.20, those from schools with an ELL population of 5% and higher rated it at 4.43. Educators from schools who reported a mobility rate of less than 25% rated this item 4.17, those from schools with a mobility rate of 25% and greater rated this item higher at 4.37. Educators from elementary schools rated this item 4.45, those from middle and high schools rated this item 4.10.

- A female elementary teacher from a school with a lower ELL rate talked about school wide expectations when examining data when related to student achievement, “School-wide we have had a couple of different times when information has been put out, (then we had) a couple of small in-services where we have looked at data. We sat down and said ‘look at these scores; this is what we're seeing in this grade; this is what we're seeing in this grade, it's across the board, across K-6, and we saw a lot of growth here, and right here, do we see this in every class?’”
- A female elementary administrator from a school with a higher ELL rate discussed how teachers' now have higher expectations, “When the teachers have an area of weakness, they do go to the instructional coaches. A lot of teachers came to me when they were writing their goals for monitoring student achievement, to ask me if it seemed like an appropriate goal, if it seemed like it was a challenging goal. That was amazing to me. They were asking if this goal was enough of a push for them, and they really stepped up nicely to that.”

## INTERVIEW RESULTS

Five new themes emerged from the interviews in this year's study. The number of comments ranged from fourteen to fifty-eight per theme. The themes and the number of comments include:

- 1) Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluation (58)
- 2) Parent and Student Expectations/Goals (26)
- 3) Consultant Support (19)
- 4) Teacher Leadership (17)
- 5) Student Engagement (14)

Schmoker (2011) in *Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning* explains that “the general underperformance of schools can be directly attributed to a failure

to implement three simple, well-known elements: a common curriculum, sound lessons, and authentic literacy” (p. 9). In this year’s study, educators shared curriculum and changes in curriculum, new strategies, interventions and professional development that provides training and support for teacher and student learning.

### **Theme 1: Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluations**

Increasing the quality of instruction is an increasing focus within school districts (Fielding, et al., 2007). “Leadership Supervision and Teacher Evaluations” emerged this year with the greatest number of references when interviewing administrators and teachers. Leaders need to know how to constructively change the culture for continuous improvement in order that all educators are on board with a focus on student learning.

#### **Instructional Leadership and Supervision**

- A female elementary teacher recognized this, “I’ve realized that leadership is probably the most important thing about a school, for the teachers. For the students, the teacher is everything! I am a better teacher because of my principal. She has solidified why I do the things I do. I think we needed a really strong principal to change the teachers, and the teachers to change the students!”

#### **Good Leadership Takes Courage**

- A female elementary administrator explained, “I heard at my previous school for the first year, and even a little bit here, ‘That’s not how the previous principal did it.’ I think there’s less opportunity for that with the teacher appraisal model . . . I think that will eventually feel more comfortable. Right now, it’s too new to be comfortable. But I think it will, and they’ll grow to see that there is less inconsistency. It would blow me away when I would go look at appraisal or personnel files, and there would be a glowing evaluation with all the pluses and ‘exceeds’ in every category, because that was how we quantified if we were a good teacher, followed right behind with a notice of performance concerns. I think, ‘how can you---you can’t do that.’ If you can’t be honest with people, you can’t turn them around and say, ‘I have concerns about your performance.’ I don’t have a problem telling people when I think they are basic, just like I didn’t have a problem in the past telling people that I didn’t think they deserved a plus on something. That still felt like I was doing it to them, this feels like we’re doing it together. But, I think you can be clearer and you can help them see what it means to be better. It’s right here in this rubric. To go from here to here you know exactly what it looks like.”
- A female elementary administrator responded to being an administrator in several schools which all had challenges with student achievement, and commonalities she had seen, “I think the commonality in all of those places (the schools she has been principal in) is that a lot of things were happening on a surface level and not on a deeper level. Unless you ask the hard questions, or keep asking deeper and deeper questions, you don’t figure out where it begins. Speaking as a former district office person, I don’t know that a district office person can figure that out, a building principal has to figure that out. You have to push past where it ends to get to a deeper level.”



- A female elementary administration addressed the importance of setting expectations so that staff can understand what is expected of them, “The other thing I would say is, ‘people rise to the expectation that you have for them.’ Sometimes it’s not even about having high expectations, it’s about being really clear about the expectations that you have. It’s not that I think that my predecessors didn’t have high expectations; I think they did. But I don’t think that everyone knew what that meant or what that looked like. Whether it’s an appraisal rubric or a data team rubric, when people know what it looks like, they’ll do it. They do as much and as well as we are able to lay it out for them. But, if we don’t do that, they’re going to be right where they are. It’s not about blame or quality; it’s just that they rise to the level that they understand. If we show them and help them understand what that next level is, they’ll go there. A lot of times they just don’t know- they didn’t think that it’s not just about the number of questions I ask; it’s the depth of them. ‘Oh - well I didn’t think about it that way - I can do that!’ ‘Well, then let’s do that.’ I think you can never be clear enough, and never assume that just because you’ve said it a thousand times, that a couple thousand more isn’t necessary.”

Teacher evaluations were a strong theme that emerged in the study with 46 quote references. Administrators shared how new evaluation procedures and appraisal instruments were being re-designed to reflect deeper expectations for instruction that is linked to student engagement and research-based strategies.

### **Teacher Appraisal Instruments to Enhance Teaching and Learning**

- A male elementary administrator explained, “I totally redesigned the appraisal instrument for K-12 teachers and specialists based upon the Charlotte Danielson Model as we had a committee this year. Teachers were involved. They collaborated. Then we included a Domain 5, which all of our staff knows. Domain 5 is not Charlotte Danielson. Domain 5 is student achievement, not just assessment, but understanding educational processes and reflecting on those practices, if they are effective or not. ‘How do you know? Are you designing lessons and teaching to the objectives?’ Domain 5 is ‘Are your students making adequate progress, based upon what?’ NeSA, you don’t get those scores until forever, but we can go through a 3-4 year range.”
- Teachers are also required and evaluated on communicating with parents, “We do have a lot of poor kids, and they do have some issues. We have a program, ‘Positive Notes.’ Teachers send one home with a kid. We log them. The notes are required - one or two minimum a week, make some type of personal contact, phone or in person, preferably, just call them, other than when you’re having an issue. ‘My name is Mr. X, I wanted to let you know I’m the fifth grade teacher, and I’m here if you ever need anything, our doors are open, etc.’ It’s hard because people are afraid to do some of that . . . some people.”
- A female elementary teacher explained how instructional teacher conferences are aligned to their school goals and/or SMART goals, “We have them as a piece of our evaluation. We have a rubric that pertains to one of our school’s goals. It’s usually related to one of the SMART goals that we have set as a team. It’s reflective upon what we have done to make progress on the goal. At the end of every quarter, we

- have an instructional conference as a team, and we really break down and have the conversations of, ‘in this classroom we saw . . . above . . . below.’ We can really break that down by classroom! We look as a grade level at ‘what does this classroom tell us’ and ‘what is the grade level telling us we need?’”
- A female elementary administrator explained how the appraisal system is organized at her school, “The focus plan is organized around classroom management, instruction, planning, and formative assessment. Those are the big four areas used basically for coaching; so coaching is very integral to this plan as well. It’s more detailed than the School Improvement Plan is, or at least, more reader friendly. It’s a one page document that NWEA MAPS out the different elements that are going to come under each of those areas. They are all tied to something that we can observe. So, I think that is where it differs from the full scale Title I plan, its finite enough that we can observe something, it all gets tied into the appraisal plan. It’s fairly cohesive when all the pieces are connected.”

### **Teacher Evaluation Rubrics**

- A female elementary teacher explained how observations make her more aware of her teaching, “It made us more aware of what we are doing in our own teaching. Having someone come in to track us, sometimes you are not really paying attention to what you’re doing. They are checking to see where the kids are, if they are engaged in what you are doing. It’s really telling, ‘they are not engaged in this,’ so I need to find something to put in its place. It can be very powerful, and almost a shock, but we’re using it as a growth experience, not an evaluation.”
- A female elementary administrator shared how their appraisal system aligns with their Title I goals, “We have five sections (Teacher Evaluation Goals); one of them is about how they get their classroom ready; the second one is how they deal with kids, the third one is overall performance, the fourth is professional, and the last one is student accountability. I’m thinking one of them deals with attendance, one with parents, and the accountability piece, naturally.”
- A female secondary teacher explained how their evaluation system is also aligned to the goals, “When we have our teacher evaluations, we hit the standards that we’re teaching to. At the beginning of the year, we had semester goals or some of us did quarter goals: ‘What do we want to improve on? How do we show how we assess our goals? What were the outcomes?’ You’re not evaluated on how many parents you’ve talked to, but it is logged. How we made parent contact, which is also . . . indirectly a part of the goal. If we can get more parents on board, then we can have more students buy into it, which is indirectly part of our goal. Also, how do we contact parents? And how often have we contacted parents, and so on?”
- A female elementary administrator shared the extent the use of instructional strategies to meet your school’s Title I Goals, “We’ve been doing a lot of work on that. Our professional learning communities this year, specifically was on the new evaluation system that we have: The Charlotte Danielson Model. A lot of that is instructional strategies, student engagement has been key. ‘What does that look like? How do we get that incorporated?’ We went through the Danielson group; we also worked with the state model, and tweaked it.”

- A female elementary administrator explained how the data was used to select instructional strategies, “Let me jump back and say that through the evaluation rubrics, the project manager keeps the administration aware of (that). We do a tally of, where the teacher is scoring, how many are at the emerging, how many are satisfactory. What we were doing was more of the low quality questioning, and we’re trying to move them towards open-ended. Another one is the discussion techniques. We share that administratively, ‘where are the areas of weakness that we’re identifying through the evaluation system?’”

## **Theme 2: Parent and Student Expectations/Goals**

A second theme that emerged in this year's study was Parent and Student Expectations/Goals. The home environments that children experience have a major impact on their development as well as their future outcomes. The Harvard University Center on the Developing Child (2007) explained,

Children develop in an environment of relationships that begins within their family, extends into their community, and is affected by broader social and economic resources. From early infancy, they naturally reach out for interaction through for interaction through such behaviors as babbling, making facial expressions, and uttering words, and they develop best when caring adults respond in warm, individualized, and stimulating ways. In contrast, when the environment is impoverished, neglectful, or abusive, the results can be a lifetime of increased risk for impairment in learning, behavior, and health. (p. 3)

Many of the families from Title I schools suffer from challenges including socio-economic, impoverished resources and lower levels of education. The educators discussed how these factors influence parent expectations for their children.

### **Parent Expectations for Children's Future Employment**

- A female elementary administrator explained, “It’s high poverty (the community) and there’s a different attitude about education. They want their kids to be at school, but maybe if they don’t graduate or if they don’t go on to college, that’s okay.”
- A female elementary administrator discussed college for students whom parents have had these expectations for their children, “We really want our kids to be college bound in some capacity, and then how do we get them there? How do we support them through that? It’s a cultural shift. I was reading this that sometimes we think, ‘in my day all parents cared about the education of their children’ and so on. There has been a shift in time. Families have changed. This is a community of high poverty, but, in the 50’s there was high poverty in smaller communities as well, but school, education, was a way out. I don’t see that mentality here, that education is a way out of poverty.”
- A male elementary administrator explained the community culture that impacts students, “I think the community you have now that sends their kids to school here, I think we go back to the same issues that we had previously, generations before. I mean, these community members, they didn’t know what success was. Okay? When you talk to community members that come to school for parent teacher conferences or

they come here to pick their kid up and you talk to them for a little bit, you sense that they really want what's best for their kid. It could be their granddaughter or grandson but to get to that point where the community members also buy-in to a higher expectation, that's a tough thing to do."

### **Parent Situations and Expectations Impact Students**

- A female secondary teacher explained how students are impacted by what they see from their parents, "Some of our families, they see their parents doing well without a high school diploma, so it's kind of hard to convince them that they need that diploma. We need a big focus on seeing education as a priority."
- A male elementary administrator also shared how parent expectations and current situations impact student learning, "Just like with graduating and going on to college. We don't have a large number of kids that do go on to four year schools. I think it comes down to being scared to do better than what their parents did, do better than what their grandparents did, because then, they kind of look like an outcast."
- A male elementary administrator stated the difficulty for kids, "For our kids, that's the most difficult thing we have to do. Most of our kids come from low expectation families when it comes to education. A lot of our parents have not graduated from high school. Very few of them have any type of college background. So, for our kids it's difficult to have them see the importance of education and to keep them moving and challenging themselves to be better. Our teachers, on the other hand, I think they work extremely hard for our kids. They have great expectations for them. Sometimes you wonder just what their feelings are as to what type of education we are able to give them here."

### **Student Attendance and Behaviors Impact Learning**

- A male elementary administrator explained that parent expectations impact the ability to educate students, "Out of 148 days, if we've had three or four that were perfect (attendance), that's unusual. But, I've been around (some of these) kids' moms who would get up at 4:00 in the morning in a blizzard and drop her kids, because if she missed work, she didn't get paid and her family didn't eat. I remember when I left, she'd say, 'Who will watch our kids?' 'Who will come and get our kids?' The point is I don't know if there are any schools in the state of Nebraska that can educate children if they're not there. They don't tell that story about our teachers. We're trying really hard."

### **Expectations for Student Attendance**

- A male elementary administrator explained his expectations for students and parents in regards to attendance, "A lot of the parents, now and then need a little help with 'Billy,' because he doesn't mind them either. When the sheriff and I show up because their child is not in school, then they have to go to the meeting. But to get to that parent and tell them ahead of time 'look, I'm just trying to give you some help.' We can't teach them if they're not here."
- A male secondary administrator explained, "The other thing that we're doing - we started last year when attendance was an area with the students - we recognized good attendance each quarter. We have an incentive."

- A female elementary administrator explained, “We look at attendance data, and that is K-12. Attendance data is critical. We actually hired a clerk, and have a truancy officer who has an office here in our building. We also designated one of our secretaries to get on the phone and make calls in the morning when the kids aren’t here. We also have an attendance clerk who is keeping track of that information. We have in policy, after five or seven days, teachers send letters out to parents. At one point, if the student has missed so many days, they have to call and arrange a meeting between the parent, the principal, and the teacher. So, that’s all data driven.”

### **Home Factors Influence Student Learning and Expectations**

- A female elementary administrator discussed how habitual behaviors impact the school and families, “Another one of our things in data that we look at, of course, is behavior. We look at behavior reports. Again, which children are presenting the issues (at conferences), the very same questions you’re asking me is what we ask ourselves - or is it a certain group of children who have a high incidence (rate). It’s typically the same thing we see with the attendance, it’s usually a family, and the students struggle. When we identify families, then we do the counseling referrals. . . . What we found was the high school students who have a probation officer, the probation officer was up here at the school checking in on them, so it’s that family counseling we’re trying to move towards.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how parents trust their schools to teach their children as they attend to basic needs, “That’s been a difficult piece. We’ve had the meetings, we’ve pulled the parents together, and we’ve said the things that we need to say, but . . . they trust us. So, the school being in need of improvement is NOT at the forefront of their thinking. I feel very little blame from them. When we talk about NCLB which caused the bussing to happen first, nobody takes advantage of that. Few parents really take advantage of the tutoring services. They think their child is getting everything they need in the classroom. They don’t want an outsider coming in and tutoring their kids. They will take advantage of the after school program. That’s where our funding has been allowed to provide more academic programming through the after school program. Our after school program manager has so much of an understanding of what the teachers need, that she’s been able to provide that programming that really, really ties into what the teachers are asking for. So, her work has been really, really powerful in making all of that happen for the parents. But, when we pull them all together, they say things like ‘well we really should get more of the trash picked up around the campus’ or ‘can we provide better lunch for them,’ ‘Can we make sure that there’s a decent cross walk going over the main street?’ They really haven’t gotten into some of the academic pieces. I do think one of the strengths of our school, is that they very much trust us.”
- A female elementary teacher shared, “I wonder if it’s just because parents have got a bunch of different things going on at home, that they are saying, ‘when I send him to school they are going to take care of the things my child needs to learn to be successful.’ I wonder if they truly know what our goals are and what we are working on. I don’t think that they do.”

## Changing the Culture of Expectations to Impact Learning

- A female secondary teacher described their efforts to change the concept of education for students, “I think we’re moving more towards accountability of students, trying to get them to believe that education is important. We really focus on, with juniors and seniors, ACT prep. We have the John Baylor for them to go through. So we’re really trying to focus on ‘education is important and you can go on and do things.’ We’ve had more kids take the ACT this year than they have in the past, so we’re succeeding in that aspect. We have more juniors that are getting excited about it. There are a lot of college visits going on and our school is physically taking the kids. Not just four year colleges, but we’re taking them around to local community colleges. Right now, I think the culture is really pushing the students to think beyond high school.”
- A female secondary teacher explained how raising expectations has raised their own teaching expectations, “I think it has caused us to also teach at a higher level. ‘Okay, this is where our kids are going . . . if we’re pushing them to go to college we’re going to have to raise what we expect them to do in the classroom.’ I know that I give them more research articles, especially because that is what they’ll see on the ACT. They’re also looking at what is happening around us and how that is affecting us, instead of ‘read this and regurgitate it to me.’ I think it’s also raised our classroom instruction.”
- A male elementary teacher explained the impact of changing student culture, “I think it has had a big effect on our kids. Here’s why I think it affects them, for some reason, with the (community) culture here, students feel that some people don’t think that they should succeed. When our kids do get a little bit of that success, they’re not accustomed to accepting that success. That’s why we want to get a (resource) teacher in here to get those students even further along than where they’re at, to reach that success level. Just like with graduating and going on to college. . . . Culturally that’s probably - the educational aspect- that’s probably the toughest thing, to deal with. It’s hard to get them to see that. To see if you go on to school, whether it’s a two year school, four year school, specialized school, whatever you do, that’s going to better your opportunities to have an easier life!”
- A female secondary teacher explained how she is seeing that both parents and students have new expectations with increased focus on instruction, “I’ve seen more students take more responsibility for their education. They’re not slacking off on homework, I’ve had parents and kids ask, ‘when are these kids going to start ACT prep?’ They want to know when they’re going to come. Former kids or kids who have older siblings say ‘I wish that had been here when I was in school.’ So, I think the parents and students both are realizing that the school is trying to make improvements.”
- A female secondary administrator explained how the community members have positively impacted their attempts to change student and parent expectations, “We’ve been working hand-in-hand, and we’ve even had community members who have not only been successful in high school, but who have degrees come in to talk to our students about: ‘We had food on the table, but you should see the car I’m driving now’ or ‘I’m eating steak now- not ground beef’ or ‘I’m eating healthier because I have the money to eat healthier now. I’ve my fruits and vegetables in.’ . . . You may

think your parents are successful, but these are some extras I can afford now that I'm a professional."

### **School Improvement Process has Improved Student Expectations**

- A female secondary teacher explained how the overall Title I Improvement process has improved student performance so far, "We've seen some increase in NWEA MAPS scores. I feel our students are trying to perform better, because they realize that, 'if I slack, I'm going to end up in general math – bored! If I slack, I'm going to be in basic English instead of tenth grade English!' I'm seeing more effort and a change in attitude."
- A female secondary teacher talked about students who change their own expectations through the Title I improvement Process, "I have some students who came in as a freshman, saying 'I just don't know what I want,' then seeing them walk across that stage saying 'I'm going to cosmetology school' or 'I'm going to tech school.' It may not be that four year college, but at least they're continuing their education in some way. I think Title I plays a big part in that."

### **Building Student and Parent Expectations**

- A female elementary teacher talked about how she helps educate parents to better understand student learning expectations, "The standards were sent out at the beginning of the year, to every parent. Also, for parents, there are expectations of what the school expects, what the teacher expects of the student and the parent. I sign it, the parents and student sign it and then the principal signs it."
- A female elementary teacher explained how parents *now want* their children to do well in school, "They want their kids to learn, they want their kids to know their math."
- A female elementary administrator explained how parent involvement impacts student involvement in their learning, "I've had a couple of kids, when their parents are involved their level of ownership goes up big time. I'll be the first to say that parents petrify me, most of the time. In the past, I haven't had a ton of good interactions with them its more 'what are you doing?' But, I feel like the more we stress it's about the students' learning, instead of their behavior . . . . Or if we say the behavior interfered with the learning parents care about that. I've had parents I would NEVER think basically chew out their kids in front of you. You know they care and they're starting to buy into what we are saying. Before it would have been more negative, where this time, it's 'this is what I'm worried about.' Sometimes you have to reframe that in your mind, because you could still be upset about what happened. I think it's good for teachers, too; to step back from it and say 'this is why it's ultimately a problem!'"

## **Theme 3: Consultant Support**

In this year's study, a new theme emerged: Consultant Support. Nineteen quotes were directly aligned to consultant support or more specifically, improving teaching through the use of consultation services. Schmoker (2011) states the importance of three essential elements for improving student learning, "(1) reasonably coherent curriculum (what we

teach); sound lessons (how we teach); and far more purposeful reading and writing in every discipline, or *authentic literacy* (integral) to both what and how we teach” (p. 2). Professional development to support these elements is critical for schools to be successful.

The researchers found schools have engaged in the use of strategies that reflect these elements including consultation services to produce sound lessons and coherent curriculum. Consultation provides support for teaching that is focused using research-based strategies that engage students. Schools using external consultation services to improve teaching and learning and were discussing the positive impact this has been making.

### **Consultation Provides Focus on What to Teach**

- A female elementary administrator shared, “I think it is important to truly focus on the right things; but deciding, sometimes on what those right things are . . . . That’s where (a consultant) came in, they helped us decide that. I see some of the other schools and they’re doing a LOT of things, way more than we are even. I think it sets up some confusion. I’ll be the first to admit - no it wasn’t focused before. We looked at the data and the consultant knew what was working in other situations.”
- A female elementary teacher talked about the role the consultant played to focus her teaching, “The consultant who came out was right there. Making suggestions, making sure that everything made sense. She worked all of the problems out and made sure they met the standard. I’m better aware of all of the Power Standards, I know next year, what I’m going to hit first, and the strongest. I’m going to make sure I hit all of the Power Standards first and the students have it before testing time.”
- A female elementary teacher explained, “(The consultant) sees that the plan is appropriate, that we’re covering what we need to cover.”
- A male elementary administrator explained how the consultant monitors Title I goals in instruction, “I don’t have a direct way of monitoring goals, I do it through (the consultants). Again, I sit down and discuss, almost on a bi-weekly (basis), where they are. I help them sometime compile all of that data, I simply review it with them, discuss what we’re going to do with the kids, and what we have to do to update the curriculum, so that we’re going to meet those goals. The biggest decision that we made this year was in math, we simply decided it wasn’t working. She’s an advisor for us. She’s been a great benefit as she offers us a lot of advice and what we have decided to do, we didn’t compress the math time, but what we did was eliminate and then expand how much we were doing Saxon. So, we sit down, mostly with our coach, and discuss those things.”
- A female elementary administrator stated, “We have a consultant that comes in. She’s been trying to work with *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins, & McTighe, 2005) it’s backwards planning. (Also), general student engagement pieces, like she’ll show a vocabulary lesson and different ways you can do it but hopefully we’ll get them more engaged.”
- A male secondary administrator shared how the consultant works with the data to recommend the Title I goals, “We had a consultant come on site visitation. We’ve taken the data from (the consultant) recommendations for the goals for improvement. We’ve merged those with the school improvement grant, the SIG grant, so the teachers are working on those.”



### **The Consultant Provides Support on How to Teach**

- A male secondary administrator shared how the consultant also focuses on instructional strategies, “(The Consultant) worked with our math teachers, and gives them instructional strategies to use. I know (the consultant) gave them some websites to use.”
- A male secondary administrator, “We have a consultant with the grant; (consultant) is contracted so many weeks a year. She visits with the teachers, and monitors the teachers, and helps them try some strategies to engage students.”
- A male elementary administrator shared, “We have a great curriculum and well prepared people. We hired a professional consultant; the (Consultant) comes right on campus, team teaches, evaluates in the classroom, and works with the teachers. That’s really a help, they know it inside and out.”
- A female elementary administrator explained the kinds of things the consultant would do when she comes, “She’s the ‘go to person’ for questions and anything that we have that we want to deal with. She’s given us ideas for interventions. She’s in our classrooms, so she’s seeing how we’re teaching; of course our Administrator is in the classrooms a lot too. . . . She’s very familiar with the intervention strategies that we are using. So she is like a coach.”

### **The Consultant’s Role**

- A female elementary administrator explained the role of consultants in her school, “We debrief with the consultant - which is every two weeks. We discuss what is going on, and we set up plans, we do a lot of observations in the classroom. If they have any questions at that time, any administrator can ask . . . if she has any need for clarification, that’s a good time for that.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how the consultant was able to play an important role, “I called the consultant and said ‘teachers have been telling me they know everything there is to know about formative assessment, we got it, we know it, and we understand it.’ They don’t really understand it. They THINK they understand it. We have to proceed carefully with that because sometimes when you think you understand it’s worse than when you say you don’t know anything about it. I said I’ll have to be the heavy on some things and say ‘this is my expectation, this is what these are, the actions I’m going to require you to take, and I need you to provide the support of how to do that.’ I’ll set up all of the actions before you come, you’ll be the one to help them figure out how to do it. It’s the same model we used with the coaching. I’m the heavy, they’re (the consultants) are the release valves. So, in a lot of cases, I set the expectations, the required actions that I have for them, and I give them options for how they are going to make that happen. They can work with coaches, they can do this, they can work with anybody, here are the ways you can go at it. But here are my expectations; here is what I’m going to expect to see.”
- A female elementary administrator specified the consultant’s role, “(The consultant) has brought in several trainers, they worked for two days one month, and then another day in the following month. They’ll have two more days in late spring, aligning to the Power Standards - the NeSA standards that are tested. Then, (they) design formative assessments to bench mark those over the course of a year in reading and math.”

### **Schools are Purposely Using More than One Consultant**

- A female elementary administrator discussed the purposeful intent to use more than one consultant, “There are multiple consultants, at least three this year. Then, (we utilize) our Educational Service Unit (ESU), we’ve planned the ESU’s involvement in this all along for that sustainability so that when the money goes away, we have a method of follow up with our ESU.”
- A female elementary administrator explained, “We’re keeping ESU in the loop with us, they come to meetings with us. She’s been trained on everything we’re doing, so that ESU can carry on after next year. Our area consultant is the lead for our consultant organization - she is hired by the organization to follow up with the school. She works with us every two weeks.”
- A female elementary administrator explained, “Even with our consultant, there are other connections that they allow us to make. We talked with the ESU yesterday and they came and talked to us about supports. So, ESU is a great resource for us as well.”

### **Consultants Are Making an Impact**

- A female elementary administrator explained the impact outside consultants can have, “We have a different (consultant) and I think that has made a big difference. (The consultant) is actually from here, so she understands our culture - the rural culture.”

### **Consultants Help Develop Teacher Leadership in Schools**

- A female elementary administrator explains how some teachers have been trained by consultants to carry on and become teacher leaders at their school, “They all have also been highly trained, they have had times just with their core group with one of our consultants, and another consultant, they have all been to a data teams training.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how several consultants help support the administrator and develop teacher leadership teams, “(Consultant) and the principal work together a lot. They and the leadership (team) pretty much determine how things are going to go. Those two kind of formulate and move it out to the leadership team, and go from there.”

## **Theme 4: Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leadership is another theme that emerged in this year's study. Consultation and administrative leaders have allowed teachers to emerge as leaders in their schools. Lambert (1998) explains teacher leadership in *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*:

The habits and conditions that allow a staff to work well as a unit contribute to a “professional community.” Such, communities are places in which teachers participate in decision making, have a shared sense of purpose, engage in collaborative work, and accept joint responsibility for the outcomes of their work. These dispositions and skills . . . can be understood as leadership skills. (p. 11)

There were 17 interview responses suggesting teacher leadership is emerging as a strong element within “Needs Improvement” schools that support both teacher and student learning.

### **Formation of Teacher Leadership**

- A female elementary teacher explained, “We have a leadership team that meets with the principal. We go out to the other groups meet with a PLC and a collaborative group. We have two extra meetings where we go and discuss our learning communities, and we also discuss other data that needs to be discussed with the other teachers. Occasionally, we have a large staff meeting, if there is something that we need to get together on.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how she selected teacher leadership for her school, “Leadership team members (facilitate the meetings); they are generally intermediate teachers, the resource teacher and the counselor. I selected them for leadership because they needed to understand that they were doing the high stakes tests. They needed to focus on where they were at, where students were at, and where they needed to go; so I needed to get them up and going first. . . . We needed to bring (the parent liaison) into the picture and help lead the process of parental involvement. We have a resource teacher, so I needed to bring her into the picture as we moved into inclusion to help facilitate that process. You need to start building that leadership capacity. They go out and meet with those people in the teams.”

### **Teachers Emerge as Leaders through Knowledge and Skills of Content and Materials**

- A female elementary administrator shared how a novice teacher emerged as a leader through her knowledge of instructional strategies, “A team leader and the teacher have really done amazing things. The teacher is one of the least experienced; (some teachers) felt like the kindergarten teacher was just tagging along but the kindergarten teacher came from another grade. Now that the teachers are saying we have the kids who are reading at this level that they haven’t worked with, but you have, they really want to know how they did it.”
- A male elementary administrator shared how a teacher emerged as a leader at his school, “Our biggest problem that we have is the sixth graders (are) at the fifth grade levels. We’re fortunate we have a great teacher over at the junior high that can juggle the two levels. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to do that. We wouldn’t attempt that with most teachers, but she worked with our at-risk program . . . and got great reviews when she decided to look at something different. She has been everything that the reviews said that she would be. We’ve been very fortunate there, that’s helped us a bunch.”
- A female secondary teacher explained a form of teacher collaboration facilitated by teachers, “There is a group of three leadership teachers, where if there’s a problem with something, that needs to be clarified, it is brought to them, and forwarded on to the principal for collaboration.”
- A female elementary teacher explained how teachers meet students’ needs based on teacher strengths, “You’re not going to have the same rapport with every single student. So, another teacher might have a better rapport with a student than you do. You can say, ‘okay, give me some strategies of how I can reach this kid’ that works.”

### **Teacher Leadership includes Mentoring**

- A female elementary teacher explained how teachers work with and mentor new teachers to build collaboration at her school, “We have our PLC groups, collaborative groups, which disseminates the information we get through leadership and leadership team. I am an informal mentor of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, she’s a new teacher into the system this year, and has a lot of questions. She also has a lot of good ideas she brings to us, and she feels very free to share her ideas with us. The second grade teacher wanted some more input, so she was joining with us also.”
- A female secondary teacher explained, “We have mentoring, all of our new teachers, not just new to teaching, but new to our district.”
- A female elementary administrator explained that roles at school are now based on teacher strengths, “They all tried out roles, so someone was the facilitator this time, and the data person next time. There were roles that just aren’t people’s strengths. This year they’re saying ‘do we need to switch roles?’ The answer is ‘no!’ you don’t. So now that they have stayed in one role, they have found their niche. They are really moving into a good spot.”
- A female elementary administrator shared, “We did a lot with data, ESU came at the beginning of the year and showed how to read data and how to set goals with kids. They had some workshops that we sent people to; one from lower elementary, one from upper elementary, then they would come back (teachers) and talk to all teachers. You know how some teachers need more help than others.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how teachers are taking the lead to provide new strategies with their colleagues to improve student learning, “We had two teachers go to a writing workshop, and they came back and they said, ‘Can we order this (intervention curriculum), and this, and this, because we really want to do this program?’ I said, ‘Do you want to talk to anybody else?’ ‘We’ll get it going.’ Well then, pretty soon (another teacher) comes to me, and she needed (intervention curriculum) for this grade, then we needed enough (intervention curriculum) for this grade, pretty soon we had high school people wanting it. If I would have said when I was the elementary principal, ‘We’re going to do this program,’ what do you think would have happened? We’ve told them to go to Response to Intervention (RTI); we’ve told them there’s a math workshop this summer that we’d really like them to go to. So, sometimes we do that. But this thing was theirs. Then we had a teacher use Study Island and she claims the third graders are so successful and that was hers. She picked it up, she tried it, she started talking about it, and she got other people on board with it.”
- A female elementary administrator stated, “We have three teachers that are very comfortable using the Promethean Boards, so they were the experts that day, and they worked and trained people.”

### **Theme 5: Student Engagement**

Student engagement is now a common term used in many of the “Needs Improvement” schools in order to improve learning. Ridnour (2011) explains:

Engagement happens when students are involved in activities that spark a desire in them. Finding out what these activities are requires some research, observation, and

interaction on your part to ensure that students not only learn what they are required to learn, but that they personalize what they learn and can build on it in the future.”  
(p. 11)

There were 14 comments from educators on the urgency to re-think and re-develop teaching strategies in ways that incorporate Student Engagement.

### **Professional Development Strategies to Impact Student Engagement**

- A female elementary administrator discussed their school’s focus on student engagement, “We’ve been working on the student engagement, with the math, really getting them engaged and relating it to their lives. So, we’re trying to find a conference that really fits that. It’s about the memory and getting students engaged. We struggle with, the kids have it one day, and then the next day it’s like they have no idea.”
- A female administrator explains that engagement must also be purposeful, “I think we have to really have engaging, purposeful lessons, but engagement can’t just be silly. It has to be purposeful. But when I watch a master teacher who asks 40 questions in a ten minute period and every single one of them has a purpose, and she has those kids right here, and they are doing high level thinking, I know we can do all of those things. It doesn’t happen by accident.”
- A female elementary administrator explained that engagement and relationships go hand in hand, “Relationships with students, building those relationships with students, and knowing it’s not about content. Content is important, but it’s about kids first. Engaging all students. You can use engagement strategies until the cows come home, but you can also still not engage all students. So, it’s not about the strategy, it’s about how they’re doing with it. So, relationships and engagement.”

### **Strategies Used to Engage Students**

- A female elementary teacher explained how technology can be used to engage students and has improved teaching, “I think it (technology) has had a major affect. We’ve now gone to the Promethean Boards, which helps our kids tremendously, because they are such visual, hands on learners. I use my board from the time school starts until we are done, unless we are doing independent reading. They know certain flip charts when they come up, ‘oh, I’m out of my seat because it’s going to be my turn to move something on the board.’ They are very involved, very active. It’s not just ‘sit back and let the teacher teach, then I get to do a worksheet.’ I think that has helped everyone’s teaching, because you can have everything prepared, ready to go. You don’t have to take the time to erase your board, set up your next item. You just click of the button and it’s ready. You can have all the bells and whistles on it that you want to grab your student’s interest. Teachers are pretty willing to help each other with the boards. To learn the new things to engage the kids into the learning.”
- A male secondary administrator explained how the internet can be a useful tool for student engagement, “For example, there’s a couple of websites out there of some instructional games on the internet that they can bring into the classroom to improve the instruction and how to engage students; that type of thing.”

### **Student Engagement Can Be Monitored**

- A female elementary administrator discussed how engagement can also be monitored, “I think when you get more specific about the data, like with engagement, the last time I had somebody come in, she actually wrote down the names of the actual students, and said, ‘I’m sure this doesn’t surprise you.’ I said, ‘No!’ She told me, ‘You have great engagement, you’ve got 85%, but what’s keeping you from 100% with these kids?’ I know that, but once it’s said to you, ‘This is what I noticed; these are your only three kids.’ Then you can make a plan with each one and work with them. Pinpointing the exact data, we talk a lot about what ‘hides’ in the data. I feel like they (the 3 non-engaged) hide in the data. You could always be working your way to 100, but it would always be the same kids every time you may need to tweak things for.”
- A female elementary administrator explained how engaging students includes helping them be accountable for learning goals, “Another great thing we’ve done is helping kids know where they are in relationship to that target. We do a lot with goal setting, and having kids be really clear what a target looks like and really clear about where they are. So, they know what they need to do to close that gap. So, communicating that with parents is that much easier because the kids can talk about it, and are aware of it. It’s amazing to hear kindergarteners talk about it. It’s any grade level can do that.”

### **Curriculum Can Restrict Student Engagement**

- Engagement is not always easy when some curricula restrict the use of instructional strategies, “Fidelity to the program makes it very difficult to . . . I mean we have to be excited when we do the program, if we’re upbeat with it, and don’t sit there and monotone read it to them. That’s how we have to get them involved. I’m a little bit more relaxed or able to be relaxed when I’m teaching my reading program, because I don’t teach Reading Mastery. I teach understanding U.S. History. My book is not D.I. But, when I turn around and teach writing and spelling, that *IS D.I.* I feel I am able to jump outside of the D.I. bubble for a little bit, but other teachers are not. So, it’s hard . . . it has (effected morale).”

## **Summary**

This year’s research project examined “Needs Improvement” schools in Nebraska and found several commonalities with previous years’ studies, 2009-2011. Leadership has emerged as a theme in every year of the study. Teacher Evaluation and Student Engagement continue to be important elements to the success of enhancing student achievement, as echoed by educators working in “Needs Improvement” schools. This year’s survey resulted in statistically significant differences between the survey ratings among identified groups which are compared throughout the paper. Those significances are displayed in Tables following this summary.

“Teacher Leadership,” “Consultant Support,” and “Parent and Student Expectations/Goals” were new themes that emerged in the 2012 study. It was evident during the interviews that

the additional resources allocated to SIG schools have made a positive impact on the ability to support classroom teachers in their quest to improve student learning.

During the 2011-12 school year, schools were beginning to see and experience the influence that the hard work and support provided many opportunities for change with a continued focus upon school improvement. Teachers and administrators shared stories of academic improvement, re-culturing, and new opportunities shared by students, teachers and families. Celebrations to recognize the progress and accomplishments of administrators, teachers, and students were beginning to occur, as they continue their efforts to improve student learning. This was evidenced by a female administrator,

What do we do when our kids are reading this well? We haven't taught it before. Those are the exciting pieces, and we have grab on to those little wins here and there, and those celebrations to say, "We've done it!"

As schools move forward, a major emphasis over the next few years that many schools will be embracing is the need to fully engage parents and communities in support of the efforts made in Title I "Needs Improvement" Schools. A Secondary Administrator reflected connecting their schools experience to the well-known Proverb,

*"They say it takes a village to raise a child - it takes a village to educate one too!"*

## Statistically Significant Differences

### Study 1: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress of Title I “Needs Improvement” Schools

Quantitative data was disaggregated into percentage of English Language Learners, free and reduced lunch rate, mobility, and type of school using the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) State of the Schools Report for 2010-2011, the most recent data available (NDE, 2012). For these categories, teacher and administrator response rates are combined. The state average for English Language Learners was 7% of the overall school population (NDE, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the schools were divided into two groups: those with a population of English Language Learners less than 5% and those with a population of 5% and higher.

Within the state of Nebraska, free and reduced lunch rate is a statistical measurement referring to the percentage of the population who, by income, qualify for free or reduced rate school lunches. The average percentage of free and reduced lunch for the state is 43% (NDE, 2012). For the purpose of this study, schools whose free and reduced lunch rate of less than 55% are being compared to those with a rate of 55% and higher.

Mobility rate refers to the rate at which “students move in or out of a school” (NDE, 2012). In this study, data is disaggregated to compare schools with a mobility rate of less than 25% with those schools with a rate of 25% or higher. The average mobility rate for the state is 12% (NDE, 2012) only one participating school reported a mobility rate lower than the state average. The final type of disaggregated data is by level, responses from both teachers and educators who identify an elementary school as their primary work location are compared to those who identify a middle or high school as their primary location.

The statistically significant differences between the previously mentioned subgroups are as follows:

**Table 11**

*Statistically Significant Difference between Responses from Male and Female Administrators*

Male and Female Administrators	
Item	p-value
63: “Teachers in my school are engaged in early identification of at-risk behavior indicators impacting student performance (i.e., attendance, behavior, etc.)” (Male Administrators 4.83, Female Administrators 3.36)	p<.001

**Table 12**

*Statistically Significant Difference between Responses from Male and Female Teachers*

Male and Female Teachers	
Item	p-value
23: “The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation.” (Male Teachers 3.00, Female Teachers 4.09)	p=.031



**Table 13***Statistically Significant Differences between Responses from Administrators and Teachers*

<b>Administrators and Teachers</b>	
Item	p-value
3: "All teachers in my school were/I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Goals." (Administrators 3.83, Teachers 3.22)	p=.027
11: "There is a clear articulation of standards in my school." (Administrators 3.94, Teachers 4.18)	p=.018
12: "Teachers in my school/ I engage students in order to improve academic performance." (Administrators 4.00, Teachers 4.45)	p=.003
68/72: [Administrators/Teachers]: "The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders." (Administrators 4.00, Teachers 3.56)	p=.032

**Table 14***Significant Differences between Teachers with 0-10 Years and 10-20 Years of Experience*

<b>Teachers with 0-10 Years of Experience and Teachers with 10-20 Years of Experience</b>	
Item	p-value
10: "There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need." (Teachers 0-10 years 3.83, Teachers 10-20 years 4.37)	p=0.37
11: "There is a clear articulation of standards in my school." (Teachers 0-10 years 3.83, Teachers 10-20 years 4.50)	p=.001
13: "The curriculum in my school is supportive of the academic needs of students." (Teachers 0-10 years 3.70, Teachers 10-20 years 4.37)	p=.007
14: "The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels." (Teachers 0-10 years 3.33, Teachers 10-20 years 4.34)	p<.001
15: "The curriculum in my school is aligned with the state standards." (Teachers 0-10 years 3.63, Teachers 10-20 years 4.55)	p<.001
17: "Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students." (Teachers 0-10 years 3.63, Teachers 10-20 years 4.34)	p=.001

**Table 15***Significant Differences between Teachers with 0-10 Years and 20-30 Years of Experience*

<b>Teachers with 0-10 Years of Experience and Teachers with 20-30 Years of Experience</b>	
Item	p-value
40: "Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school." (Teachers 0-10 years 4.23, Teachers 20-30 years 3.33)	p=.001
52: "Data are used to monitor and focus our school/district's Title I Improvement goals and other successes." (Teachers 0-10 years 4.40, Teachers 20-30 years 3.75)	p=.045
64 [Teacher Only]: "I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students." (Teachers 0-10 years 4.30, Teachers 20-30 years 3.50)	p=.002
65 [Teacher Only]: "I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students' performance based on data." (Teachers 0-10 years 4.27, Teachers 20-30 years 3.50)	p=.003

67 [Teacher Only]: “I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data.” (Teachers 0-10 years 4.27, Teachers 20-30 years 3.33)	p=.001
71/75 [Administrators/Teachers]: “Data shows that progress is being made in implementing our Title I Goals.” (Teachers 0-10 years 4.10, Teachers 20-30 years 3.42)	p=.010

**Table 16**

*Significant Differences between Teachers with 10-20 Years and 20-30 Years of Experience*

<b>Teachers with 10-20 Years of Experience and Teachers with 20-30 Years of Experience</b>	
Item	p-value
7: “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.61 , Teachers 20-30 years 3.83)	p=.003
9: “My school engages in continuous school improvement.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.55, Teachers 20-30 years 3.92)	p=0.21
11: “There is a clear articulation of standards in my school.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.50, Teachers 20-30 years 3.83)	p=.022
12: “Teachers in my school/ I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.68 , Teachers 20-30 years 3.92)	p<.001
16: “Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments are used to support instruction and enhance student learning.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.34, Teachers 20-30 years 3.75)	p=.027
17: “Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.34, Teachers 20-30 years 3.67)	p=.042
22: “The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.13, Teachers 20-30 years 3.08)	p=.018
23: “The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.32 , Teachers 20-30 years 3.17)	p=.004
40: “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.45, Teachers 20-30 years 3.33)	p<.001
42: “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.21, Teachers 20-30 years 3.42)	p=.013
43: “Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.11, Teachers 20-30 years 3.25)	p=.004
46: “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.05, Teachers 20-30 years 3.25)	p=.046
49: “Teachers in my school/ I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.16, Teachers 20-30 years 3.50)	p=.029
52: “Data are used to monitor and focus our school/district’s Title I Improvement goals and other successes.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.42, Teachers 20-30 years 3.75)	p=.029
	p=.036

60: “Changes in school-wide performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.13, Teachers 20-30 years 3.50)	p=.001
61: “Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.24, Teachers 20-30 years 3.25)	
64: [Teacher Only] “I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.34, Teachers 20-30 years 3.50)	p=.001
65: [Teacher Only] “I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students’ performance based on data.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.47, Teachers 20-30 years 3.50)	p<.001
66: [Teacher Only] “I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students’ performance.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.24, Teachers 20-30 years 3.33)	p=.032
67: [Teacher Only] “I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.42, Teachers 20-30 years 3.33)	p<.001
71/75: [Administrator/Teacher] “Data shows that progress is being made in implementing our Title I Goals.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.18, Teachers 20-30 years 3.42)	p=.002
74/78: [Administrator/Teacher] “The use of our research-based interventions is leading to the attainment of our Title I Goals.” (Teachers 10-20 years 4.18, Teachers 20-30 years 3.42)	p=.017

**Table 17**

*Significant Differences between Teachers with 20-30 Years and over 30 Years of Experience*

<b>Teachers with 20-30 Years of Experience and Teachers with Over 30 Years of Experience</b>	
Item	p-value
60: “Changes in school wide performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.” (Teachers 20-30 years 3.50, Teachers 30+ years 4.43)	p=.030
61: “Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.” (Teachers 20-30 years 3.25, Teachers 30+ years 4.43)	p=.007
64: [Teacher Only]: “I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students.” (Teachers 20-30 years 3.50, Teachers 30+ years 4.43)	p=.015
65: [Teacher Only]: “I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students’ performance based on data.” (Teachers 20-30 years 3.50, Teachers 30+ years 4.43)	p=.012
67: [Teacher Only]: “I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data.” (Teachers 20-30 years 3.33, Teachers 30+ years 4.43)	p=.009

**Table 18**

*Statistically Significant Difference between Free and Reduced Lunch Rates*

<b>55% and Lower Free/Reduced Lunch Rates and Higher than 55% Free/Reduced Lunch Rates</b>	
Item	p-value
Item 31: “I am passionate about student learning.” (Lower 5.00, Higher 4.81)	p<.001
Item 57: “Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school’s Title I Goals.” (Lower 3.59, Higher 4.02)	p=.050

**Table 19***Statistically Significant Difference between Rates of English Language Learner Student Populations*

<b>Lower than 5% Student ELL Population and 5% and Higher Student ELL population</b>	
Item	p-value
3: "All teachers in my school were/I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Goals." (Lower ELL 3.00, Higher ELL 3.63)	p=.005
4: "I have consistently/Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I Goals to teachers in my school." (Lower ELL 3.45, Higher ELL 4.13)	p<.001
5: "Teachers in my school/ I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals." (Lower ELL 3.41, Higher ELL 4.13)	p<.001
6: "Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified." (Lower ELL 3.76, Higher ELL 4.20)	p=.002
22: "The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning." (Lower ELL 3.51, Higher ELL 4.02)	p=.019
23: "The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation." (Lower ELL 3.65, Higher ELL 4.19)	p=.009
24: "The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas." (Lower ELL 3.61, Higher ELL 4.11)	p=.005
27: "The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity." (Lower ELL 3.29, Higher ELL 3.78)	p=.020
31: "I am passionate about student learning." (Lower ELL 4.71, Higher ELL 4.98)	p<.001
34: "Teachers in my school/ I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance." (Lower ELL 3.29, Higher ELL 3.74)	p=.031
37: "Teachers in my school/ I break down and examine student performance data by grade, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities." (Lower ELL 3.49, Higher ELL 3.91)	p=.017
46: "Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning." (Lower ELL 3.69, Higher ELL 4.07)	p=.032
49: "Teachers in my school/ I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data." (Lower ELL 3.63, Higher ELL 4.13)	p=.001
50: "Teachers in my school collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity." (Lower ELL 3.41, Higher ELL 3.87)	p=.030
53: "The faculty and staff/ Teachers in my school monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively." (Lower ELL 3.86, Higher ELL 4.30)	p=.017
54: "Teachers in my school/ I examine disaggregated standardized test score data." (Lower ELL 3.78, Higher ELL 4.15)	p=.029
56: "Teachers in my school/I adjust my instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals." (Lower ELL 3.76, Higher ELL 4.17 )	p=.011

57: "Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school's Title I Goals." (Lower ELL 3.75, Higher ELL 4.11)	p=.018
72/76: [Administrators/Teachers]: "During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers/Administrators discuss with me about the way they are helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals." (Lower ELL 3.51, Higher ELL 4.00)	p=.007
73/77: [Administrators/Teachers]: "Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap." (Lower ELL 3.78, Higher ELL 4.09)	p=.038
74/78: [Administrators/Teachers]: "The use of our research-based interventions is leading to the attainment of our Title I Goals." (Lower ELL 3.80, Higher ELL 4.13)	p=.033

**Table 20**

*Statistically Significant Differences between Rates of Student Mobility*

<b>Lower than 25% Student Mobility and 25% and Higher Student Mobility</b>	
Item	p-value
24: "The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas." (Lower Mobility 3.57, Higher Mobility 3.99)	p=.050
38: "Teachers in my school compare their/ I reflect and compare my actual teaching practice to what they/ I had planned and hoped to achieve." (Lower Mobility 3.60, Higher Mobility 3.95)	p=.040
49: "Teachers in my school/ I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data." (Lower Mobility 3.57, Higher Mobility 4.01)	p=.010
57: "Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school's Title I Goals." (Lower Mobility 3.67, Higher Mobility 4.04)	p=.050

**Table 21**

*Statistically Significant Differences between Elementary and Secondary Schools*

<b>Elementary Schools and Secondary Schools</b>	
Item	p-value
22: "The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning." (Elementary 4.00, Secondary 3.41)	p=.014
23: "The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation." (Elementary 4.16, Secondary 3.56)	p=.010
31: "I am passionate about student learning." (Elementary 4.94, Secondary 4.71)	p=.010
34: "Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance." (Elementary 3.72, Secondary 3.22)	p=.027
42: "Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school's Title I Improvement Plan." (Elementary 4.22, Secondary 3.68)	p=.001
44: "Professional development was provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies." (Elementary 4.28, Secondary 3.73)	p=.003
45: "Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices." (Elementary 4.42, Secondary 3.73)	p<.001

---

46: “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.” (Elementary 4.05, Secondary 3.63)	p=.038
49: “Teachers in my school/I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.” (Elementary 4.02, Secondary 3.68)	p=.042
51: “Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (Elementary 4.67, Secondary 4.20)	p=.002
53: “The faculty and staff/teachers in my school monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.” (Elementary 4.30, Secondary 3.76)	p=.007
54: “Teachers in my school/ I examine disaggregated standardized test score data.” (Elementary 4.20, Secondary 3.61)	p=.001
56: “Teachers in my school/I adjust my instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals.” (Elementary 4.17, Secondary 3.66)	p=.003
57: “Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school’s Title I Goals.” (Elementary 4.14, Secondary 3.61)	p=.002
59: “Changes in grade-level classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.” (Elementary 4.14, Secondary 3.59)	p=.001
61: “Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.” (Elementary 4.16, Secondary 3.71)	p=.010
69/73: [Administrators/Teachers]: “Community members understand why our school has a Title I School Improvement Plan.” (Elementary 3.38, Secondary 2.95)	p=.017
72/76: [Administrators/Teachers]: “During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers/administrators discuss with me about the way they are/I am helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals.” (Elementary 3.94, Secondary 3.49)	p=.019
73/77: [Administrators/Teachers]: “Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap.” (Elementary 4.16, Secondary 3.61)	p=.001

---

*Note.* Due to the small number of middle school (n=7) and high school (n=34) respondents compared to elementary respondents (n=64), middle and high schools have been combined into the group “Secondary.”

## References

- Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- DuFour, R., & Marzano, R. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing: A handbook for Professional Learning Communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Fielding, L., Kerr, N., & Rosier, P. (2007). *Annual growth for all students, catch-up growth for those who are behind*. Kennewick, WA: The New Foundation Press.
- Fullan, M. (2004). *Leading in a culture of change: Professional action guide and workbook*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Goodwin, B. (2011). *Simply better: Doing what matters most to change the odds for student success*. Denver, CO: McRel.
- Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. (2007). *A science-based framework for early childhood policy: Using evidence to improve outcomes in learning, behavior, and health for vulnerable children*. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. Retrieved from <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-Analyses relating to achievement*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. New York: Routledge.
- Henderson, A., Mapp, K., Johnson, V., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships*. New York: The New Press.
- Kerbow, D., & Bernhardt, A. (1993). Parent intervention in the school: The context of minority involvement. In J. Coleman & B. Schneider (Eds.), *Parents, their children, and schools* (pp. 15-145). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Nebraska Department of Education. (2012). *2010-2011 State of the Schools Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.ne.gov/documents/SOSR.html>
- Nebraska Department of Education. (2011). *2009-2010 State of the Schools Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.ne.gov/documents/SOSR.html>

- Nebraska Department of Education. (2011). *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Guidance Revised for the Reporting of 2010-11 Results*. Retrieved from [http://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/pdfs/AYP\\_Guidance\\_2010\\_11\\_March\\_04\\_2011.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/pdfs/AYP_Guidance_2010_11_March_04_2011.pdf)
- Nebraska Department of Education. (2010). *2008-2009 State of the Schools Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.ne.gov/documents/SOSR.html>
- Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2012). *Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high*. USA: McGraw-Hill.
- Ridnouer, K. (2011). *Everyday engagement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Schmoker, M. (2011). *Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Wiggins, G., and McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Zhao, Y, (2009). *Catching up or leading the way*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



# **Bridging Gaps to Improve Teaching and Learning**

## **Section III: Research Studies**

### **Study 2: Educator Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Nebraska Public Schools**



*“They say it takes a village to raise a child - it takes a village to educate one too!”*

*Secondary Administrator*

### **Educator Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Nebraska Public Schools**

**Jody Isernhagen, Ed.D., Associate Professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

**Nicole Effle, M.A., Research Assistant, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

“Researchers who study what families do to support children’s learning and development have repeatedly documented the powerful influence that families have on the in-school and out-of-school socialization of children” (Amatea, 2009, p. 24). In recent years, “federal policies for family involvement established in various laws began to explicitly link families and schools and encouraged educators to consider how school policies and practices influence their relationships with families” (Amatea, 2009, p. 25). Leaders in schools need to intensify their focus upon “harnessing extra resources and support with family and community involvement” (NNPS, 1996-2009, p. 1) in efforts to increase student achievement well into the future.

Park and Palardy (2004) defined parent involvement as elements of programming that contained “supportive actions or values oriented toward the child’s academic attainment and achievement” (p. 98). However, for decades, school systems have struggled with involving parents in their child’s education. “The real barriers that negatively affect the engagement of

parents and the mechanisms that encourage parents to become engaged in their children's education have not been clearly understood" (Kerbow & Bernhardt, 1993 as cited in Anfarra & Mertens, 2008, p. 58). Additionally, the traditional model of parent involvement has been replaced with more contemporary models of *family engagement*, defined as "systems, processes, policies, procedures, and practices that allow parents *and family* to be a credible component within the academic lives of their children" (Constantino, 2003, p. 10). Constantino (2003) goes on to emphasize, "involvement of parents or families includes the engagement of families in the instructional and non-instructional (co-curricular, extracurricular) lives of their children as well as the family's educational experiences and values about the importance of education." (p. 9)

Parent involvement does not and cannot happen independently, it must be "an ongoing process, rather than a single moment in time" (Bouffard & Weiss, 2008, p. 4). There is a shared responsibility and commitment necessary for supporting parent involvement programming (Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss, 2009). In order for children to receive maximum benefit, families, parents, teachers, school staff and other community members must be in agreement as to the value of the program and find ways to work together, as a team, with active communication.

Additionally, developing parent involvement programs or models that embrace commonalities across all ethnic and cultural boundaries have proven to be a challenge for schools. Epstein and Salinas (2004) found that "most (schools) do not have well - organized, goal - linked, and sustainable partnership programs" (p. 17). In an effort to help schools and communities develop high quality programs that impact student learning, researchers have focused on developing a mind-set embracing parental involvement. As educators have continued their work on reform efforts, the concept of parent involvement has continued to evolve; and researchers have noted a developing 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm shift with a three-fold focus: 1) the engagement of **all** parents; 2) differentiated engagement based on the cultural and socio-economic contexts of the families, and 3) community dynamics (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, & Chatman-Nelson, 2010).

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to define parent involvement in Nebraska schools. The study examined two research questions:

1. How do educators define parental involvement in public schools?
2. What type of parental involvement activities do educators perceive as having the most impact on student success in school?

### **Review of Literature**

Programs and models created for family and parental involvement should direct focus toward the simplest, clearest means by which all stakeholders from all demographic areas can learn new patterns of interaction (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001) which will academically benefit the child and meet the goals and funding obligations of the local entity. Joyce Epstein and James Comer are two predominant researchers in the area of family and parental involvement. Their research, theory, and subsequent models of family involvement programs have led to the increased use of their model to improve student achievement in schools across the country.

### **Six Types of Family Involvement**

Joyce Epstein's (2001) research on family involvement identified six types of involvement which can be used to develop models and programs. They are: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaborating with community. School leaders must "recognize parents and families as the first and enduring educators" (Glanz, 2006, p. 40) for their child who encourage and provide education and positive discipline which "promote and reinforce the work of teachers in the classroom" (p. 80). Educators must now work to find opportunities 'outside of the box' to ensure families have access to communication "in a format that meets their individual needs" (Gardner Chadwick, 2004, p. 80), which may include web based programs, telephonic messages, and other creative means that align with Epstein's model.

Epstein also highlights the value of engaging all stakeholders within the school community, not just parents and educators. Leaders must work with the knowledge that building "lasting alliances involves inviting families as participants in school governance, school leadership teams, advocacy groups, and other relevant committees" (Glanz, 2006, p. 41), while simultaneously forming positive connections to bring the community into the school. "By implementing activities for all six types of involvement noted, schools can help parents become involved at school and at home in various ways that meet student needs and family schedules" (Epstein & Salinas, 2004, p. 12).

Epstein (2001) employs an approach in which "research, policy and practice" (NNPS, 1996-2009, Dr. Joyce Epstein Section) guide connections between the family, home, and school (Epstein, 2001); these partnerships are the underlying focus. "In partnership, educators, families, and community members work together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate successes" (Epstein, 2001, p. 4); "without partnerships, educators segment students into the school child and the home child, ignoring the whole child" (Epstein, 2001, p. 5).

### **James Comer's School Development Program (SDP)**

After years of studying family and school interaction, James Comer discovered it was necessary to "consider theory from a social ecology - the interaction of individuals in groups in a social system (in this case, schools) - and not address the parent involvement issue in isolation" (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Similar to Epstein, Comer and colleagues did not view parents and community involvement as independent entities suggesting instead that "parents are a natural link to the communities in which schools are located" (Comer & Haynes, 1991, p. 273). With this in mind, Comer's theory "uses the metaphor of six developmental pathways to characterize the lines along which children mature - (1) physical, (2) cognitive, (3) psychological, (4) language, (5) social, and (6) ethical" (The Leadership Conference, 2011, Resources section, para. 2). In the SDP model, "children are taught how to use the six developmental pathways to try to figure out what they need most from teachers and from other children in their class" (The Leadership Conference, 2011, SDP section, para. 10).

The Comer SDP focuses on adolescent and child development, ensuring curriculum is appropriate for each age level, while aiming to "view parents from cultural perspectives and understand the role of communication in diminishing barriers between home and schools"

(Amatea, 2009, p. 164). In addition, the SDP is “designed for a whole-school implementation, with the goal of improving the ecology of the school by improving the school governance system, the functioning of the mental health team, and the development of a parent program that allows parental participation in school governance and school activities” (Amatea, 2009, p. 45).

Comer & Haynes (1991) found that students and teachers having negative interactions in the classroom can cause a negative attitude toward school by the parents and students. The result is a continued reinforcement of previously engrained beliefs the parents may have toward school evolving from their own school experiences. This, in turn, exacerbates a lack of interest, desire, or need, on the part of the parents, to be involved in their child’s education. The SDP model hones a community development focus as a means to involve parents at every level of the school system (Amatea, 2009).

### **Summary**

Creating a school environment which will embrace and accept a family involvement model is a challenge regardless of the model selected. When motivated administrators and teachers work to provide “high-quality teaching *and* family and community support, more students will achieve reading and literacy goals and progress to the next level” (NNPS, 1996-2009, p.1). “Researchers who study what families do to support children’s learning and development have repeatedly documented the powerful influence that families have on the in-school and out-of-school socialization of children” (Amatea, 2009, p. 24). This is only the beginning of what schools can do in efforts toward “harnessing extra resources and support with family and community involvement” (NNPS, 1996-2009, p.1) in efforts to increase student achievement well into the future.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This quantitative survey research study examined the perceptions of Nebraska educators, both administrators and teachers, as to how they defined parental involvement for their school and the types of activities they perceived as having the most impact upon student success in schools. Within the survey there were opportunities for participants to make comments about the survey questions yielding some qualitative data based on the survey questions.

Nine school districts with 43 schools were invited to participate in this study. Eight districts with thirty-six schools agreed to participate. For the purpose of this research, participating Nebraska public school districts were divided into two categories, (1) Non-Rural, (2) Rural, using New Urban - Centric Locale Codes as defined by the Common Core of Data (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). The category of non-rural schools includes Locale Codes: “(32) Town, Distant: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 minutes from an urbanized area” and “(33) Town, Remote: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area” (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). This non-rural category contained twenty eight schools.

The category of rural included New Urban – Centric Locale Codes: “(42) Rural, Distant: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles

from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster” and “(43) Rural, Remote: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster” (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). This rural category contained eight Nebraska schools. After schools were identified as Non Rural and Rural, researchers then used demographic factors for school selection based upon Title I status.

### **Survey Instrument**

The survey consisted of 20 multiple choice questions focused on seven categories: (1) Parental Involvement Definition, (2) Results, (3) Indicators and Predictors, (4) Student Success, (5) Culturally Responsive Programs, (6) Recruitment, and (7) Opportunities and Challenges.

Each category consisted of three questions with the same nine multiple choice options for each question (Appendix F). Item 14, “The following indicates my school’s level of success in engaging parents” used a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*extremely successful*) to 1 (*not successful at all*).

Only eight of the nine districts invited to participate in the study returned surveys. Survey data for 36 schools within the districts were disaggregated by Title I status, job titles and ethnicity. Title I status was designated as Title I or Non-Title. The job title designations were: District Administrator, Elementary or High School Administrator, Elementary, Middle or High School Teacher and a category designated as “Other” including all other job titles (English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Instructional Facilitator, etc.). The overall survey return rate was 39%.

### **Survey Procedures**

This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) characterized by the highest level of integrity, with respect and equitable treatment for all persons involved in the study in order to maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of participants in the study (Appendix E). Superintendents from identified districts were asked for written approval for the district to participate in the research project. After permission was granted, principals within these districts were then asked to distribute an electronic survey to all administrators and teachers within their buildings.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study were teachers and administrators located in thirty-six school from eight Nebraska public school districts. Of those schools, twenty-three were identified as Title I “Needs Improvement” status. The remaining thirteen schools have not been identified as Title I “Needs Improvement” and were chosen based upon geographic and demographic characteristics in effort to provide data that is representative of the entire state.

## **RESULTS**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to define parent involvement in Nebraska schools. The study examined two research questions:

1. How do educators define parental involvement in public schools?
2. What type of parental involvement activities do educators perceive as having the most impact on student success in school?

The results section will summarize the findings for these two questions.

### **Parental Involvement Defined**

The first research question was answered by the responses provided by participants to Survey Item 1, “The definition of parental involvement . . . .” Sixty percent of respondents chose the response, “Engaging parents in parent-teacher conferences, school-wide activities, volunteering at school, and discussing their personal goals and expectations for academic achievement.” A non-rural, Non-Title I high school teacher explained, “Parental involvement is when parents are active participants in their child’s life. This means they are in communication with their child and the entities they are involved with. School is just one of those entities.”

A non-rural, Non-Title I school administrator described how difficult it was to create a specific definition because it, “. . . can also be as simple as making sure students have lunch money, homework completed and get to school on time.” A non-rural, Non-Title I high school teacher agreed adding that despite the circumstances, any parent can become instrumental in their child’s education if they are “willingly involved in every aspect of their child's education. They should be looking at academic progress, behavioral development and they should be encouraging their child to always work to their best ability.”

### **Parental Involvement Results**

By examining the definition for parental involvement more broadly, Survey Item 2 indicated a strong connection between parents and student success. The item, “Parental involvement results in. . . (Indicate all that apply),” resulted in 88% of the respondents choosing either “Improved grades and academic achievement” or “Increased collaboration between parents and teachers that positively impact student learning.” Additionally, district administrators (90%) chose, “Enrichment by parents in areas of interest for their child” as an important parenting behavior. Respondents from schools with a Hispanic population of 14% and over chose, “Improved parent- child relationship” as well. Prioritizing expectations and outcomes for parental involvement was a challenge for survey participants as described by a non-rural, Non-Title I elementary administrator, “Parents understanding curriculum and essential learning and parents understanding that education has changed since they were in school.”

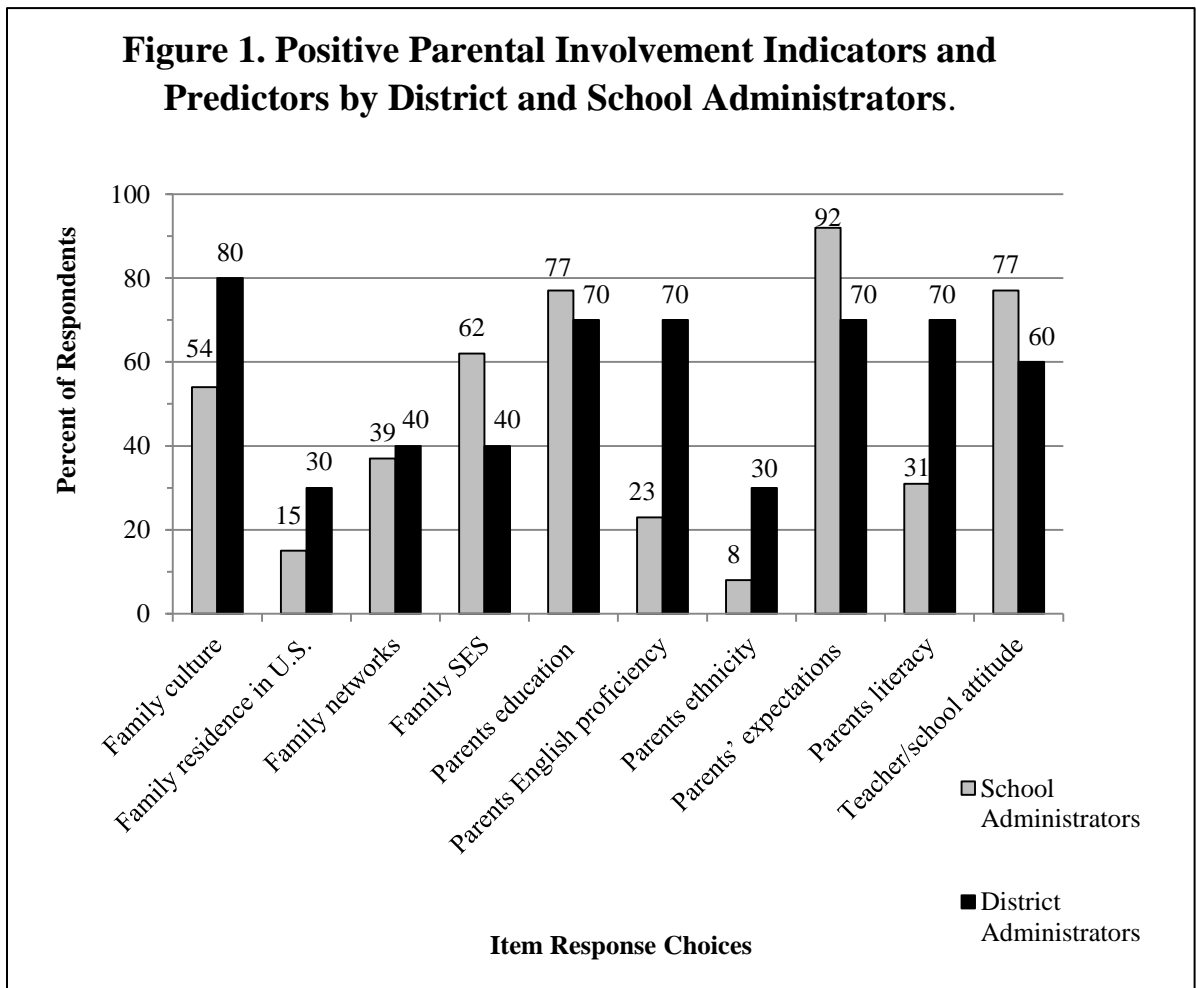
When asked the *most important* result from parental involvement, all respondents chose, “Increased collaboration between parents and teachers that positively impacts student learning.” A non-rural, Title I elementary administrator described the long term benefit of increased collaboration as an “Increased positive relationship between the parent and the school which would ultimately affect student achievement.” A non-rural, Title I elementary teacher added, “When parents are involved with their students education by choice and intrinsic motivation, it improves behavior and student performance.”

Additionally, all but two groups chose, “Increased student motivation to learn” as the second most important result of parent involvement. Respondents added comments relating to the benefits of parent involvement to the student and school including,

- “Students who are able to work with others and contribute to society.”
- “Increased student motivation to be successful in every aspect of their life.”
- “Greater success in school, both academically and socially.”

**Indicators and Predictors of Parental Involvement**

District administrator responses differed from other job title designations for Item 5, “The following items predict positive parental involvement.” Figure 1 illustrates the differences in responses between school and district administrators.



*Note:* Figure 1 is the distribution of responses for survey Item 5, “The following Items predict positive parental involvement,” for school and district administrators.

The majority (80%) of district administrators chose, “Family’s cultural values” whereas the most common response for the other job title designations, including school administrators,

were “Parents’ expectations for their child’s academic achievement.” In addition, 90% of those in the category “Other job” chose “Teacher and school attitude toward parents.” This discrepancy between administrator groups may be impacted by their level of direct involvement with students and families when implementing parent involvement programs.

When asked about the indicator which *most impacts* parental involvement for Item 6, 48-63% of respondents for all demographic groups chose, “Parents’ expectations for their child’s academic achievement.” Overall, the majority (60%) of respondents chose the same response for the Item. Most groups also chose “Teacher and school attitude toward parents” and “Parents’ educational background” as having importance in involvement. District Administrators were the only group to differ in responses by selecting one of these four responses to the item:

- “Parent expectations for their child’s academic achievement” (30%)
- “Parents’ educational background” (20%)
- “Family’s cultural values” (20%)
- “Teacher and school attitude toward parents” (20%)

A rural, Title I elementary teacher described how a combination of variables intersect to make an impact, “Parents’ interest and expectations combined with a schedule that allows them time during the school day” as well as “Work schedules prevent many interested parents from being involved at school.”

Survey Item 7 had a similar focus, “The following indicator *least impacts* parental involvement.” Rural respondents identified “Parents’ ethnic background” (32%) as the most common response as did 25% of the all respondents in the study. In contrast, non-rural participants chose “Family’s length of residence in the U.S” as their most common response (33%) to this Item. A non-rural, Title I elementary administrator identified challenges in pinpointing specific indicators, “I truly do not believe that a student’s level of poverty is the best indicator of parental involvement even though it seems to be blamed for everything from bullying to low graduation rates.”

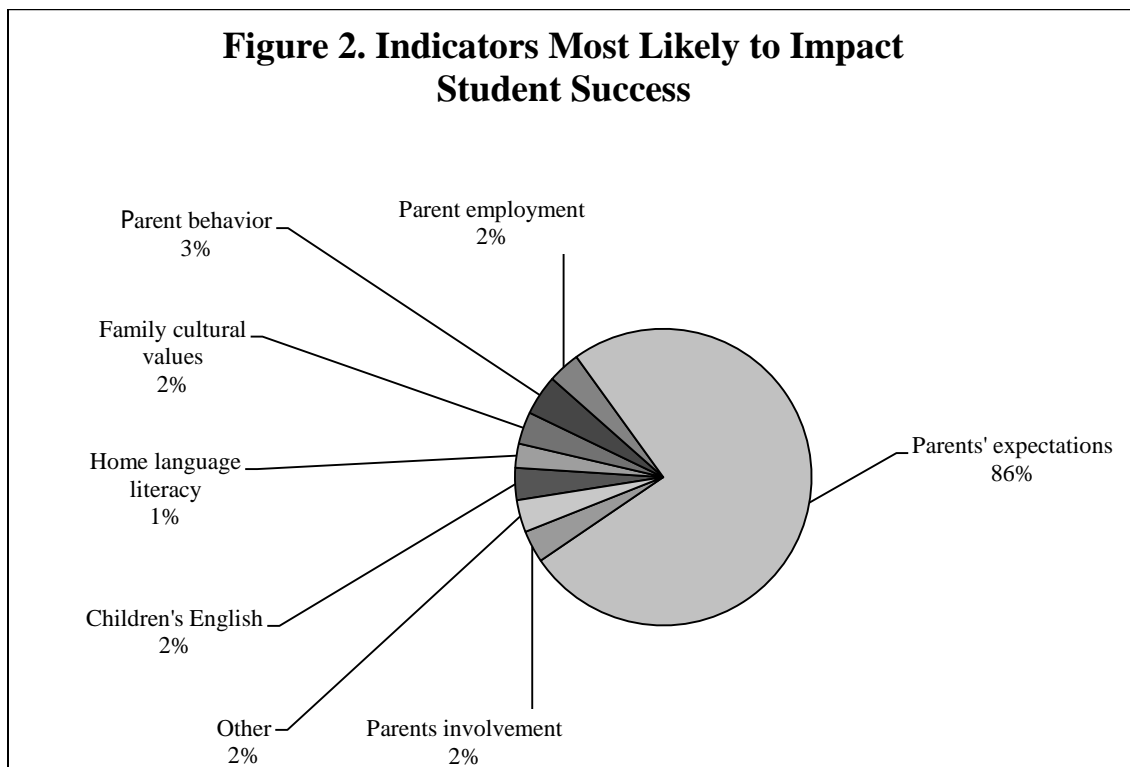
### **Parental Involvement as a Predictor of Student Success**

Responses to items in this category began to reveal answers to the second research question, “What type of parental involvement activities do educators perceive as having the most impact on student success in school?” One item within this theme asked respondents to identify, “The following indicator *most impacts* the likelihood of student success. Choose One.” The majority of respondents (86%) chose “Parents’ expectations and attitudes toward education” as the predictor that most impacts student success.

A non-rural, Title I elementary teacher explained, “We try to get our parents involved. A majority of them are in survival mode and school has been taken care of if they are there the majority of the time.” Additionally, a non-rural, Non-Title I high school teacher elaborated, “Many parents place a large amount of ‘trust’ in the educational setting their child is a part of and assume the school is taking care of all needs or don’t question (or get involved) with the direction the school is taking.”



Figure 2 illustrates the difference in responses to, “The following indicator *most impacts* the likelihood of student success” from all respondents.



*Note:* **Figure 2** displays the results from all respondents (n=376) for survey Item 9, “The following indicator *most impacts* the likelihood of student success.”

Several respondents added comments which were not addressed in the survey:

- “Depends on the child and the parents or if it is a single parent.”
- “Parental behaviors and unemployment can impact student’s success by increasing outside stress, changing the child's daily routine, etc.”
- “The students' friends and what their achievement level is.”
- “Stable household status (divorce, separation, etc.)”

These comments were a reflection of the experiences of the respondents as having an impact on the likelihood of student success.

### **Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement**

In response to Item 11, “My school incorporates varying cultures of languages of students/parents into the overall culture of the school community through... Indicate all that apply,” district administrators (90%) and elementary teachers (64%) responded with “Translating/Interpreting key information using parents’ home language(s).” All other demographic groups identified “Creating a welcoming and open climate for parents to visit the school” as the most common way their school incorporates culture. A non-rural, Title I elementary teacher illustrated efforts focused on the school population, “We have interpreters for all events and calendars, newsletters and other letters get translated. We also have a translator on hand to help communicate with parents.” Another non-rural, Title I elementary

teacher stated, “The school uses user-friendly words on report cards and other reports rather than technical terms so our parents can understand what is being written.”

Survey Item 12, “The indicator which *most impacts* incorporating varying cultures and languages...” resulted in every group choosing the same response (47% overall): “Creating a welcoming and open climate for parents to visit the school.” The second most common response (28% overall) was “Translating/interpreting key information using parents’ home language(s).” A non-rural, Title I middle school teacher agreed,

While there are those in our building who can communicate with our non-English speaking parents, most of us cannot. I believe that in order to foster our parental involvement, we will need to promote teachers’ Spanish speaking skills and we need to continue to offer English courses to our parents through the community resource center.

In relation to cultural sensitivity in a school with a small minority population, a non-rural, Non-Title I middle school teacher reported, “We don’t have a lot of diversity but on a case by case basis, we offer support as needed.” A rural, Non-Title I teacher related similarly, “They (resources) are ‘available’ if ever parents need to make school contact in a very positive, supporting way.” These portray an overall support of all students and their families.

The last item in this category, Item 13 asked, “The following indicator *least impacts* incorporating varying cultures and languages of students/parents . . . .” Three responses were chosen most frequently by district level administrators:

- “Inviting parents to school as guest speakers”
- “Involving parents in cultural or holiday celebrations/activities”
- “Providing transportation for school events for parents living in outlying areas”

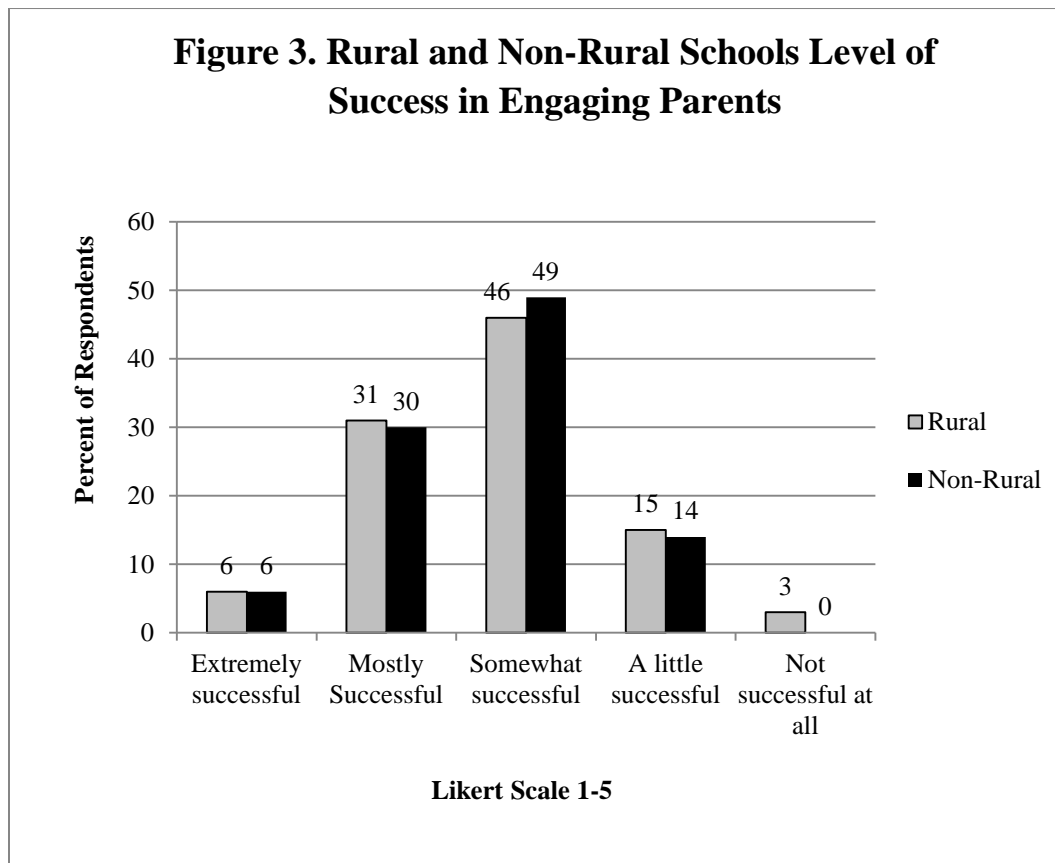
Twenty-two percent of the district administrators chose one of these responses. No other demographic group chose any of these three responses the most.

### **Parental Involvement Recruitment**

Gauging the success of efforts to involve parents was the theme of the next category. Item 14, “The following indicates my school’s level of success in engaging parents” was the only item in the category and used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (*extremely successful*) to 1 (*not successful at all*). Responses from participants in schools with less than 14% Hispanic student population rated their school “Mostly successful” 44% of the time, whereas those from schools with a Hispanic student population of over 14% primarily (51%) rated their schools success as “Somewhat successful.”

The item was rated “mostly successful” by 40% of district level administrators, whereas most other job groups rated their schools success as “Somewhat successful”. This result may reflect the level of direct involvement district administrators have on the actual implementation of parent and family programs. These individuals most likely are involved in administrative planning, whereas those who are directly working with students and their families may have a different perspective of the schools’ efforts. Overall, all survey respondents chose “Mostly successful” 30% of the time and “Somewhat successful” 47% of the time.

Figure 3 illustrates how nearly half of all rural respondents (49%) rated their schools success “somewhat successful” as did 46% of non-rural participants.



*Note:* **Figure 3** displays responses to survey Item 14, “The following indicates my school’s level of success in engaging parents,” based upon respondent Locale Code (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010).

Educators are faced with the challenge of finding a balance between engaging and motivating parents and the reality of social and demographic factors which can prohibit this type of engagement. A non-rural, Title I elementary teacher reported, “The students’ friends and what their achievement level is” are key predictors of student success. A non-rural, Title I middle school teacher added, “Parental behaviors and unemployment can impact students’ success by increasing outside stress.”

### **Opportunities for Parental Involvement**

Engaging parents in school related activities can vary and potentially impact the level of involvement of parents. When asked, “The following opportunities are available for parental involvement in my school” (Item 15), every group selected “parent-teacher conferences.” In addition, nearly half of the groups chose, “communication between parents and school” as an opportunity available in their school.

Several respondents commented about having ‘family night’ activities available. A non-rural, Title I elementary teacher stated,

I believe our school does a very adequate job of involving parents in a variety of ways. However, I do believe that we would benefit immensely if we searched for more ways to connect with more of the families in our district, most notably the increasing number of Hispanic families.

Within the same category, Item 16 inquired as to the opportunities which “*most impact* parental involvement in my school.” Respondents from Title I (48%) and Non-Title (58%) schools chose “Communication between parents and school (newsletter, email, social media, etc.)” most often. A non-rural, Non-Title I elementary teacher related, “Our school has not consistently used the newsletter this year. I feel it has had a negative impact.” Another non-rural, Title I elementary teacher discussed how this communication can impact student attitude and achievement, “Parents are the primary example of normal behavior for every student. If parents show their concern for student’s education, students will feel that education is important and valued.”

Item 17, “The following opportunities *least impact* parental involvement in my school” resulted in respondents from schools with a Hispanic student population of less than 14% (25%) as well as those in Non-Title I schools (25%) choosing “Translation and interpretation for key school activities.” All other groups chose, “Fundraising activities for school/program/class events” as having the least impact.

### **Challenges of Parental Involvement**

The final category focused on the challenges specific to each respondent’s school. Item 18, “The following are challenges experienced by my school when involving parents in school related activities,” resulted in 90% of district administrators and 100% of school administrators choosing the response, “Parents’ work schedules.”

In the same focus area, Item 19 asked “The following challenge *most experienced* by my school when involving parents in school related activities.” The most common responses to the item were “Parents socio-economic status” and “Parents’ work schedules.” A Non-Title I middle school teacher reinforced this outcome,

I do think we've lost the ‘personal touch’ with communication ever since technology has come into play. We don't send out newsletters, we don't have open houses, we don't ‘talk’ as much. Parents are also so busy---they don't have as much time to spend with us. We have a PTO, but they don't even meet in the evenings due to lack of attendance.

This theme elicited the greatest number of additional comments from survey participants. These responses revolved around challenges to eliciting parent participation.

- “Parental view of the importance or lack of importance of education.”
- “The educational level of the parents.”
- “Parents having to deal with poverty.”
- “(Parents) wanting to meet their child's basic needs” first.
- “Language challenges” for both parents and children.

An elementary administrator in attempting to sort out the schools' biggest challenge stated, "I see several that carry equal weight: family structure, parents' educational background, work schedules, school-home cultural differences, and language differences." Several respondents echoed similar challenges.

## SUMMARY

Creating an environment which will embrace and accept a family involvement model is a challenge regardless of which model is used. "Research indicates that programs and practices of partnership make a difference in whether, how, and which families are involved in their children's education" (National Network of Partnership Schools, 1996-2009, p.1). Survey respondents from various districts and schools across the state displayed similar perceptions about parental involvement in schools regardless of Title I status, job title, or ethnicity. Parents' expectations for a child's academic achievement were critical elements identified by all administrators and teachers participating in the study.

The most important result from parental involvement was expressed by a non-rural, Title I elementary administrator who emphasized the importance of building a "positive relationship between the parent and the school which would ultimately affect student achievement." A non-rural, Title I elementary teacher confirmed, "When parents are involved with their students education by choice and intrinsic motivation, it improves behavior and student performance."

In response to the questions focusing on culturally responsive parental involvement, the item identified as *most impacting* cultures and languages of students into the overall school community was, "Creating a welcoming and open climate for parents to visit the school" by all demographic groups. Additionally, in the category of Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement, the second most highly rated response was "translating/interpreting key information using parents' home language(s)." Through "building meaningful, authentic and culturally-inclusive partnership(s) with our families and their communities" (Seattle Public Schools, 2010, Family and Community Engagement Framework Section, Para. 2), schools are better able to provide a welcoming, inviting environment to embrace all families.

A non-rural, Title I middle school teacher shared the value in building cultural partnerships for the inclusion of all families,

I know we have much work to do before we will routinely have parents in the building, volunteering, or involved on a regular basis. Part of this is a language barrier issue. While there are those in our building who can communicate with our non-English speaking parents, most of us cannot. I believe that in order to foster our parental involvement, we will need to promote teachers' Spanish speaking skills and we need to continue to offer English courses to our parents.

A non-rural, Title I high school teacher,

This school has done a very good job of communicating with the parents of our students about students through our newsletters which we send out in Spanish. Our Parent/Teacher/Student conferences offer an interpreter and have been scheduled at

several different times during the day to see if the numbers would go up. Our school really cares.

“Researchers who study what families do to support children’s learning and development have repeatedly documented the powerful influence that families have” (Amatea, 2009, p. 24) on student success in school. This is only the beginning of what schools can do in an effort toward “harnessing extra resources and support with family and community involvement” (NNPS, 1996-2009, p. 1) in an effort to increase student achievement well into the future. In order for schools to reap the benefits of family involvement efforts, it is vital that all stakeholders be actively engaged. This ongoing challenge is already felt in schools across the state.

## REFERENCES

- Amatea, E. (2009). *Building culturally responsive family school relationships*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Anfara, V., Jr., & Mertens, S.B. (2008). What research says: Varieties of parent involvement in schooling. *Middle School Journal*, 39(3), 58-64.
- Bouffard, S., & Weiss, H. (2008). Thinking big: A new framework for family involvement policy, practice, and research. *The Evaluation Exchange*, XIV(1 & 2), 2-5.
- Chrispeels, J. H., & Rivero, E. (2001). Engaging Latino families for student success: How parent education can reshape parents sense of place in the education of their children. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(2), 119-169.
- Comer, J. P., & Haynes, N. M. (1991). Parent involvement in schools: An ecological approach. *The Elementary School Journal*, 91(3), Special Issue: Educational Partnerships: Home-School Community, 271-277.
- Constantino, S. M. (2003). *Engaging all families: Creating a positive school culture by putting research into practice*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.
- Epstein, J. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Epstein, J.L. (2010, Nov). School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Kappan*. Retrieved from: <kappanmagazine.org>.
- Epstein, J. L., & Salinas, K. (2004). Partnering with all families and communities. *Educational Leadership*, 61(8). Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Gardner Chadwick, K. (2004). *Improving schools through community engagement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Glanz, J. (2006). *School-community leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools.
- Hong, S., & Ho, H-Z. (2005). Direct and indirect longitudinal effects of parental involvement on student achievement: Second-order latent growth modeling across ethnic groups. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(1), 32-42.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Battiato, A. C., Walker J. M. T., Reed, R. P., DeJong, J. M., & Jones, K. P. (2001). Parental involvement in homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3), 195-209.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2010). *Common core of data (CCD): Identification of rural locales*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education,

- Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Retrieved April 1, 2010 from [http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural\\_locales.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural_locales.asp)
- National Network of Partnership Schools. (1996-2009). *Sampler: Family and community involvement in reading: Make partnerships part of the story*. Retrieved from <http://www.csos.jhu.edu>
- Park, E., & Palardy, G. J. (2004). The impact of parental involvement and authoritativeness on academic achievement: A cross-ethnic comparison. In S. J. Paik (Ed.), *Advancing educational productivity: Policy implications from national databases—Research in educational productivity*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Seattle Public Schools District. (2010). *Seattle Public Schools: Family and community engagement framework*. Retrieved from [www.seattlepublicschools.org](http://www.seattlepublicschools.org)
- The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. (2011). *Realize the Dream: Quality Education is a Civil Right*. Retrieved from [www.realizethedream.org](http://www.realizethedream.org)
- United States Census Bureau. (2012). State and County Quick Facts: Nebraska QuickLinks. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/310001k.html>
- University of Washington College of Education. (2010). *Center for Multicultural Education: Comer School Development Program*. Retrieved from <http://education.washington.edu/cme/comer.htm>
- Weiss, H.B., Kreider, H., Lopez, M.E., and Chatman-Nelson, C. (2010). *Preparing educators to engage families: Case studies using an ecological systems framework*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Westmoreland, H., Rosenberg, H., Lopez, M., & Weiss, H. (2009, July). Seeing is believing: Promising practices for how school districts promote family engagement. *Harvard Family Research Project Issue Brief*.



***Bridging Gaps to Improve  
Teaching and Learning***

**Section IV: Appendices**



**Appendix A**

**Study 1: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress  
of Title I “Needs Improvement” Schools**

**IRB Approval Letter**



January 19, 2012

Jody Isernhagen  
Department of Educational Administration  
132 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

Jackie Florendo  
Department of Educational Administration  
900 Dundee Ct Crete, NE 68333-2634

IRB Number: 20110112359 EX  
Project ID: 12359  
Project Title: 2012 Title I School Improvement

Dear Jody:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 01/19/2012.

1. The approved informed consent forms have been uploaded to NUGrant (files with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use these forms to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent forms, please submit the revised forms to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.
2. The interview phase has been conditionally approved. The principal approval letters will need to be submitted as part of a change request prior to conducting the interviews. You do not need to submit the principal approvals all at once. We can approve schools on a case by case basis.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

*Becky R. Freeman*

Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB



**Appendix B**  
**Researchers for the Project**





## **Researchers for the Project 2011-2012**

### ***Principal Investigator***

**Jody C. Isernhagen, Ed.D.**, is an Associate Professor in Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She received her doctoral degree from Virginia Tech and has been a teacher, assistant principal, principal, supervisor of elementary education, and superintendent in pre-K through 12 schools. Dr. Isernhagen served as the primary investigator for the STARS Process and is the primary instructor for the School Improvement Specialist Program and the Professional Development Leadership Certificate Program. She serves as the State Accreditation and North Central Accreditation External Leader for four school districts in Nebraska. Dr. Isernhagen was awarded the College of Education and Human Sciences Distinguished Teaching Award, the Charman Outstanding Professor Award, and the NASCD Al Kilgore Award of Excellence.

### ***Secondary Investigator***

**Jackie Florendo, M.Ed.**, received her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Doane College and is currently a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

### ***Project Assistant***

**Nicole Effle, M.A.**, received her Master's degree in Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Counseling from Doane College, Lincoln campus. She has been working at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in a research capacity for just over one year.



## **Appendix C**

### **Study I: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress of Title I “Needs Improvement” Schools**

#### **Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Survey**



## Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability - Administrator Survey

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please provide the following demographic information by responding to the questions or selecting the appropriate category for each area.

1. **District Name:** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **School Name:** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Mark all the position(s) below that you hold in your school district:**  
 Principal     Asst Principal     Title I Coordinator     Intervention Program Mgr     Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ELEM     ELEM     ELEM     ELEM     ELEM  
 MS/HS     MS/HS     MS/HS     MS/HS     MS/HS
4. **My Gender:**     Male     Female
5. **Highest Degree Earned:**     B.A.     M.A.     Ed.D.     Ph.D.
6. **Total Years of Experience in Education:** \_\_\_\_\_
7. **Total Years of Experience in my School:** \_\_\_\_\_

	Strongly	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly
<b>Directions:</b> Please click on the circle that best describes your response to each statement.					
<b>TITLE I SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN</b>					
1. I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teachers were involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
3. All teachers in my school were involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have consistently communicated the Title I Goals to teachers in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teachers in my school understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>     					
<b>CLEAR FOCUS</b>					
8. My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My school engages in continuous school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
10. There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need.	1	2	3	4	5
11. There is a clear articulation of standards in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Teachers in my school engage students in order to improve academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The curriculum in my school is supportive of the academic needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The curriculum in my school is aligned with the state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments are used to support instruction and enhance student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5

## Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability - Administrator Survey

COMMENTS:					
	<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.					
<b>CULTURE</b>					
18. The culture of our schools plays a dominant role in exemplary student performance.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
22. The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The culture of our school initiates caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff and students.	1	2	3	4	5
26. The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.	1	2	3	4	5
28. The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
29. The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am passionate about student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES</b>					
32. Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers in my school collectively reflect on instructional strategies used daily in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Teachers in my school use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Teachers in my school search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Teachers in my school break down and examine student performance data by grade, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Teachers in my school reflect and compare their actual teaching practice to what they had planned and hoped to achieve.	1	2	3	4	5
39. My teachers are implementing research-based interventions and strategies to meet Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school's Title I Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					

## Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability - Administrator Survey

<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>					
43. Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Professional development was provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Groups of teachers in my school have shared planning periods for professional growth.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Teachers are encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Teachers in my school seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Teachers in my school collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>DATA/MONITORING</b>					
51. Data are essential to our school improvement process.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Data are used to monitor and focus our school/district's Title I Improvement Goals and other successes.	1	2	3	4	5
53. The faculty and staff monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.	1	2	3	4	5
54. Teachers in my school examine disaggregated standardized test score data.	1	2	3	4	5
55. Every classroom is implementing our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
56. Teachers in my school adjust their instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
57. Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school's Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
58. My teachers monitor students' additional learning time to ensure success.	1	2	3	4	5
59. Changes in grade-level classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
60. Changes in schoolwide performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.	1	2	3	4	5
62. Teachers in my school examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.	1	2	3	4	5
63. Teachers in my school are engaged in early identification of at-risk behavior indicators impacting student performance (i.e., attendance, behavior, etc.).					
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.					
	<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>					
64. Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
65. Community members are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
66. Parents are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.	1	2	3	4	5
67. Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.	1	2	3	4	5
68. The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
69. Community members understand why our school has a Title I School Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5

## Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability - Administrator Survey

70. Community members have high expectations for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>OVERALL IMPROVEMENT</b>					
71. Data shows that progress is being made in meeting our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
72. During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers about the way they are helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
73. Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap.	1	2	3	4	5
74. The use of our research-based interventions is leading to the attainment of our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
75. Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
76. The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement.					
77. Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement.					
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>MODEL OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN</b>					
<b>Directions:</b> <b>For Question 78 please use the area provided to respond to the question.</b>					
78. Describe the most prevalent instructional strategy or intervention being used in your school.					

On behalf of the Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Project, thank you for sharing your knowledge and thoughts.





## Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability - Teacher Survey

COMMENTS:					
<p><b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.</p>	<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>CULTURE</b>					
18. The culture of our schools plays a dominant role in exemplary student performance.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
22. The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The culture of our school initiates caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff and students.	1	2	3	4	5
26. The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.	1	2	3	4	5
28. The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
29. The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am passionate about student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES</b>					
32. Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers in my school collectively reflect on instructional strategies used daily in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I use peer coaching and peer review to improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I break down and examine student performance data by grade, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I reflect and compare their actual teaching practice to what they had planned and hoped to achieve.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I am implementing research-based interventions and strategies to meet Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school's Title I Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>					
43. Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data.	1	2	3	4	5

## Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability - Teacher Survey

44. Professional development was provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Teachers in my school collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>DATA/MONITORING</b>					
51. Data are essential to our school improvement process.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Data are used to monitor and focus our school/district's Title I Improvement Goals and other successes.	1	2	3	4	5
53. Teachers in my school monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.	1	2	3	4	5
54. I examine disaggregated standardized test score data.	1	2	3	4	5
55. Every classroom is implementing our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
56. I adjust my instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
57. Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school's Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
58. I monitor students' additional learning time to ensure success.	1	2	3	4	5
59. Changes in grade-level classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
60. Changes in schoolwide performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.	1	2	3	4	5
62. I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.	1	2	3	4	5
63. I am engaged in early identification of at-risk behavior indicators impacting student performance (i.e., attendance, behavior, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
64. I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students.	1	2	3	4	5
65. I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students' performance based on data.	1	2	3	4	5
66. I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students' performance.	1	2	3	4	5
67. I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>					
68. Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
69. Community members are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
70. Parents are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.	1	2	3	4	5
71. Community members are engaged in decision making based on data that is analyzed.	1	2	3	4	5
72. The Title I Improvement Plan is communicated to all stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
73. Community members understand why our school has a Title I School Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
74. Community members have high expectations for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5



**Appendix D**

**Study I: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of  
Title I “Needs Improvement” Schools**

**Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Protocol**



**NEBRASKA STATEWIDE TITLE I ACCOUNTABILITY  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL  
2011-2012**

**Qualitative Research Purpose:** *Examine the success of the implementation of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans to improve student achievement in identified schools.*

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Profile**

Participant Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_ Title I Coordinator @ HS MS ELEM \_\_\_\_ Principal/Asst. Principal @ HS MS ELEM

Years at present position and site: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Years in Education: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction:**

1. Thank you for taking the time to visit with me today.
2. I am serving as an interviewer for the Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Project conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This research is being conducted so that the Nebraska Department of Education has a better understanding of how Title I Improvement Plans are developed and implemented in identified Nebraska Title I Schools.
3. First, I want to assure you that this interview is strictly confidential. Information provided by school and district staff is reported or released in aggregated form only. Districts, schools, and individuals are not identified.
4. I have an Informed Consent form outlining your rights as a research participant. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw from the study at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or the Nebraska Department of Education. Contact persons for the project and the Institutional Review Board are provided on the Informed Consent Form in case you have questions or concerns. I have a copy for you to sign and one for you to keep for your use.
5. It is important that educators participating in this research be willing participants. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw from the interview at any time without harming your relationship with your district, this project, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or the Nebraska Department of Education. Should you decide not to participate you may either return to your normal activities or sit with me for the interview period. Are you willing to participate in this interview?
6. I am going to record this interview so that the interview can be transcribed (a typed copy of the interview will be made) and we have an accurate rendering of your responses.
7. It is important that I maintain the integrity of your words and intentions; therefore, I may ask you to review the transcription if I have any difficulties with the interpretation.
8. We are interested in finding out about the perceptions that you hold regarding the development and implementation of your Title I Improvement Plan relative to the focus of the plan, classroom interventions used, professional development, data monitoring, community involvement, and overall improvement.
9. Please feel free to discuss your views openly. From time to time, I may have additional questions to further understand a concept that you have shared.
10. Let's begin. Please state your name, school, district, and give verbal permission to record this interview by repeating this statement, "I (your name) at (school/district name) willingly give my permission to record this interview."

## Interview Questions

*DIRECTIONS:* Place a check when the participant mentions each probe so that you do not repeat the probe.

1. To what extent are the administration and teachers involved in the development and monitoring of the Title I Improvement Plan?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. What is the role of your Academic Compact Team in monitoring the goals for the Title I Improvement Plan?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. To what extent are you involved in monitoring the Title I Improvement Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. To what extent are teachers involved in monitoring the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. To what extent is data used to determine the achievement of the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. In what ways have you communicated the progress of your Title I Goals to teachers, staff, and parents?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

2. What is your school's focus, and how does it relate to your identified areas of need?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. To what extent is there a school-wide focus on improvement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. What processes are implemented to build your school's capacity to improve?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. How is curriculum aligned to state standards? How is curriculum aligned between and among grade levels?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes



3. To what extent is your school culture conducive to successful school improvement?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. How would you describe your school culture and the values it promotes?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. What effect has the school culture had on student achievement and teacher instruction?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. What processes do you use to share your school beliefs, values, and understandings related to Title I within the school community? How do you ensure that your teachers have embraced it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. How do the school's shared values and beliefs affect the community?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

4. To what extent do your teachers use instructional strategies to meet your school's Title I Goals?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. What instructional strategies are teachers in your school using?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. How do teachers make sure they are using the most effective strategies for student improvement in their classrooms?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Where can teachers get assistance or training for their instructional strategies?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. How was data used to select instructional strategies?
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. How have changes in instructional strategies affected student learning?
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. To what extent has professional development been provided to address the instructional strategies being used?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

5. To what extent is professional development provided to support your school's Title I Goals?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. How is data used to determine the professional development needs of teachers in your school?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. What forms of teacher collaboration are in place in your school?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. In what way does professional development support the implementation of research-based interventions and instructional strategies?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. How have new professional development experiences impacted classroom instruction?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

6. To what extent is data used to monitor the implementation of the Title I Improvement Goals in your school?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. What data is analyzed? How are the results of the analysis used?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. How is classroom instruction and student achievement monitored?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. How is school-wide performance monitored?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. What processes are used to ensure that every classroom teacher is implementing the Title I Goals?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

7. To what extent are parents and community members engaged in the Title I Improvement process?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. To what extent are parents and community members engaged in identifying and monitoring the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. To what extent are parents and community members involved in using data to make decisions about student performance?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. To what extent do parents and community members understand why the school is in Title I Improvement?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

8. To what extent has the overall Title I Improvement process improved student performance so far?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. How do you as an administrator focus on the Title I Goals during teacher evaluations?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. To what extent do you discuss specific classroom student achievement data with teachers?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. How much do you know about the student achievement data of each classroom?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. What does your current data indicate about your school's progress in meeting the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. What strategies, interventions, or other changes have been most important in improving student achievement for your school?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

9. What comments, recommendations, or final observations would you like to make about your Title I Improvement Plan or student performance that we have not discussed?

**Descriptive Notes:**

**Reflective Notes**

**Appendix E**

**Study 2: Educator Perceptions of Parent Involvement in  
Nebraska Public Schools**

**IRB Approval Letter**





December 21, 2011

Jody Isernhagen  
Department of Educational Administration  
132 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

Jackie Florendo  
Department of Educational Administration  
900 Dundee Ct Crete, NE 68333-2634

IRB Number: 20111212326 EX  
Project ID: 12326  
Project Title: Parent-Family Involvement in Education

Dear Jody:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 12/21/2011.

1. Please include the IRB approval number (IRB# 20111212326 EX) in the consent documents. Please email a copy of this document, with the number included, to [irb@unl.edu](mailto:irb@unl.edu) for our records. If you need to make changes to the consent document please submit the revised document to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman

Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB





**Appendix F**

**Study 2: Educator Perceptions of Parent Involvement in  
Nebraska Public Schools**

**Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey**



## Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please provide the following demographic information by responding to the questions or marking the appropriate category for each area.

1. **District Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **School Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Primary Position: Please mark the primary position you hold in your school**

Administrator: <input type="checkbox"/> School Administrator	Teacher: <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary	<input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Facilitator
<input type="checkbox"/> District Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/> (Coach)
<input type="checkbox"/> District/School Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> High School	<input type="checkbox"/> Counselor
<input type="checkbox"/> (Title I, ELL, SPED Coordinator)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		

<p><b>Directions:</b> Please respond to each of the survey items by indicating the item that best reflects your thoughts.</p>
<p><b>Parental Involvement Defined</b></p> <p>1. The definition of parental involvement is: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Engaging parents in parent-teacher conferences</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Engaging parents in parent-teacher conferences and school-wide activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Engaging parents in parent-teacher conferences, school-wide activities, and volunteering at school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Engaging parents in parent-teacher conferences, school-wide activities, volunteering at school, and discussing their personal goals and expectations for academic achievement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Explain: _____</p>
<p><b>Parental Involvement Results</b></p> <p>2. Parental involvement results in: <b>(Indicate all that apply)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate school-age behavior</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Enrichment by parents in areas of interest for their child</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improved grades and academic achievement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improved parent-child relationship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improved teacher-child relationship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased collaboration among parents, teachers, and staff</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased collaboration between parents and teachers that positively impacts student learning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased student motivation to learn</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased completion rate of homework</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parents providing additional learning resources for their child outside of school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Explain: _____</p>
<p>3. The most important result from parental involvement is: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate school-age behavior</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Enrichment by parents in areas of interest for their child</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improved grades and academic achievement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improved parent-child relationship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improved teacher-child relationship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased collaboration among parents, teachers, and staff</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased collaboration between parents and teachers that positively impacts student learning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased student motivation to learn</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased completion rate of homework</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parents providing additional learning resources for their child outside of school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Explain: _____</p>

## Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey

<p>4. The <b>least important</b> result from parental involvement is: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate school-age behavior</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Enrichment by parents in areas of interest for their child</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Improved grades and academic achievement</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Improved parent-child relationship</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Improved teacher-child relationship</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased collaboration among parents, teachers, and staff</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased collaboration between parents and teachers that positively impacts student learning</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased student motivation to learn</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased completion rate of homework</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents providing additional learning resources for their child outside of school</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Explain:</li></ul>
<p><b>Indicators and Predictors of Parental Involvement:</b></p>
<p>5. The following items predict positive parental involvement: <b>(Indicate all that apply)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's cultural values</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's length of residence in the U.S.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's social networks</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's socio-economic status</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' educational background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' English proficiency</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' ethnic background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' expectations for their child's academic achievement</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' home language literacy</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher and school attitude toward parents</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: Explain:</li></ul>
<p>6. The following indicator <b>most impacts</b> parental involvement: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's cultural values</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's length of residence in the U.S.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's social networks</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's socio-economic status</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' educational background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' English proficiency</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' ethnic background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' expectations for their child's academic achievement</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' home language literacy</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher and school attitude toward parents</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: Explain:</li></ul>
<p>7. The following indicator <b>least impacts</b> parental involvement: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's cultural values</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's length of residence in the U.S.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's social networks</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family's socio-economic status</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' educational background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' English proficiency</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' ethnic background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' expectations for their child's academic achievement</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' home language literacy</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher and school attitude toward parents</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: Explain:</li></ul>

## Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey

Parental Involvement as a Predictor of Student Success
8. The following predictors impact the likelihood of student success: <b>(Indicate all that apply)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Children's English proficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Children's home language literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Family's cultural values <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' behaviors <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' employment status <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' expectations and attitudes toward education <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' involvement in school activities <input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please Explain:
9. The following indicator <b>most</b> impacts the likelihood of student success: <b>(Choose one)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Children's English proficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Children's home language literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Family's cultural values <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' behaviors <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' employment status <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' expectations and attitudes toward education <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' involvement in school activities <input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please Explain:
10. The following indicator <b>least</b> impacts the likelihood of student success: <b>(Choose one)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Children's English proficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Children's home language literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Family's cultural values <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' behaviors <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' employment status <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' expectations and attitudes toward education <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' involvement in school activities <input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please Explain:
Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement
11. My school incorporates varying cultures and languages of students/ parents into the overall culture of the school community through: <b>(Indicate all that apply)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting the school calendar to meet varying cultural needs of the community <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating social services to support families and children in-need <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a welcoming and open climate for parents to visit the school <input type="checkbox"/> Home visits to understand family background and cultural values <input type="checkbox"/> Integrating cultural values into curriculum <input type="checkbox"/> Inviting parents to school as guest speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Involving parents in cultural or holiday celebrations/activities <input type="checkbox"/> Providing transportation for school events for parents living in outlying areas <input type="checkbox"/> Translating/Interpreting key information using parents' home language(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please Explain:

## Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey

<p>12. The following indicator <b>most impacts</b> incorporating varying cultures and languages of students/ parents into the overall culture of my school community: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting the school calendar to meet varying cultural needs of the community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating social services to support families and children in-need</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Creating a welcoming and open climate for parents to visit the school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home visits to understand family background and cultural values</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Integrating cultural values into curriculum</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inviting parents to school as guest speakers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Involving parents in cultural or holiday celebrations/activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Providing transportation for school events for parents living in outlying areas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Translating/Interpreting key information using parents' home language(s)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please Explain:</li> </ul>
<p>13. The following indicator <b>least impacts</b> incorporating varying cultures and languages of students/ parents into the overall culture of my school community: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting the school calendar to meet varying cultural needs of the community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating social services to support families and children in-need</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Creating a welcoming and open climate for parents to visit the school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home visits to understand family background and cultural values</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Integrating cultural values into curriculum</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inviting parents to school as guest speakers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Involving parents in cultural or holiday celebrations/activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Providing transportation for school events for parents living in outlying areas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Translating/Interpreting key information using parents' home language(s)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please Explain:</li> </ul>
<p><b>Parental Involvement Recruitment</b></p>
<p>14. The following indicates my school's level of success in engaging parents: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Extremely successful</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly successful</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat successful</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A little successful</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not successful at all</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities for Parental Involvement</b></p>
<p>15. The following opportunities are available for parental involvement in my school: <b>(Indicate all that apply)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Communication between parents and school (newsletter, email, social media, etc)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Family learning activities (math, literacy, back-to-school, curriculum, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising activities for school/program/class events</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent education programs, classes, workshops (ELL, computer skills, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent-teacher conferences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent-teacher organization/association</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> School/program/class volunteers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Translation and interpretation for key school activities (newsletter, conferences, learning activities, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please explain:</li> </ul>

## Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey

<p>16. The following opportunities <b>most impact</b> parental involvement in my school: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Communication between parents and school (newsletter, email, social media, etc)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family learning activities (math, literacy, back-to-school, curriculum, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising activities for school/program/class events</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent education programs, classes, workshops (ELL, computer skills, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent-teacher conferences</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent-teacher organization/association</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> School/program/class volunteers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Translation and interpretation for key school activities (newsletter, conferences, learning activities, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please explain:</li></ul>
<p>17. The following opportunities <b>least impact</b> parental involvement in my school: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Communication between parents and school (newsletter, email, social media, etc)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family learning activities (math, literacy, back-to-school, curriculum, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising activities for school/program/class events</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent education programs, classes, workshops (ELL, computer skills, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent-teacher conferences</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent-teacher organization/association</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> School/program/class volunteers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Translation and interpretation for key school activities (newsletter, conferences, learning activities, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please explain:</li></ul>
<p><b>Challenges of Parental Involvement</b></p>
<p>18. The following are challenges experienced by my school when involving parents in school related activities: <b>(Indicate all that apply)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Communication between parents and schools</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family structure (single-parent family, nuclear family, extended family, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' educational background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' socio-economic status</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' work schedules</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment of <b>all</b> parents to get involved in children's education</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> School-home cultural differences</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> School-home language differences</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Techniques for parental involvement</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Transportation</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please explain:</li></ul>
<p>19. The following challenge is <b>most experienced</b> by my school when involving parents in school related activities: <b>(Choose one)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Communication between parents and schools</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family structure (single-parent family, nuclear family, extended family, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' educational background</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' socio-economic status</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' work schedules</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment of <b>all</b> parents to get involved in children's education</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> School-home cultural differences</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> School-home language differences</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Techniques for parental involvement</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Transportation</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please explain:</li></ul>

## Nebraska Educator Parent Involvement Survey

20. The following challenge is **least experienced** by my school when involving parents in school related activities: **(Choose one)**
- Communication between parents and schools
  - Family structure (single-parent family, nuclear family, extended family, etc.)
  - Parents' educational background
  - Parents' socio-economic status
  - Parents' work schedules
  - Recruitment of **all** parents to get involved in children's education
  - School-home cultural differences
  - School-home language differences
  - Techniques for parental involvement
  - Transportation
  - Other. Please explain:

Additional comments regarding Parental Involvement:

On behalf of the Parent-Family Involvement in Education, research project, thank you for sharing your knowledge and thoughts.