READY SCHOOLS: ASSESSING THE VALUE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT VARIABLES AS PREDICTORS OF SCHOOLS’ READINESS FOR CHILDREN

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READY SCHOOLS: ASSESSING THE VALUE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT VARIABLES AS PREDICTORS OF SCHOOLS’ READINESS FOR CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Goals of social equality, eradication of poverty, and national security have peppered U.S. educational history. In response curricula, policies, and processes are constantly evolving to meet perceived needs. Nowadays “academic achievement” and “accountability” are of greatest interest to stakeholders. While students are tested for proficiency in a myriad of subjects and schools are held responsible for the outcomes, we are just beginning to understand the conditions that must exist within a school to ensure students are able to learn—what it takes for schools to be “ready.” This study extends what has been recently learned about schools’ readiness for children, as defined by the National Education Goals Panel and measured by an abridged version of the High/Scope Ready School Assessment (2005). It examines the relationship of social context to schools’ readiness for children. Social context data is drawn from the Ohio Department of Education and the U.S. Census databases. Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to assess the effect the independent variables have on school readiness.
DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to Jeff Buckshaw

who served as a motivator when the process became
difficult and illustrated what giving 110% truly means.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Rose (1995) refers to public school classrooms as “miniature public spaces.” They reflect the culture and diversity of the surrounding community as well as social challenges. Public education accounts for 25% of state and local spending in the United States and employs approximately 33% of all government civil servants (Raffel, 2007). For many Americans the public school is their first encounter with civil service, yet the operations of the school bureaucracy and the quality of service delivery have been ignored by public administration researchers (Raffel, 2007). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) has brought attention to the effectiveness of schools and the achievement gap that exists between children living in advantaged and disadvantaged communities. However, No Child Left Behind was enacted before the goals of the Educate America Act of 1994 (also called Goals 2000) were fully realized. The first of eight goals in the Educate America Act is to ensure that all children arrive at school ready to learn. This entails giving all children access to a high-quality preschool program, offering parents training and support they need to get children ready for school, and making sure all children arrive at school healthy and fed so their minds would be alert. All this was
supposed to have taken place by the year 2000. However, not all eligible children were enrolled in preschool (not all preschool programs were fully funded), not all parents took part in training, and not all children were arriving at school “healthy” and ready to learn.\footnote{The National Education Goals Panel failed to acknowledge the emotional health of children that has also been shown to impede learning. This is described in greater detail in Chapter II.} As a result, the early childhood education researchers began to look into how schools could help children who, for a variety of reasons, arrive at school less prepared than their peers. The National Education Goals Panel (2005) later adopted an “ecological” view of child development that involves early childcare, the community, and schools in addition to a child’s family. To eliminate the achievement gap among students, schools must be “ready” to serve all children that arrive—ready or not. Early childhood researchers have established what needs to be done, but few have measured the extent to which schools have implemented readiness standards to ensure all children reach a minimum level of proficiency. Nor has a study taken place that measures the extent to which the public space surrounding the school affects schools’ readiness for the diverse children and families they are to serve. While it makes sense that education experts develop means to eliminate the achievement gap, the means of implementation and service delivery is a public administration issue. The structure of delivery and context in which education policy is effective may be of greater interest to public administrators than to educators.

This paper acknowledges basic but important questions regarding Ohio public schools’ “readiness” for children and the implications of social context. The paper approaches the problem from the perspective of educational equity, tracing the democratic imperative for educational equality of our U.S. forefathers through the
adoption of NCLB. It also accepts leadership as a powerful intervening variable in the nature, quality, and effectiveness of educational delivery in all contexts and accepts principals maintaining a dual role of public manager and street-level bureaucrat. Finally, the study acknowledges conflicts between bureaucratic and democratic processes and between local and top-down policy initiatives. After examining school policy programs and initiatives leading up to the “ready schools” movement, this study will apply what has been learned from the past, explore the current state of school readiness implementation in Ohio, and explain what type of communities yield ready schools. This study posts nine hypotheses about community factors anticipated to predict schools’ readiness for children. The dependent measure was constructed from survey data collected via the World Wide Web and via post using an established school readiness scale, shortened and tested for internal and test-retest reliability. Survey respondent data was then paired with public access (explanatory) data from the 2000 U.S. Census and from the Ohio Department of Education’s Power User Reports from the 2005-2006 school year. Multiple linear regression analysis is the method of choice for analyzing the data. The dissertation concludes with implications for potential improvements Ohio schools can make to get ready for children. Additional means of evaluating readiness will be suggested as well. Finally, consequences of ready schools, or lack thereof, for the community will be addressed.
1.2 Background: Reality of the Common School

What “ready school” characteristics do Ohio public schools possess? While it seems reasonable to demand that all schools be effective and able to serve all children, it may be unreasonable to assume that policies that work in one setting will have the same, invariable effects in another. Local tax dollars finance local schools and, in return, it is expected that schools meet the needs and address the concerns of the taxpayers.

A universal system of public education was a means of establishing social order based on public consensus across groups with varying (often conflicting) interests (Tozer, Violas, and Sense, 1995). Horace Mann argued in his *Twelve Annual Reports* that schools operating on the democratic model were at the mercy of the majority—which was undemocratic—and that schools would become political battlegrounds for differing social views among parents. Localities strove to preserve culture and social values and challenged top-down reforms at the local level. What few education authors realize is that creating a “universal” system of education also meant creating a bureaucratic system of education. The rhetoric was social equity and democracy, but the actions were regulation of buildings, standardization of curricula, budgeting, teacher training, and a myriad of other bureaucratic processes. Taylor’s (1920) “one best way” spilled from the work of industry, to government, to public education.

For many years following the formation of the Common School bureaucratic organization of the public education system has often been understood to be a means of protection for local schools from community scrutiny. However, Chubb and Moe (1990) examined the role of organizational control in limiting student achievement and found
that U.S. public education has become stagnant because of over-bureaucratization. Despite bureaucratic operation, educators are responsible to their communities. In order to carry out top-down policies, local school leaders (principals) must alert the staff and community of changes, the reason for the changes, and how they will affect the school. Schools must understand community values, preferences, and demands and make sure that the community is aware of and understands changes in programs and procedures carried out by the schools (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 2). It is difficult to get new programs going that were created outside of the local school district unless a program was designed to allow local educators to adapt it to meet local needs. “Universal” or “best practices” may not be compatible with the culture of the school in day-to-day practices. Educators learn to recognize power and manage it. Just as public managers and street-level bureaucrats follow enforced rules to create an ambiance of compliance, principals and teachers make practical decisions that may or may not follow the letter of the law to get their job done. The motivation that underlies street-level bureaucrats’ responses to the policy is beyond the reach of decision makers and can be greatly affected by managerial interpretation (Lipsky, 1980).

Sergiovanni, Kehelleher, McCarthy, and Wirt (2004) found collaboration to be a key element of school reform. This phenomenon is referred to by High/Scope (2005) as family, school, and community partnerships. Providing targeted services results in greater structural complexity of schools and districts. The administration must handle more rules, staff, and procedures that are necessary to effectively deliver special

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2 As the description of ready schools unfolds, it will be better understood how family, school, and community partnerships play into the education of children.
But devolution of responsibility has been shown to promote participation of stakeholders in school decisions, reduce alienation, raise community understanding, and increase job satisfaction (Johnston and Hedeman, 1994). Collaboration provides opportunity for partners to disagree and later arrive at a lasting compromise. While schools affect communities, simultaneously communities affect schools.

Leadership in developing a ready school is critical to the school’s success (High/Scope, 2005). As a result, principals are seen as central in school reform. They often determine school climate for learning. They suggest and enforce collaborative planning and collegial relationships, develop a sense of community, clearly identify goals and expectations, and maintain order and discipline in schools characterized with high student achievement (Purkey and Smith, 1983). In this study, principals serve as the responding representative for the unit of analysis, the school. (The use of a knowledgeable representative to represent conditions of a larger unit is common practice in family studies. For evidence, see Fisher, Terry, and Ransom, 1990 and Uphold and Strickland, 1989).

1.3 Educational Equity

What elements present in the social context of Ohio public elementary schools can be linked to the school’s readiness? Social concerns are interrelated with educational issues. Service agencies that are specialized are unable to effectively devise comprehensive solutions to complex problems. Lack of funding and lack of interagency

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3 High/Scope advocates that classrooms must introduce a variety of cultural backgrounds.
collaborations also prevent successful interventions. Children that attend schools located in communities with social and economic challenges reflect the needs of the community. Just as community members have an increased need for services so do children attending the schools. However, services at-risk children need are expensive and oftentimes the school district residents’ incomes do not provide sufficient funding for local schools to offer necessary services.

According to the National Collaborative Perinatal Study (Broman, Nicholls, and Kennedy, 1985), the cognitive abilities of children by age four are better explained by eight variables relating to social status than by 161 bio-medical variables that assessed the condition of mothers and children. For at-risk children, equal schooling may result in unequal achievement as early care experiences and parent involvement are unequal. Groups that have not been effectively served by the public schools may embrace an ideology that conflicts with the goals of public schools (Zill, 1999). Children are not only members of a family, but members of society. Until they are old enough to enter school the responsibility of education falls on the parents. But not all parents can be counted on to provide their children with an adequate education. Before a child enters first grade there is a 98% chance that he or she will have experienced some form of service outside of the home (Kagan and Neuman, 1997, p. 75). In 2006 more than half of children attending public school in 12 states qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (Becker, 2006). The achievement gap between advantaged children and children of low socioeconomic status are significant by kindergarten entry and increase with each year in school (Christenson, 1999). To ensure that the learning gap between the socially advantaged and disadvantaged children narrows and that all children are reaching their
potential, schools must assess the progress of children and implement effective curricula that support the learning of diverse children (High/Scope, 2005 and NCLB, 2001).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

As mentioned previously this study examines one broad research question: “What elements present in the social context of Ohio public elementary schools can be linked to schools’ readiness?” This question is driven by the democratic imperative that all citizens must receive at least that level of education that is sufficient to prepare them for participation in a democratic society. The standards-based reform movement focuses on the equality of educational success, or education up to a minimum accepted level of achievement. However, for schools to achieve equal academic performance they must first be ready to address the myriad of problems children carry with them to school and have learning supports in place to address the needs of children at all levels of academic achievement—they must be “ready” for children. This required examination of literature from sociology, economics, education, and urban studies. Schools that serve large numbers of at-risk students must offer more services and supports to bring their students up to the minimum acceptable standards of academic performance. Yet social and economic situations of the school context may inhibit schools’ abilities to make themselves ready for diverse children. Most of the measurement of educational equity has focused on revenue and expenditure. Since the implementation of Goals 2000 student achievement has been added to educational equality definitions. NCLB has led to school report cards illustrating student performance on standardized tests, for which
schools are held accountable for their performance. But student academic performance as a means of evaluating schools is limited, as children who arrive at schools are intrinsically different. Children may perform low, despite gains made throughout time in school. Yet it is the schools’ responsibility to improve student achievement in every situation and it is important to determine where the most assistance needed to prepare schools for diverse children and communities.

This study will explore the relationship between Ohio public elementary schools’ readiness for children and the community in which the school resides. Schools seem to be running well, based on established organizational norms. New demands are regularly placed on schools while prior obligations are left in place. Any time a new policy is added, a new relationship/collaboration is established, or a new program is put in place school organizations become more complex. And as schools become more complex so does the job of educators who must maintain their schools as part of a bureaucratic organization and as part of a community. Policymakers can gain insight on what schools need to deliver public education to their top-down standards and can, at least in part, make the necessary changes/resources available to schools to help them operate more efficiently and effectively while serving diverse children and communities.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

In light of the Ohio state-level school readiness movement evolving concurrently with state-level accountability standards, this research study offers baseline information on where Ohio public schools stand in the readiness process and how communities affect
schools’ readiness. Information about schools will be gathered from principals as a representative of the larger organization. 4

Principals are accountable to the state and federal governments on specified academic standards and, separately, to local officials expecting schools to meet the needs of the immediate constituency. Principals are public administrators with multiple commitments, often with conflicting expectations of moral obligation to students, the school system, local employees, and the community. Chen, Goldring, and Addi (1994) examined the two roles principals must maintain as educational leaders. The first is as a professional who sets the goals and implements the processes necessary to reach those goals. The second is as an individual who embraces the social values of a community. Professional accountability clashes with practical accountability when bureaucratic functions overrule professional standards of appropriate practice. Principals are responsible for how teachers implement public policy in their classrooms. Principals limit access to policy information (meaning that they pass along practical information that they easily understand or feel is important), participate in the understanding and adaptation processes, and maintain the conditions in which teachers facilitate learning in schools (Brieschke, 1985). They are in an ideal location within the educational delivery system to indicate what readiness traits are embossed within the institution.

A standards-based accountability framework implies that variation of student performance in public schools will decrease over time by raising all students to a

4 Uphold and Strickland (1989) and Fisher, Terry, and Ransom (1990) advocate that the perspective of an individual informant can provide valuable information about a larger unit. While multiple perspectives are best, reliant of a single informant can be justified on feasibility grounds.
minimum score on a given criterion referenced assessment of student achievement. Improvements in the educational system should be taking place in order for the phenomenon to occur. Extending the conceptual framework, challenges that restrain school progress may not be universal and school leaders must be aware of the present state of schools to assess their progress in getting ready for children and making the necessary resources available to help students achieve educational equality. However, the school readiness movement advocates that certain processes and environments are to be in place in order for child academic achievement to take place.

1.6 Purposes and Objectives

Within the conceptual framework of ready schools this dissertation falls under the broad question of what needs to take place in Ohio public schools for educational equality to come into fruition. The study provides explanatory analyses of school readiness information obtained from a sample of Ohio public elementary schools offering kindergarten, via principal responses to questions on a web-based survey paired with information from school data submitted to the Ohio Department of Education in the 2005-2006 school year and data from the 2000 U.S. Census.

The study first examines the current readiness of Ohio public elementary schools per principal report. Dimensions of school readiness included on the survey were developed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. A detailed description of the survey instrument is included in Chapter III. School report data on the Ohio Department of Education website for the 2005-2006 school year and the U.S. Census
2000 will predict the readiness of the local school serving the community. Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to determine the extent to which variables that have been historically linked to effective schools (race/ethnicity, community education, economic status, limited English proficiency, student mobility, population, employment status, and household income) can predict the readiness of the local school.

1.7 Measurement

As an early study of school readiness as it relates to local context, the scope of the study is limited. The study focuses on readiness at the state level. The scope could be expanded to compare multiple states or the nation, or narrowed to compare classrooms, or programs in future studies. There is only one universally accepted measure of ready schools. It is the High/Scope Ready School Assessment (RSA, 2005). This assessment requires five weeks and a five-person school team to complete. According to Sandra Miller (2006), Director of the Office of Early Learning and School Readiness at the Ohio Department of Education, schools are not using the RSA because the time required for completing the instrument. To accommodate participants in this study a shorter version of the RSA was created and assessed for reliability. Readiness is determined by a compilation of multiple indicators methodologically selected from the RSA using factor loadings representing the 23 Sub-Dimensions compiled in eight Dimensions. The indicators with the greatest factor loadings will be included on the short form, described in greater detail in Chapter III.
The study is restricted in terms of available data. The ready school data used in the analysis was generated by self-report information provided by public school principals on a web-based or traditional paper survey. There was no means of determining whether or not survey responses accurately reflect the school’s condition. Additionally no variable alone can define school context. Proxy variables including economic disadvantage indicators, race and ethnicity, and setting (urban, suburban, rural, etc.) must be used.

The instrument will introduce probable measurement error, reliability, and validity concerns. Reliability is the degree to which an instrument consistently measures the same phenomenon. Test-retest reliability will be controlled through pre-testing the short-form RSA to ensure that each item functions in a similar manner to the original RSA. The reliability test will take place in two schools in a rural district in Northeastern Ohio that have recently completed the original RSA. The new short form of the RSA will also be tested for internal reliability and additivity. Validity is the degree to which the score of an instrument can be interpreted in a particular manner and can be controlled through careful specification of the construct of interest. Chapter III addresses this issue in accordance with the High/Scope RSA Administration Manual (2005).

An important final consideration is generalization of results. Since the random sample of schools will be generated from the entire state of Ohio, the results will be generalized to the state—pending no significant non-response error (to be addressed in Chapter III). Since results are drawn from a particular state and in one small snapshot of time the empirical results of this study can be assumed to be idiosyncratic with other states’ variations in school readiness initiatives.
1.8 Assumptions

The study assumes that information collected pertaining to ready schools will generate valid and reliable measures of school readiness. It is assumed that principals will answer questions truthfully and to the best of their ability without assistance or distraction. All principals have at least a Bachelor’s Degree; it is assumed that a majority will have the technical knowledge to complete a survey via the Internet (although alternatives means of participation were available). Since all schools must submit demographic information and test results to the state electronically it is assumed that most elementary school principals will have access to a computer in their workplace. The study assumes that the school is an appropriate unit of analysis for examining readiness and its context and that the principal is the best representative to respond on behalf of the school. It is also assumed the all data appearing on the ODE website for the 2005-2006 school year and data from the 2000 U.S. Census are acceptable for all areas in Ohio.

1.9 Contributions to the Field

The information in this dissertation extends the research literature by applying school readiness characteristics present in the literature and empirically examining the nature of the communities in which ready schools reside. The results will provide important information missing from school improvement data. By introducing the examination of community characteristics that have historically been linked to school
performance (effectiveness) to the study of readiness, this study advances the analysis of educational equity from a longstanding emphasis on the distribution of educational resources necessary for student achievement. As we all know, student achievement is the keyword in current education policy. Using quantitative measures of ready school characteristics as they relate to the local community, this study will enable future inquiry into causal relationships that result in student achievement to a minimum standard of academic proficiency.

1.10 Layout of the Study

The first chapter has provided an overview of the research problem and the milieu surrounding that problem. The second chapter explores the background for the study in great detail. Information has been utilized from multiple disciplines including but not limited to public administration, education, political science, economics, sociology, and psychology to outline how views about school’s readiness for children have changed over time. Additionally, Chapter II highlights key policy issues related to the distribution of public education throughout U.S. history that led to Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind. It asks a key question regarding the current state of schools in Ohio responsible and what they need to ensure that all of their students can learn. The third chapter presents the methodology. It describes the variables, the mathematical measures that were employed, and the data collection methods. Chapter IV presents the results of the analyses and discussion related to the findings. Chapter V draws conclusions from the results of the analysis and makes recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Education as a Prerequisite for Democracy

The politics of school/community relations is not often addressed, although it rests at the point where many fields of study intersect and is an implicit part of each of those fields. The relationship of the schools to their community is a political relationship, but preparation of administrators is often based on the myth that schools have been (or should be) removed from the political arena (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p. 1).

According to the Coates (1999) interpretation of the writings of Thomas Jefferson, “The object of the republican form of government and of the principles that are essential to that form, is to enable a people to govern themselves to the most practicable extent possible.” Jefferson also described the diffusion of knowledge among the citizens as the means to the “preservation of freedom and happiness” (Ford, 1904, p. 44 cited in Cooper et al., 2004). Nowadays his words have even greater merit if the nation is to remain unified and strong despite growing racial, ethnic, language, and economic differences throughout the United States.

Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy, and Wirt (2004) found that the political context for education in the United States was set prior to the drafting of the Constitution. Public
education was a means of establishing social order based on public consensus across groups with varying (often conflicting) interests (Tozer, Violas, and Sense, 1995). The social order remains stable through the cooperation of the citizenry who, despite ideological differences, learned how to share their ideas through participation in the democratic process—taught in schools. Since the means of educating U.S. citizens was not mentioned in the Constitution, the responsibility was left up to the states. In turn, the state passed on the responsibility to local authorities (Sergiovanni, et al., 2004).

A disjointed Colonial School existed during the reign of the British for the first 50 years of the Republic. By 1820 social reformers sought a means to nationalize residents of the United States and cure social troubles. “In their eyes, the only way to bring cultural harmony, economic prosperity, and social justice to U.S. society was through the establishment of a state-sponsored, state-controlled system of schools attended by all. Systematic social problems required, in their minds, a systematic solution” that only the state could provide universally in an efficient manner (Cooper, et al., 2004). Teachers and principals are now required to be certified and curriculum has become mandated (Katz, 1957). Taylor’s (1920) “one best way” spilled from the work of industry, to government, to public education.

Without the ability to effectively obtain information necessary to participate in government, individuals must rely on others to make the fundamental decisions affecting their lives. Inequality among citizens of the United States is apparent in their literacy. Many individuals cannot read and write in the English language, many cannot apply what they read to achieve a goal, and many do not understand what they read because they have not been exposed to enough basic knowledge to associate the words they read with
any meaning (Tozer, Violas, and Senese, 1995, p. 249-256). According to John Dewey (1916) there is no democratic justification for a ruling class that monopolizes the decision making. Some argue that since schools are government-run institutions and since participation in government is available to the elite with sophisticated knowledge of the political process (Hunter, 1968), public schools are not democratic (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 4). A constant debate occurring around public education is whether or not it serves as a unifying mechanism giving all people, regardless of social or economic standing, skills they need to be successful or if it solidifies the divide among individuals who “have” and those who “have not.”

2.2 Bureaucracy in Public Schools

Throughout American history, schools (or governments running schools) have inherently worked to make themselves “ready” for children. First, schools needed to be accessible. Thomas Jefferson proposed that school districts be divided up into five- or six-mile areas to provide a local unit of school governance (intended to provide an environment to foster growth for self-government and for school authority to be able to meet the needs of the community it was designed to serve) that was feasible to administer with the limited communication capacity available at that time (Tozer, Violas, and Senese, 1995, pp. 31-32). In later years, communities’ need for schools changed. By the 1830s industry leaders with economic demands encouraged government to become more involved in private affairs. Centralization of authority and power became an accepted practice. The system of public education reflected the practice of government becoming
involved in industry and the system of public education began to become structured in a similar manner (Tozer, et al., 1995, p. 55). As a result of the bureaucratization of the public schools, the Modern School has evolved. Centralization of function emerged during the Progressive Era as compulsory education became an American institution and school districts began consolidation (Katz, 1957). What makes delivery of public education particularly challenging is that in order to carry out the top-down will of the bureaucratic leaders, local school leaders (principals) must alert the staff and community of changes, why they are taking place, and how they will affect the school. Educators are responsible to their communities. Schools must appreciate community values, preferences and demands and make sure that the community is aware of and understands educational programs and procedures carried out by the schools (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 2).

Early research in education policy illustrated a lack of “will” and “capacity” to effectively implement newly developed programs at all levels of bureaucracy, national to local. Most local educators did not want to become involved (lack of will), which may or may not have been related to their incapability in implementing the policy (lack of capacity) (Odden, 1991b, p. 1-2). It is important to note that claiming policies and programs have been implemented is different than claiming polices and programs are effective (able to solve the problems for which they were created). Those who have studied educational policy have criticized the processes responsible for changes in the delivery of public education but have failed to propose changes in the institution (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005, ix). Chubb and Moe (1990) also found effective schooling to be incompatible with the democratic institutions governing them. They
believe reformers inaccurately determined that problems exist around the schools and that the present institution can impose necessary changes to correct the problems. Chubb and Moe found that the institutions are the problem (pp. 2-3).

Later research concluded that it is difficult to get new programs going that were created outside of the local school district unless a program was designed to allow local educators to adapt it to meet local needs. In short, “If higher level governments took policy initiatives, it was unlikely that local educators would implement those initiatives in compliance with either the spirit, expectations, rules, regulations or program components” (Odden, 1991b, p. 2). It is clearly evident that getting schools ready to deliver public education has largely been a process of trial and error since its inception.

2.2.1 Leadership and the Development of a Public School System

Governance in U.S. education has undergone a number of dramatic changes over time. The structures and processes have historical roots and contexts that have been shaped by social forces. The Constitution of the United States of America provides a malleable framework for a democratic republic. Its authors assume that citizens of this country have an innate set of values that drive them to do good works. They are to be selfless and dutiful to their cities, states, and nation. At the same time citizens of the United States of America were to respect individuals’ rights to life, liberty, and property, commonly known as John Locke’s (1690) law of nature, which was borrowed and adapted by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence from England’s King George III (1776 as cited in Williamson, 2004, p. 59). This utilitarian idea served as the
baseboard for the structure of American governance. However, values must be instilled in society as they are not innate at birth. Therefore, the development of values necessary for popular sovereignty is the result of an educational process. According to John Stuart Mill (1861) the greatest number of people will be happy so long as actions taken by society are morally right. There may be negative consequences for some individuals, but collective good always prevails, as long as consequences of action are considered. The problem is that views of what is “collective good” change over time.

Gutmann (1987) called the ideas of John Locke the “State of Families.” According to this school of thought the education of children is the responsibility of the parents. This theory advocates that parents best know the needs of their children and how the needs can be met. In the “State of Families” values and traditions can be passed through generations. The problem with this idea is that children are not only members of a family, but members of society. No individual is perfect and not all parents can be counted on to provide their children with an adequate education. For example, parents may attempt to “protect” their children from competing values and viewpoints that contradict parents’ perspectives. They can teach children characteristics (such as intolerance and prejudice) that may cause harm to other individuals in society or teach children to tolerate and accept physical or verbal abuse. A competing view to the “State of Families” is the “Family State.” The “Family State” model was introduced by Plato in *The Republic* and advocates for the state to have absolute power over education without local control or input from parents. Outside thinking has potential to disrupt social order and only the state is capable of conceptualizing a means of educating a moral and prosperous society. The problem is that morals and definitions of prosperity are not
objective and may vary greatly among those possessing leadership roles as well as the parents of the children the state seeks to serve (Gutmann, 1987).

Reforming the governance of American public education was no easy undertaking at a time when several competing methods of school governance were already in place. The founder of the American Common School, Horace Mann, sought to configure the system of governance in a manner reflecting social values and using education to perpetuate these values (Katz, 1975). Mann became known as the “father of American public school education” (Moore, 2005). He virtually revolutionized the public school system in Massachusetts and (indirectly) other states by withstanding the criticism of religious groups and refusing to exclude sectarian values from the classroom. Mann built the Massachusetts Common School System on a Jeffersonian principle that “no republic can endure unless its citizens are literate and educated” (Cremin, 1957). By holding conventions for teachers, lecturing, developing a resource library for teachers, winning state financial assistance for educational infrastructure and supplies, and founding/editing the Common School Journal in 1838 Mann transformed the state’s myriad of charity schools to a universal system of education to be attended by all people regardless of race, class, or gender. Mann outlined his plan for universal education in the Twelve Annual Reports to the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts (Katz, 1968; Moore, 2005; and Cremin, 1980). Reports maintaining elements of school readiness are outlined.

What few authors realize is that creating a “universal” system of education also meant creating a bureaucratic system of education. The rhetoric was social equity and

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5 This debate continues at present. Please see section 2.6, the discussion of Ready Families, Ready Communities, and Ready Schools.
democracy, but the actions were regulation of buildings, standardization of curricula, budgeting, teacher training, and a myriad of other bureaucratic processes. For example in the *First Annual Report* Mann made recommendations for classrooms that would facilitate the learning process (engaging environments). Mann also recommended that the State School Board select books for the entire state and upfront some of the cost (local governments would pay for the remainder). Education of the youth was the responsibility of the communities; not the parents alone. Mann initiated the practice of collaborative state and local funding for public education (partnerships). Finally, Mann believed that only trained instructors should educate children and he developed a state hiring system and method of payment designed to monitor the quality of instructors (teacher supports).

Many of Horace Mann’s policy recommendations are present in recent federal school legislation and pertain to readiness. The *Second Annual Report* to the Board of Education focused on holding teachers accountable and on issues of teacher qualifications. Mann recommended that the State Board of Education and local school boards determine a process of continuing education and teacher accountability (leaders and leadership). Additionally, he established standards for curriculum in reading language-related subjects (effective curricula). The report closed by suggesting withholding state monies from districts that fail to pay their teacher appropriately and did not follow through with the attainment of suitable textbooks (a theme present in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation).
“Schools as part of a community context” was the theme of the *Fourth Annual Report to the Board of Education*. The report alluded to the Progressive Era, indicating a shift toward industrialization, and the presence of footloose industry in the state of Massachusetts. Public acceptance of sending children to work in factories threatened their receipt of public education. The ninth and tenth reports returned to the values set forth in the *First Annual Report*. Community involvement, state responsibility, moral excellence, mutual respect of pupils and teachers, and importance of accurate information were highlighted. Of particular interest to Public Administration scholars are the sections relating to school governance and the validity of the Massachusetts Common School System. When present-day public administrators and academic researchers hear the term validity, the use of research methods in evaluating a policy program comes to mind. For Horace Mann validity was determined by a reasonable program for the cost to the public.

Those who did not believe in education, who did not have children, or who no longer had children of school age felt that the increased tax burden they experienced was unfair. Mann explained that all children are entitled to eat food, breathe air, and receive protection. As children born in the United States, they had a right to participate in republican government. Horace Mann believed that public education was the only mechanism that would provide equal opportunity for all children to rise up in a single-class society and prosper, regardless of their beginnings. However, in order for democracy to prevail, schools had to get ready for children. Between 1870 and 1920 the number of children who enrolled in public schools increased by 600%, increasing demand for buildings, educated teachers, texts, and funds for operation (Tozer, *et al*., 1995, pp. 86-87).
2.2.2 Present-Day Bureaucracy

In order for schools to offer equitable public education the systems became bureaucratized. Some critics argue that top-down educational policy, even with regulations for local compliance, simply does not work in public schools (Odden, 1991a). Chubb and Moe (1990) found that schools have no “immutable or transcendent” purpose. Their purpose reflects the will of individuals in charge that exist at a distance from the site of implementation. Schools are not locally controlled. Local authority is delegated by the states and can be modified or revoked at the will of the higher power (p. 30).

Social scientists have paid little attention to institutions in their collective attempts to study and explain school performance (Chubb and Moe, 1990, p. 13). As in all other trades and aspects of life, a school system is comprised of routines, regular ways of acting based on a collection of values and practices (Hunter, 1968). New recruits are socialized to reflect the norms of the system and learn accepted behaviors to carry out regular tasks. Shocks to the system, typically occurring outside of the district, disrupts routines and causes stress within the system (Sergiovanni, et al., 2004, p. 229-230). System shock, while at times necessary, inevitably results in its members being forced to accept (or live with) new values. “Translating an Act into action is marked by marginal changes, not sudden great leaps forward” (Murphy, 1991, p. 35).

The federal government is able to create uniform program delivery across states. However, there is a great deal of conflict between federal and state governments during

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6 Brown v. Topeka, 1957 and the desegregation of schools is perhaps the most vivid example of federal policy altering the affinity within a district. However, system shock does not guarantee positive outcomes.
the implementation process as the federal government takes decision-making power from the states. Subsidizing state-selected initiatives reduces conflict, but granting more decision-making discretion to the states results in wider program variation across the states. The federal government typically achieves its mission by allocating large amounts of money to the state effort and waiting as compliance is gradually attained over time (Moore, Goertz, and Hartle, 1991).

It is no surprise that revolutions in schooling have been limited to policy because changing institutions of government would be unpopular among politicians and established interests. As a result, effective schools research has focused on variables inside and immediately outside of the school instead of the mode of public school delivery itself (Chubb and Moe, 1990, pp. 18-20). Cutting programs, laying off senior staff members, and firing good teachers for poor class performance on a standardized assessment will have negative consequences on district morale (Sergiovanni, et al., 2004). While politically popular at times, periodic educational overhaul may not yield expected results. Knapp, Stearns, Turnbull, David, and Peterson (1991) found that at the establishment of a federally-initiated program within a school administrative fragmentation did occur as some staff accrued greater workloads and chose differing instructional approaches. But over time most issues were worked out and responsibilities returned to a manageable level. Knapp and his colleagues (1991) reported that most schools accept systematic procedures as devices of accountability and as a condition for receiving federal funds. Change appears to be less dramatic if schools are reimbursed for their efforts.
Tyler (1988) argues that national, state, and district-level systems exhibit characteristics of the Weberian ideal-type bureaucracy, but that individual schools “reveal a number of structural characteristics which seem to be better attuned to non-routine activities and unpredictable events” (pp. 46-47). Tyler found that the bureaucratic protection and direction provided by the higher-level system “above” an individual school, such as guidelines for salary, maintaining buildings and health standards, and training teachers, allowed schools to focus on instruction. Tyler (1988) goes as far to say, “It may even be extremely doubtful as to whether the bureaucratic form could ever be an appropriate model for a single school unit” (p. 47). Others believe that the ideal-type bureaucracy is not truly present in any public organization. Not since Max Weber (1947) has leadership been dependent upon one’s position in the hierarchy in an organization. Human resources literature encourages participation from all levels of government in making decisions to promote engagement in implementation (Barnard, 1981 and Lipsky, 1980).

While some authors believe street-level educators to have control, evidence exists that teachers do not believe they have control. Anderson (1994) reported to the U.S. Department of Education that teachers do not believe they have much control over school policy outside of the classroom. Lichtenstein and his colleagues (1991) argue that the structure of the system of public education is set up in a manner that restricts teachers’ abilities to present their curriculum to their students based on their own perceptions of best practices. With this in mind, the ready school philosophy that leaders are to emerge from the ranks of teachers seems to conflict with present norms of practice. Education politics teaches educators to recognize power and manage it. They learn how to
compromise, survive, and cooperate in a system of dominance (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005, ix). Prestine and Nelson (2005) argue that leadership does not belong to an individual. It is spread out over an organization and occurs between members during social interactions.

2.3 Bureaucratic Structure of Modern Schools

According to Prestine and Nelson (2005), there are two basic functional demands of local school sites. The first is teaching for the purpose of student learning. The second is organizing an environment for teaching and learning—which is what High/Scope (2005) believes is the focus of a ready school. Teachers and administrators have been segregated within the school to achieve one or the other of the aforementioned functions. Some schools are organized more effectively than others. Some would like to be more effective, but struggle because goals, leadership, personnel, and practices are imposed upon the school. In order to understand school performance school organization as well the context of its environment must be examined (Chubb and Moe, 1990, p. 141).

Making policy come into fruition is incredibly hard—especially across multiple levels of government (which has been the case in education policy since the 1980s). Social problems are complicated and policy makers cannot mandate the goals. Capacity can be addressed, training can be offered, funding can be provided, and consultants can be hired via policy. But the motivation that underlies street-level bureaucrats’ responses to the policy is beyond the reach of decision makers. Policy can enable outcomes, but administrators must create the result of policy efforts (McLaughlin, 1991). In short, state
and federal governments can lay the framework for ready schools, but it is up to the locality to realize the vision.

Not all strong professional communities are oriented in a fashion that is conducive to change, even though communities that encompass a collegial environment that fosters teacher collaboration and are goal-oriented are often cited as prerequisites for effective school reform (Pristine and Nelson, 2005). School leaders have only limited control over who works at their school because personnel rules are formally structured and imposed by higher levels of government (Chubb and Moe, 1990, p. 48). How a school principal goes about developing, supporting, and sustaining learning communities focused on instructional improvement is not fully understood. What the literature does tell us is that bigger schools in urban areas tend to struggle to reach out to the community more often than do small schools (Anyon, 2005; Carey, 2004; and Strike, 1989 among others).

Diversity in public schools is not a recent phenomenon. Since the Progressive Era when Americans and residents from other countries moved to cities and were greeted by poverty, crime, and poor living conditions (Phillips, 1996, p. 210) have ethnic differences and economic concerns impacted urban education delivery. Schools had to adjust, make themselves “ready,” to meet the needs of a changing constituency.

Policies are a structural form of power in which accepted organizational practices maintain an unequal distribution of resources. Although the policies are of a structural nature their burden can be carried on an individual level by those who must administer the policies and programs, as well as by the recipients of the public goods and services. Schools must meet the expectations of whoever gains public authority, regardless of what has been done in the past. Schools must supply everything from social services to
vocational training while providing students with academic excellence. The goals are countless and schools are legally bound to honor all of them (Chubb and Moe, 1990, p. 54). While it seems reasonable to demand that all schools be effective and able to serve all children, it may be unreasonable to assume that policies that work in one setting will have the same, invariable effects in another setting. The checklists for school improvement located throughout educational history and literature, often politically motivated, are not sufficient for implementing effective education reform. There are structural and procedural characteristics of schools that mitigate the effects of mandated reforms (Purkey and Smith, 1983).

Principals, in the past, have tended to develop loyalty to the bureaucracy to protect teachers and the school’s academic and professional core from the uncertainty of its context (Driscoll and Goldring, 2005, p. 62). Tyler (1988) agrees. He sees the bureaucratic organization of public schools as a means of protection for local schools that enables them to carry out the educational process. The bureaucratic model, he reports, consists of two parts. The first is based on top-down bureaucratic control and the second is based on professional expertise. In short, the higher authority provides the necessary structure for street-level bureaucrats to utilize their expertise. They put the knowledge, skills, and abilities to use to provide children with innovative, quality education. The rationalization creates the context in which professionals can effectively operate. Principals are seen as central in school reform. They often determine school climate for learning. They suggest and enforce collaborative planning and collegial relationships, develop a sense of community, clearly identify goals and expectations, and maintain order and discipline in schools characterized with high student achievement (Purkey and
Smith, 1983). “There do not seem to be particular federal requirements that achieve their aims more consistently than others. Instead, the important local effects of federal policy appear to stem from the combination of many federal and state policy tools, including funds, goal statements, program requirements, and sanctions” (Knapp et al., 1991, p. 117).

2.3.1 Professional Partnerships

Educators, especially school administrators, are becoming increasingly hesitant to make changes. They are continuously pressured by organizations whose leaders have no competence in the field of education. This idea conflicts with Tyler’s (1998) interpretation of public school bureaucracy as a protector of the local school. Providing targeted services results in greater structural complexity of schools and districts. The administration must handle more rules, staff, and procedures that are necessary to effectively deliver special programs. Additionally, costs are difficult to tally and impossible to eliminate. While administrators have the capacity to leverage problems they were less able to solve, staff time and program administration, and responsiveness may suffer (Knapp et al., 1991).

The power within the decision-making process remains with a few even when guidance from outside stakeholders is sought because of time constrains, conflict, stakeholder alienation, and misunderstandings that interfere with successful collaboration (Johnston and Hedemann, 1994). For a policy to be successfully implemented at the local level, viewpoints of street-level bureaucrats and the constituency must be heard in order
for officials to understand the culture of implementation at the local level (Walker, 2004). States’ policy actions are limited by the values and beliefs that stem from the experiences of decision makers (Hunter, 1968). A similar problem arises when there are a large number of individuals from a given profession within the organization. Educators want the decisions made on behalf of the organization to be the decisions of other educators. But professional members identify with others like themselves within the organization and may place constraints on the organization’s outcome preferences. Because the school and the outside world are interdependent laymen must be incorporated in the decision making. Conflict between the two groups is both inevitable and necessary (Thompson, 1967, p. 139).

In Russo’s (2004) Chicago report the public school system employed universities and other external partners to improve student learning and used an effective probation system to “discipline” schools that were not performing adequately. The requirements to be off of probation increased each year, which encouraged schools to out-perform themselves in subsequent years. Of 109 schools on probation in 1996, 13 schools remained on probation in 2004—only two of which were elementary schools. The districts assisted building principals with training and other resources. The probation did not strip the capacity of the school to educate children. Instead, it fostered growth through partnerships. Sergiovanni, Kehelleher, McCarthy, and Wirt (2004) found collaboration to be a key element of school reform. Johnston and Hedeman (1994) would concur, but warn that collaborative processes are not easily established. Devolution of responsibility has been shown to promote participation of stakeholders in school decisions, reduce alienation, raise community understanding, and increase job satisfaction
(Johnston and Hedeman, 1994). Teachers who do not feel isolated in their endeavors will be more likely to embrace beliefs that foster permanent changes that benefit children (Sergiovanni et al., 2004). Personal growth facilitated throughout the workplace by means of creative stimulation and support for the work they do ultimately benefits communities and children as the collegiality fosters collective reform throughout buildings, districts, and communities. For teachers and others involved in the school reforms, the knowledge of colleagues’ practices reinforces camaraderie and validates their own practices. Street-level bureaucrats will adopt policies that reflect their expertise (Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore, 1991).

“When teachers develop schoolwide goals for student learning, share collective responsibility for meeting the goals, and collaborate to achieve them school capacity is strengthened and student performance is likely to improve” (Youngs, 2001, p. 298). Principals have the responsibility of motivating teachers to establish effective collaborative relationships (Prestine and Nelson, 2005). Teachers feel good about their work and become more secure in becoming involved in policies that affect their work7 (Lichtenstein et al., 1991). These partnerships, as described by Russo (2004), were based on the theory that increasing direct accountability between schools and their neighborhood constituencies would enhance respect an engagement between teachers and students and eventually improve academic performance (pp. 90-91, 110). As advocated by Johnston and Hedeman (1994) the collaborative processes instituted in Chicago were

7 Only 37% of teachers believe they have influence over the establishment of curriculum (Anderson, 1994).
characterized by a sense of empowerment\textsuperscript{8} and an opportunity for partners to disagree and later arrive at a compromise.

2.3.2 \textit{Schools as Part of a Community}

Lutz and Merz (1992) report that if a school is to be accepted by the community, it must first join the community—\textit{not} teach children despite the community.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Community is not simply a place. It is not simply a set of norms or values, or a group of people, some with and other without informal power. It is all of these at different times and, sometimes, all of them at once. One can be a member of more than one community. Everyone seeks to be part of a community, yet also becomes uneasy when too many obligations are demanded by too dominating a community. At some point sacred and gemeinschaft become unbearable. The community seeks interaction with the school but will reject its domination. They demand geselleschaft opportunities, but seek gemeinschaft understanding and acceptance} (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 52).
\end{quote}

Schools are as diverse as the communities they serve—\textit{which is why} High/Scope included respecting diversity and family, school, and community partnerships in their definition of readiness. And schools must be ready to address concerns that arise concurrently with increased individuals differences. American public schools are

\textsuperscript{8} Lichtenstein, McLAughlin, and Knudsen (1991) distinguish empowerment from allowing teachers to participate in decision-making, which is often how policy makers and school leaders interpret “empowerment.” For teachers to develop a sense of power they must first be trained in knowledge of policy systems, professional organizations, and of the dialogue related to their work. To be successful in taking on new responsibilities they must be given the capacity to do so.
democratically “owned” by their community. Local tax dollars finance local schools and, in return, it is expected that schools should meet the needs and address the concerns of the taxpayers (Driscoll and Goldring, 2005). Human, social, and financial capital for schools is provided by parents and the community. Some believe that schools should initiate social change, while others believe that they should reflect the community and adapt to its environment. “Policy participants are the individuals with the greatest interest in the outcome (Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore, 1991). Oftentimes one minority group sets itself another in fighting for representation of their culture in school tasks, social relationships, and context in which the children learn and develop (Riehl, 2000). Some cultural groups have fought for curriculum and instruction that best meets their need, but assimilation has historically been the norm in public schools with the ideas that a common school will help create a unified society (Riehl, 2000).

Dewey has been criticized for his ideas that schools are reflective of their communities. Mills (1964 as cited in Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 23) contends that Dewey did not account for the influence of special interests that affect the operations of public bureaucracies. Driscoll and Goldring’s (2005) disagree. They found that communities provide the foundation to make learning possible and establish what learning is esteemed. In fact, before a child enters first grade there is a 98% chance that he or she will have experienced some form of service outside of the home (Kagan and Neuman, 1997, p. 75). The community is the “living textbook for learning” (p. 67). In a sense, the recent “ready schools” movement reflects the work of John Dewey (1897), which connects learning with the physical and social environment of the child. Kagan and Neuman (1997) present
evidence that gender, temperament, and cultural values predetermine how a child thinks and responds to opportunities for learning.

Decisions about school district practices (such as funding) are often left up to local constituents as issues pertaining to the education of children are put on the ballot. Although movements in the past 30 years have gradually led to state and federal control of public schools (Odden, 1991a), since No Child Left Behind (2001) was enacted the national government removed autonomy from districts in terms of educational delivery (as proficiency tests motivate teachers to provide instruction on measured areas), but has not followed through with appropriately funding the effort. Instead, the state has funded local districts less and less each year as children enroll in private or charter schools. As a result, public schools in the United States are not universal. Not all children are born into homes that can afford private schools or are located in school districts with a large enough tax base to fund the finest buildings, materials, and teachers. In urban districts, teachers who are well-prepared to deliver curricula are not prepared for the context in which they are to work (Fleming, Chou, Ransom, Nishimura, and Burke, 2004).  

De Tocqueville (1834 as cited in Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 35) said that all countries will in some ways forever mirror the individuals who founded the nation. However, De Tocqueville failed to envision the massive immigration movements to occur in the U.S. and how the blending of cultures, religions, and values allowed to be

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9 In Fleming and her colleagues’ (2004) study of the placement of “highly qualified teachers” in urban schools since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), they found that teachers were unprepared for: unexpected student concerns, unexpected instructional scenarios, and unexpected school conditions that were not covered in teacher preparation programs.
preserved by U.S. citizens via the separation of church and state that prevents the homogeneity of a municipality (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p. 40). Fifty percent of all children living in the United States live in urban areas (Lapp, Flood, and Block, 2004) and urban areas serve a large percentage of minority students (Riehl, 2000). Challenges associated with poverty, diversity of language, and diversity of cultural experiences affect schools as they affect public service agencies (Fleming et al., 2004). Sergiovanni and his colleagues (2004) cite a study by Johnson (1990) which found that working conditions in schools have become dismal. Paperwork, increased academic expectations, increased family and social problems, larger classes, and loss of autonomy contribute to the discontent. Last year, in 12 states, more than half of children attending public school qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (Becker, 2006). In order to effectively instruct students in urban settings teachers must possess deep cultural understanding, negotiate the impact of poverty on teaching and learning, and adapt to working with children that must take on adult responsibilities. Academic challenges for teachers are heightened by a wide array of skill levels and a lack of intervention services for students with special needs (Fleming, et al., 2004). Providing teachers with training to develop their skills as instructional leaders is the responsibility of the principal (Cooper, 2004).

Diversity was not listed as “one of the biggest problems the public schools of your community must deal with” (Rose and Gallup, 2006, p. 45). But 88% of American survey respondents indicated that it is either very important or somewhat important to close the achievement gap between white and minority students (Rose and Gallup, 2006, p. 46). However, 77% of Gallup survey respondents believe that the nation’s low-quality education is related to social factors other than the achievement gap. Additionally these
respondents did not believe the educational disparity to be the fault of schools (Rose and Gallup, 2006, p.43) but 57% believe it is the responsibility of schools to close the achievement gap (Rose and Gallup, 2006, p. 47).

In 2002 16.7% of all children under the age of 18 lived in poverty and one out of 15 children lived with a family with an income less than half of the official poverty line (Bardige, 2005, p. 105). Anyon (2005) argues that mandates affecting economic and social opportunities for the urban poor restrict opportunities available to city residents. Urban poverty creates environments (such as poor nutrition, delayed intellectual development, and dangerous living conditions\(^{10}\)) that overwhelm the schools and limit their potential for influence. So long as minimum wage results in an individual living in poverty and affordable housing and transportation are not located in the vicinity of job development programs, families will not make the education of their children a priority.\(^{11}\)

Nieto (2005) argues that marginalized groups are predetermined for failure by being labeled as “disadvantaged.” She found that blame for failure is placed on individual and cultural characteristics of the child and his/her family when it should be placed on the administrative structure, racism, and class inequality. Zill (1999) found that many children with family members who have struggled to achieve in school or were unable to conform to the accepted practices of classroom conduct will struggle as well. Zill (1999) also argues that the public school is an organization set up dedicated to train all American children to participate in life is now a “sorting mechanism” to maintain inequalities. For

\(^{10}\) The characteristics of an impoverished environment were listed in (Bardige, 2005, pp. 105-106).

\(^{11}\) Sociologists have known since the 1960s that the social status of parents is mirrored in their children (Blau and Duncan, 1967 as cited in Entwisle and Alexander, 1999, p. 14).
example, schools in poor neighborhoods operate like prisons, with bells and other systems of control while schools in wealthy districts feature open floor plans and opportunities for critical and creative thinking (Nieto, 2005). Tozer, Violas, and Senese (1995) argue that the sorting took place before the children entered the classroom as neighborhoods choose that education is not of value in their community. Although there is disagreement about where students of advantage and disadvantage are “sorted,” there is agreement that schooling among the two groups is different.

2.3.3 Schools as Public Service Agencies

Ready schools are not only educational facilities, but a potential hub for service delivery. Kunesh and Farley illustrate that social problems are interrelated with educational issues. They found that families’ problems do not fit into distinct categories. Service agencies that are specialized are unable to effectively devise comprehensive solutions to complex problems—and lack of funding and interagency collaborations prevent successful interventions. Quality site-based management can effectively bring the formal and informal politics of education together to meet the needs of all (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 153). In terms of the successful delivery of public education there is a plethora of evidence throughout the body of this document that illustrates the interaction of forces that hinder and enhance the successful development of young children. Schools depend on community service agencies to educate children as well. “Full-service schools” offer an array of services in school and connect students with other community institutions. However, issues related to turf, funding, and confidentiality made
implementation of collaborative services in schools difficult (Driscoll and Goldring, 2005, p. 64).

According to Apple (2001), “Schools now do too much; they have become social work and health agencies” (pp. 324). Schools took on issues of health care, nutrition, counseling, and social justice (among other things) because the rest of society did not (Apple, 2001, p. 331). Hodgkinson (1991, as cited in Christenson, 1999) found that approximately one-third of U.S. preschool children are at-risk for failure in school before their school careers ever begin. Families of children in poverty have other survival concerns that diminish a family’s ability to cope with the educational needs of their children (SREB, 1996). Poverty has been documented repeatedly as a risk factor for the developmental and achievement deficits among children who do not show evidence of disabilities. The achievement gap between advantaged children and children of low socioeconomic status are significant by kindergarten entry and increase with each year in school (Christenson, 1999). High quality preschool can minimize the achievement gap, but the benefits of such programs may be lost if schools are not able to further assist children in sustaining those gains (NEGP, 2000). SREB (1996) concurs. They found that family support initiatives must be included with educational interventions over time. Intensive learning interventions will only have limited effects unless the factors that impede learning are addressed as well.

Lee and Burkham (2002) examined the differences in the achievement test scores in the areas of math and literacy for young children. Results were broken out by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. They found that being poor affected child learning more than race or family structure as a source for cognitive disadvantage. Before children enter school, the average score of a child of a wealthy family will be 60% higher than a child of a poor family. Once poverty has been accounted for, racial differences in child learning become less influential.
Not only do economically disadvantaged children arrive in kindergarten with fewer cognitive skills than their more advantaged peers, they also attend lower-quality elementary schools (Lee and Burkham, 2002) and begin school at a younger age (Buckshaw, 2006). Rothestein (2004) argues that housing, medical care, nutrition, preschool, and after-school programs may be a better use of public resources to help children be successful in school than are standardized achievement tests. There is a small amount of evidence that effective schools, like effective bureaucratic agencies must be culturally competent. Love and Kruger (2005) developed their study around previous findings indicating that African American children learn better in environments where teachers draw on African culture and history and reference their current environment.

2.3.4 Principals as Public Managers

Leadership is the key to Ready School development. Someone must be in place to organize the efforts made in partnerships, the environment, curricula, and all other necessary dimensions outlined by High/Scope (2005). The Association of Washington School Principals (1998 as cited in Lashway, 1999) lists seven key responsibilities of principals. Principals must endorse a safe school environment, uphold a culture of continuous improvement, put data-driven plans to improve student achievement into operation, implement standards-based assessment, monitor school improvement plans, manage human and financial resources, and communicate with colleagues, parents, and community members to promote student learning.
Principals are public administrators with multiple commitments, often with conflicting expectations of moral obligation to students, the school system, local employees, and the community. Chen, Goldring, and Addi (1994) examined the two roles principals must maintain as educational leaders. The first is as a professional who sets goals and implements processes necessary to reach those goals. The second is as an individual who embraces the social values of a community. Chen and his colleagues found that the latter moral component was not seen as very important to individuals who have earned a graduate degree, worked in state public education roles, or have aspirations to stay in administration as a career. Leaders of non-effective schools rely on bureaucratic procedures, external demands, and the political environment. The values of these principals are “adult,” meaning that they were distant from the classroom. The political monitoring process, hierarchical relationships with teachers, and parent satisfaction took priority over children (Wimpelberg, 1986). This focus differs from effective principals who feel overwhelmed by management and often “work around the system” to get things done (Lecker, 2002, p. 32). Some researchers actually attribute creative insubordination13 to effective school principals (Brieschke, 1985, p. 158).

Professional accountability clashes with practical accountability when bureaucratic functions overrule professional standards of appropriate practice. Public schools were established by state law and are governed by various federal, state, and local elected and appointed bodies. They are politically accountable to the demands of public representatives and the concerns of the constituency (Firestone and Shipps, 2005).

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13 Creative insubordination is defined by Brieschke (1985) as “wisdom in knowing where and how to disobey.”
Oftentimes the demands conflict with one another and put pressure on school leaders to become “creative negotiators,” convincing disparate political interests that a compromise will satisfy their goals (Firestone and Shipps, 2005. p. 84). Public school principals wish that had more freedom to reward good teachers and terminate ineffective teachers (Lecker, 2002). While principals in effective and non-effective schools have an equal amount of control (or lack of control) in hiring teachers, leaders in effective schools bent the rules to obtain the better teachers (Wimpelberg, 1986). Many school administrators cite politics and bureaucracy as their biggest obstacles in running an effective school (Lecker, 2002).

In the words of McLaughlin (1987), “Change is ultimately the problem of the smallest unit . . . and what is actually delivered or provided under the aegis of a policy depends upon the individual at the end of the line” (p. 175). Street-level bureaucrats may resent decisions that flowed from the top down and may reject the policy or program via insubordination, slow progress, or absenteeism and the ramifications fall upon public managers. According to the Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy, the principal makes decisions for the school based on input from the state and federal levels of government as well as the local school board—closing the system of decision-making from the public. Eventually the stable system becomes unresponsive to the needs of the ever-changing community. The “dissatisfaction” is what occurs among community members when their values and the policies of the school become incompatible (Lutz and Mertz, 1992). To lessen the local dissatisfaction with schools principals in more effective schools keep classrooms available to themselves, other teachers, parents, and the community (Wimpelberg, 1986).
Coburn (2005) found that principals are responsible for how teachers implement public policy in their classrooms. Principals limit access to policy information by sharing what they understand or what they feel is important to stakeholders, participate in the understanding and adaptation processes, and maintain the conditions in which teachers facilitate learning in schools (Brieschke, 1985). As multiple change agents administer contradictory directives, opposing philosophies can cause conflicts in lesson planning, testing, and curricular initiatives. Street-level bureaucrats and public managers continue to function and develop coping mechanisms to manage the varying demands. Chubb and Moe (1991) reported that public school principals are not granted the authority that is necessary to lead. They view public school principals as lower-level managers with the supervisory responsibility for a public agency. Decisions are made by higher authorities and principals are responsible for administrating those decisions. Not all school principals have much discretion in how funds are spent. There is some evidence that schools with fewer restrictions on how local and state funds are put to use are more successful at meeting the needs of students (SREB, 1996).

Organizations have two sets of goals, stated goals and operative goals. The latter includes maintaining employment of the current workers, organizational stability, and monitoring deviant behavior. Public managers, such as school principals, must simultaneously pursue stated and operative goals and oftentimes make sacrifices in one area to meet the goals in the area (Brieschke, 1985). Principals are forever redefining and reinterpreting policies and procedures as they are implementing them—much like a street-level bureaucrat (Lipsky, 1980). So long as the existing social order of public schools, that espouses the values of democracy and meritocracy, is viewed as legitimate
principals duties as managers will be emphasized over their duties as social reformers (Riehl, 2000).

2.3.5 Principals and Teachers as Street-Level Bureaucrats

“Most citizens encounter government . . . through their teachers and their children’s teachers . . .” (Lipsky, 1980, p. 414). Lipsky (1980) defines street-level bureaucrats as “[p]ublic service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantive discretion in the execution of their work” (p.414). Principals and teachers fit this definition. Principals serve as the intermediary for making boundaries more permeable for parents and the community to be involved in the school and ensure that internal and external constituent roles in these processes are “authentic” (Reyes and Wagstaff, 2005, p. 109). Unlike policy makers whose decisions are “rational” (Simon, 1949) and dispersed over a large population over an extended period of time, principals’ and teachers’ decisions are personal and immediate. When organizational conditions mitigate against administrators’ abilities to make changes, street-level bureaucrats develop practices that allow them to perform the work they are required to do with limited resources by modifying goals, narrowing the clientele, and rationing services (Sorg, 1983). “[Street-level bureaucrats] are positioned to see clearly the limitations on effective intervention and the constraints on responsiveness engendered in mass processing,” stated Lipsky (1980, p. 420). Unless principals and teachers and their representatives are given the opportunity to participate in the formulation of policy,
it is unlikely that imposed changes will be effectively implemented (OECD, 2005, p. 213).

School-level improvement as the result of street-level bureaucrat collaboration can occur without the influence of the state. In fact, schools that failed to include teachers in their improvement plans may have weakened school capacity which includes teachers’ understanding, abilities, and dispositions related to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom management, and expectations for students (Youngs, 2001 and Lichtenstein et al., 1991). While most education researchers believe that cooperative efforts among teachers led by principals are important for school improvement, there is some opposition. Hanusek and his colleagues (2005) did not find that schools should be graded as a whole. Currently most state systems of accountability aggregate student performance for the entire school, not by classroom. They found that combined scores, across years and classrooms, masks variation in the quality of instruction provided by individual elementary teachers. This weakens the incentives for good teachers to enter the profession and remain in teaching.

Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) believe that state leaders should exercise their authority in helping local service delivery systems establish, expand, and improve their services. The first step in this endeavor is to hire and train personnel. The next step is to include service recipients in implementation decisions—keeping in mind that they may be swayed by pressures from service providers. They also believe leaders should reinforce conformity to preferred practices in achieving top-down goals. While “coping” behavior cannot be eliminated they can decrease it through careful monitoring and redirection (Weatherly and Lipsky, 1977, pp. 195-196). Johnston and Hedemann (1994)
concur. They found in their case studies of state policy implementation at the local level that “senior officers within the education department do not give a clear and consistent view about what level of collaboration should characterize devolution [of responsibility] practices within the state. Clarification of intentions is obviously needed at all levels before effective devolution can be achieved” (p. 204).

2.3.6 Delivery of Social Services—and Education

Noddings (1992 as cited in Nieto, 2005) coined the phrase “ethic of care” to describe the means in which students experience school in an environment where teachers and principals illustrate that they care for students by having expectations for them and praising them for their achievements. According to Wertheimer and Croan’s (2003) analysis of the 1998-1999 Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, 1.2 million kindergarteners (31%) had at least one health challenge, 753,000 (20%) lagged behind in cognitive tasks, 1.2 million (31%) lagged behind in social-emotional health, and 192,000 (9%) were behind in all three areas. According to Kunesh and Farley (1993) children and families experiencing one social ill such as inadequate housing, poor health, substance abuse, violence, and difficulty in school are at-risk for a number of other problems. Since the problems are interrelated it is difficult to distinguish between the domains. It is evident that social service intervention is necessary in schools in addition to academics.

Almost 30% of Ohio students have been identified as economically disadvantaged (Wiley et al., 2005). McCombs and her colleagues (2005) found a 23-25% difference between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged children on fourth
grade proficiency tests nationwide. They concluded that children who struggle the most in school are attending districts with less money to assist them with their reading and learning challenges. Many schools with the poorest academic performance do not have the resources to make the comprehensive changes desired by the central authorities (Elmore, 2004 and Mathis, 2005). Roschevsky (2002) found that it costs twice the amount to educate a child living in poverty to the same standards as a child from an advantaged home. Viadero (2005) reported on a study completed by The University of Michigan that compared full-day kindergarten to half-day kindergarten. Children learn about 33% more by attending full-day kindergarten than they do in half-day programs. Although the programs were traditionally set up to serve as child care for minority groups in economically disadvantaged areas, the all-day format provides opportunity for children to catch-up to their more advantaged peers.

Thirty-six states have a funding gap, with a nationwide disparity of $1,348 per student in high-poverty and low-poverty districts within the same state. In defense of states, it is more expensive to educate a child in an area of high cost of living. However, the gap understates the true extent of the problem because the added expense of educating a child in poverty (for extra meals, supplies, special need assistance, etc.) is ignored. Carey (2004) found that many high poverty schools are located in urban areas and suffer from deteriorating buildings and issues related to diversity of student needs.

Enrollment in kindergarten can serve as an opportunity for families to reach needed services. Odden (1991b) describes types of policies that allow schools to offer assistance to students and families. Developmental services are policies that reinforce local initiatives by providing additional resources. Redistributive programs require local
agencies (or schools) to engage in activities in which they had not been previously involved to provide more services to some clients who have a perceived need. Generally developmental programs place few constraints on localities, meaning that localities can implement the projects as they see fit. Redistributive programs are “relatively contentious” at initial implementation, but over time become in full compliance with legislative intent (Odden, 1991b, p. 7).

The Pathways Mapping Initiative (2004a) recommends that school services include prevention in addition to remediation and intervention. In the instance that the school is unable to provide social services needed by a child and his or her family, they should be able to provide assistance that will navigate a family to the proper community entity. Local services are to provide multiple points of entry, recruit from at-risk populations without limiting access by other populations, and maximize eligibility while minimizing costs (Pathways, 2004a).

2.4 Public Policy, School Readiness, and Educational Equity

In School Funds and Their Apportionment Cubberly discussed the idea that children are of equal importance to society and are entitled to the same advantages (1906, p.17). Unfortunately the state cannot provide each child with everything he or she is entitled. The United States has been called a “melting pot,” a place where all cultures can blend. However, many groups find their identity in cultural heritage and resist efforts to blend. Diversity in public schools has been accepted throughout the student population and among the staff, but creation of a supportive environment for student learning has not
been universal (Reyes and Wagstaff, 2005). Moral accountability is the duty to defend values and social principles, such as fairness and justice, when rationally opposed (Firestone and Shipps, 2005). Believers in moral accountability agree that a shared commitment by leaders and followers will result in better society. For schools, this means that as long as teachers and principals are dedicated to improving the education of children, better performance outcomes will result. However, social justice research illustrates that even though American public education is supposed to help the economically and socially disadvantaged students transcend class and enter desirable careers, the provision of equal education alone will not provide most disadvantaged children with opportunities to succeed. As stated by Esposito (2000), “humans do not simply confront social objects and events, but define them in ways consistent with their unique and variegated experiences” (p. 174). Students who do not grow up in environments where education is of value or are not clear as to how education will help them be successful in life will not take advantage of the opportunity for education as would a student who has experienced the good education can bring.

2.4.1 Influences from Home

“The important role of communities in supporting children and in supporting parents in their own roles as nurturers and providers must be considered central to understanding readiness” (Kagan and Neuman, 1997, p. 67). Family support and community services significantly affect whether or not a child attains healthy development. Making sure that a child attains healthy development is easier said than
done. The funding gap that exists between advantaged and at-risk children in public
schools also exists in early childhood education. For many children, the age at which
they enter school may not be related to readiness, but to family demographics, child care
costs and number of arrangements, child gender, and time spent in care predict age of
kindergarten entry (Buckshaw, 2006). Most public schools are not responsible for
children until they turn five (or six) and are ready to enter kindergarten. Until that time,
the responsibility of child education falls upon the parents or other caretakers (SECA,
1993). Children demonstrate higher academic achievement, positive attitudes toward
school, and better homework habits if their parents are involved (Baum and McMurray-
Schwarz, 2004). Parents who work and are unable to educate their children on their own
must provide for the education and care of their children through other means, such as a
friend or relative, a babysitter, center-based childcare, or some combination of the
aforementioned means (Shellenbarger, 2004). Education of children younger than five
years of age is a continuum of the child’s home environment, non-statutory provision,
and compulsory schooling. Parents maintain the central role, particularly in helping bring
about smooth transition through each developmental stage (McInnes and Williamson,
2004). Zill (1999) found that low-income families were more likely to report that schools
did a good job of communicating with the parents on the progress of their kindergarten
child (73%) than were middle- to high-income parents (63%). These findings can be
interpreted in two ways. The first is that kindergarten programs serving a low-income
population are taking extra measures to involve parents in their child’s education.
Another means of interpretation is that economically disadvantaged families are less
demanding of the schools.
Fox, Dunlap, and Cushing (2002) believe that the development of partnerships centered on families is the most effective means of early intervention. Halpern (2004) argues that parent support and education programs have inherently modest effects because parenting is inherently difficult to define and to alter. In response to increased accountability in schools spurred by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), some parents send their children to profit-making education centers to give their children an academic edge (Borja, 2005). Other parents choose to hold their children out of kindergarten a year, or “redshirt” their child, to give their children a performance edge over their younger peers (Gay, 2002). Evaluations of this practice have yielded mixed results for children (see Jacobsen, 2000 and Viadero, 1998 among others). However there is evidence that delaying school entry costs taxpayers $4,700 a year for each delayed student (Gay, 2000). Costs are incurred from inflation, greater cost for treating disabilities that would have been caught earlier should a child have entered school on time, and from the cost of keeping a child on early care subsidies such as Head Start, for an extra year.

In a report drafted for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Lino (2003) stated that total child care expenses range from $6,620 a year for the lowest income group to $14,950 a year for the highest income group in two-parent households. In 2005, approximately 65% of American children received care outside of home. The means in which families select the type of care for their children are often not related to quality. Family values, affordability of preschool, and availability of care play into the equation of care determination in which quality is compromised (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2005).
2.4.2 Influences from Community

It has been established that the United States of America is a diverse society. In 2000, Caucasian students made up 61.2% of the U.S. public school population. African-American students made up 17.2%, Hispanic/Latino students made up 16.3%, Asian-American students made up 4.1% and American Indian students made up 1.2% (Reyes and Wagstaff, 2005, p. 103). Diversity is a concept that accompanies more than race and ethnicity. Gender, physical capacity, language, sexual identity, age, religion, and context also affect student learning.

Economic environments largely determine how schools are funded and who will attend a neighborhood school. Wealthy families pay a lower percent of their income on taxes than do poor families but yield a larger return in terms of high-quality education for their children (Phillips, 2002 as cited in Anyon, 2005, p. 70). As investments are made in suburbia rather than downtown, urban residents do not have access to entry-level positions or and the schools serving urban students lack a tax base. As residents’ financial situations decline so does a communities ability to provide quality public education (Wilson, 1996).

For at-risk children, equal schooling may result in unequal achievement as early care experiences and parent involvement are unequal. At-risk students may do less well than their affluent peers because their home situations make them less capable of profiting from the opportunity. The cluster of conditions from which they are influenced prior to school entry and the hours they spend out of school prevent children from taking full advantage of the opportunities presented during formal schooling (ERS, 2002). The
result of “equal” school is that children who enter behind leave behind (Strike, 1989, pp. 209-210). In this view child readiness for school is secondary to the quality of a child’s home, child care, and classroom learning environment. Children learn at differing rates over time and in context—which means that a child “ready” on one measure may be ahead or behind in another (ERS, 2002) depending on his or her exposure to the content.

Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2001) argue that school is just one of the many entities in a child’s environment that facilitates learning. The broad range of cultural, community, and family experiences promoting individual differences in students’ capacity for learning and motivation to achieve cannot be overcome by the introduction of extrinsic rewards for performance. Their educational progress is diminished because of stressors at home and in their community (Anyon, 2005). Rothenstein (2004) agrees that resources need to be directed to out-of-school services for children in order for them to achieve at the same level of their peers in school. A child needs to arrive at school safe, healthy, not hungry, and prepared to learn. For children outside the dominant culture or who are exposed to poverty and other environmental risks, inadequate preparation for school is likely to be compounded by the fact that most classrooms are ill-equipped to deal with students who have different cultural styles, learning patterns, or whose home situations may not contribute positively to their development or well-being (Wesley and Buysse, 2003). The last item is of particular concern because the “at-risk” populations are growing the fastest. By 2010 the African-American and Hispanic populations will be of equal size and by 2025 there will be no dominant culture in the United States (Hodgkinson, 1995). Wesley and Buysse (2003) concur that education systems must adapt to the varying needs of all students to be successful. According to
Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000) teachers reported adjustment problems which are a likely result of a disconnection between a kindergarten teachers’ views of readiness and a distinctive set of preschool experiences, cultural values, and a child’s skill set. They believe that a child’s competencies, home environment, and kindergarten teacher’s expectations need to be better aligned.

Communities with aging and declining populations also have an effect on readiness. Schools with declining enrollments face a set of problems different from those often sited in the literature associated with growth and a changing population. Districts with an outward-migrating and aging population may experience declining enrollments and empty, over-staffed schools. Schools may be closed and teachers may be let go in response to budget cuts. In response, the community can become resentful of the institution. Needless to say, school leaders must work especially hard to maintain a good relationship with the community. This can best be achieved by keeping the community informed of the reasoning behind the changes (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 170).

2.4.3 Influences from Child Care and Social Service

It is common knowledge in the early childhood care industry that preparing a young child for school is important to success beyond school as early brain development lasts throughout an individual’s lifetime (Kagan and Neuman, 1997). According to the National Collaborative Perinatal Study (Broman, Nicholls, and Kennedy, 1985), the cognitive abilities of children by age four are better explained by eight variables relating to social status than by 161 bio-medical variables that assess the condition of mothers and
children. Nationally only one out of seven children eligible for child care assistance under federal law receives help (CLASP, 2004). Of states that maintain waiting lists for child care assistance over 500,000 children are waiting for their opportunity for early learning (Children’s Defense Fund, 2004). Only 3% of infants and toddlers eligible for Early Head Start are enrolled in the program and public funding only allows 60% of eligible preschool-age children to participate in Head Start (Children’s Defense Fund, 2004). States are cutting reimbursement rates for providers, eliminating available slots, tightening income eligibility, and reducing investments in early care quality despite a plethora of recent evidence that the investments illustrate effective, positive, long-lasting results (Robinson and Stark, 2005). Willer (as cited in Borja, 2005) believes that preschool tutoring should be offered to everyone, not only those who can pay for it. She also advocates for a universal high-quality preschool program. “Participation in excellent preschool programs has been shown to boost academic achievement and reduce dropout rates, among other benefits. The economic benefits of such programs range as high as seven dollars for each dollar spent, although savings and positive results are not linked to preschools that lack adequate funding and strong teaching” (Richard, 2005).

Most child care centers (86%) provide mediocre- to poor-quality care (Kagan and Neuman, 1997, p. 76). Access to high-quality early education programs is not universal. Agencies seeking to implement such programs lack the infrastructure and the resources to do so (Kagan and Neuman, 1997). Efforts to improve early childhood education program quality largely depend upon regulations imposed by state legislation. Funding, aside from fees paid by parents, comes from federal and state reimbursements. Like the public school system, requirements for teacher-child classroom ratios, teacher qualifications,
performance standards and assessments, and other quality indicators are set forth in public policy (Robinson and Stark, 2005).

The American public believes that providing high-quality early learning to children from disadvantaged families will help children perform better in school (Rose and Gallup, 2006). Empirical research confirms their belief. Most teachers (between 78% and 93%) said that children who attended a high-quality preschool program were more likely to get along with their peers, be sensitive to the feelings of others, be less disruptive in class, and would have pre-academic skills in reading and mathematics (Rees and Kharfen, 2004). It has been well-documented that preschool has long-term academic and social benefits (Bardige, 2005; Burchinal, 1999; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, and Clifford, 2000; and Temple, Reynolds, and Meidel, 2000), particularly for children from low-income families (Gottlieb and Weinberg, 1999). Jacobson (2005) covered a Berkley study that found mixed results from early childhood programs. Evidence was consistent with other studies that children in early childcare settings made academic gains that continued through third grade. However, children who spent 30 hours or more in center-based childcare display behavioral problems by third grade that were not observed earlier in their school career.

The RAND Corporation (Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon, 2005) evaluated 20 early care and intervention programs that took place in the home, at a child care center, or in a combination setting. They found statistically significant benefits for children in two thirds of the programs reviewed. Two of the most famous early childhood education and care initiatives, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project and the Carolina Abecedarian Project, are outlined briefly. The 22-year study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool in
Ypsilanti, Michigan showed that preschool can affect the lives of participants throughout school and into adulthood. The study divided 123 African American children born in poverty into two groups. The treatment group received preschool that encouraged active learning in an environment stocked with high-quality learning materials and highly trained teachers. The control group received no intervention. Over 71% of the Perry Preschool participants graduated high school compared to 54% from the control. Only 59% of the treatment group received public assistance compared to 80% of the control group (Halle, Zaff, Calkins, and Margie, 2000).

The Carolina Abecedarian Project that took place from 1972 until 1974 and included a sample of (primarily) African American children of single mothers randomly assigned to receive either high-quality child care or no treatment. The treatment began at three months of age and children received the intervention five days a week for 6-8 hours until they turned five. By 18 months of age the children in the preschool condition had higher IQ scores that persisted through their school careers. In the treatment condition 35% had either enrolled in or graduate from college, compared to 14% from the control group (Halle, Zaff, Calkins, and Margie, 2000).

Rates of preschool participation vary along racial lines rather than income lines. African American children tend to take part in center-based programs more often than all other racial groups and Hispanic children are unlikely to attend preschool at all (Zill, 1999). Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon (2005) found that the most effective early care and education programs have better-trained caregivers, have smaller child-to-staff ratios, and are more intensive. Peisner-Feinberg and Burchinal (1997) found that preschool is helpful for all children, but the gains are greatest for children at greatest risk for school
failure. Translated into dollar amounts, the estimate of net benefits per child served range from $1,400 per child to $240,000 per child—or $1.26 to $17.07 for each dollar invested (Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon, 2005). The “immediate” money comes from less public dollars being spent on remedial education services, repeated grades, and special education classes on preschoolers reach the public education system. (Special education programs may account for as much as 20% of a school’s budget (Lecker, 2002, p. 33).) Later savings include higher tax revenues and reduced outlays in the form of social welfare and criminal justice expenditures. The Committee for Economic Development (2006) found that adequately preparing all three- and four-year-old children for school will return $2 to $16 to the nation’s economy in the forms of health, crime, education, and tax revenue. Unfortunately the initial cost of implementing a high-quality preschool with 1:10 staff/child ratios for 15 to 40 hours a week will cost between $16 billion and $27 billion initially (approximately $5,100 per child) (Committee for Economic Development, 2006).

2.4.4 Collaboration among Education Stakeholders

Leadership is a powerful intervening variable in the nature, quality, and effectiveness of educational delivery in all contexts (Reyes and Wagstaff, 2005). Effective principals negotiate among constituents to achieve horizontal networks of power. While a vertical network “links unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence,” a horizontal network “brings together argents of relatively equivalent status and power,” states Putnam (1993, p. 173 as cited in Reyes and
By altering the distributions of power among constituents into a horizontal network, principals encourage communities that are engaged in achieving success for all students by building public trust and cooperation.

Public dissatisfaction can be “put to work” to benefit schools (Lutz and Merz, 1992, p 153). Most reform movements have moved public education toward a professional, elite government entity “protecting” schools from interacting with the community directly. Resisting public demands can be an effective means of solving a problem, much like sweeping dirt under a rug. However, conflict management, although challenging in the short term the school can avoid dissatisfaction that becomes great enough to result in political upheaval. Thompson (1967) argued that only schools that align with the community will truly be effective.

Dockett and Perry (2004) found that there are significant differences in expectations of schools and understandings of parents’ role in their child’s education. Without effective communication between parents and teachers collaboration opportunities are lost. Levels of compliance of implementation will be dependent on local opposition as well as willingness of participation. Reyes and Wagstaff (2005) reviewed studies of principals’ leadership. They found that effective principals understood their leadership is context specific; that principals must develop their own approach to the democratic process; and that schools must integrate with the community through principals’ empowering of teachers and the surrounding neighborhoods.

There is little evidence that individuals unhesitatingly and unquestioningly engage in any practice, let alone leadership practice simply because the opportunity is afforded them. Rather, the relationship between leadership practices that individuals engage in and the individuals
themselves may be co-constituted. In other words, there is likely a fairly strong interdependence and reciprocity between how leadership practices invite leaders to participate and how (to what extent) individuals decide to engage in these practices. Further, how opportunities for participation are offered (and to whom) and certainly individuals’ decisions on how they will participate are not likely to be uniform across or even within organizations (Prestine and Nelson, 2005, p. 52).

Reforms that deliver clear, coherent procedures and goals will enhance the success of implementation. There is evidence that collaborative processes are rarely understood by the participants. According to Johnston and Hedemann (1994) the terms involvement, consultation, participation, and collaboration are used interchangeably while they really represent varying levels of involvement in a collaborative process. Dialogue is necessary for group learning. Leaders, street-level bureaucrats, and constituents can gain insight that they would have not been capable of achieving on their own when working as a team. Values and beliefs that are dominant in a school, in the end, establish the course of education (Reyes and Wagstaff, 2005). Unless stakeholders are clear about the nature of collaboration for which they are aiming, it is unlikely that strategies will be devised to allow a group to operate in the manner necessary to achieve its goals (Johnston and Hedemann, 1994).

Gulich and Urwick (1937) noted that organizational components could have a common contribution to the larger organization, can utilize common processes, can serve a specific clientele, or can serve a particular geographic area. While homogenizing the organization in this manner may be rational, the components are not one-dimensional and finding logical means to systematically group organizational elements may prove to be
problematic. Interdependence among organizations is troublesome to manage because exchanges are difficult to coordinate. When interdependence is “pooled,” action within one part of the organization may have no affect on the rest of the organization so long as the overall organization’s existence is assured. If elements of the organization operate under sequential interdependence then all other parts of the organization must adjust if one fails to operate as intended. If interdependence is reciprocal then the actions of one element must adjust to the actions of multiple elements within the organization (Thompson, 1967, p. 55).

2.5 Leveling the Playing Field

The demographics of the nation’s children are constantly in flux. Therefore, schools must be ever-changing to meet the needs of a diverse, often segregated, student body (Cooper, 2004). There are many reasons why an achievement gap exists between white and minority children, which were outlined in Cooper (2004). They include disinterest of stakeholders to close the gap; beliefs that minority children are unable to succeed; lack of quality preschool access for poor children of color; beliefs that educational disparity is the responsibility of nature rather than schools; and beliefs that the gap is the result of economic disparity, bad teaching, missed opportunities for children as the fault of their parents, and unequal access to high-level courses and challenging curricula; negative peer pressure from nonwhites for children “acting white” by doing well in school; and, finally, a lack of parental involvement of non-white families in schools. Murray (1995) argues that cognitive abilities are influenced heavily by the
environments that a child experiences and that most assessments for cognitive abilities measure cultural learning rather than pure intelligence.

In the years since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* equal opportunity for a high-quality education has been the general theme in public education reform discussions. The goal is to ensure that all students, especially those from economically and socially disadvantaged homes (Nichols, *et al.*, 2005), receive high-quality education and training necessary to be successful in life. Since the 1980s states have increased academic standards, revised their systems of teacher certification, improved teacher compensation, and enhanced accountability mechanisms (Fuhrman *et al.*, 1991). Knapp *et al.* (1991) found that both positive and negative effects for non-target students result from federal programs designed to help less fortunate students. For example, during time when targeted students are out of the classroom teachers can give more individual attention to non-target students. But in districts with fiscal strains, providing federally-mandated services meant cutbacks for non-targeted students, such as increased class sizes.

Education has been used to leverage change in behavior at the local level in an attempt to “alleviate a variety of social ills” (Spillane, 2004, p. 3). Representatives at all levels of government have attempted to implement broad societal changes via public school classrooms. The reforms have taken many shapes including school-based management, parental choice, policy alignment, whole-school reform, charter schools, and standards-based curricula. With any change, administrative burden is intensified at the local level. However, in schools of all sizes the burden associated with
implementation of new programs dramatically reduced after the first year (Knapp et al., 1991).  

2.5.1 Public Education Reform

People from wealthy families have been more literate than individuals from lower class homes for over 200 years (Tozer, Violas, and Senese, 1995, p. 248). Gender was at one time an obstacle for education because in the early years of the U.S. participation in government and in the private sector was only important for men. Race has also been an obstacle. In 1865, 90% of African-American males were illiterate (Tozer, Violas, and Senese, 1995, p. 248). Educational access was also determined by the place where one lived. In the urban north schools were more accessible than they were in the south. Many southerners of wealth were educated outside of a school setting (Tozer, Violas, and Senese, 1995, p. 249).

Since the nineteenth century debates over the purpose of public schooling ranged from “Americanizing” immigrant populations from Europe, to eliminating segregation in society, to training children in science and engineering, to fostering the growth of individual children instead of focusing on subject matter, and to offering disadvantaged populations equal opportunities for success (Feinberg and Soltis, 1998, p. 9). In short, the social needs of society are reflected in the required changes imposed on public schools. The reform en vogue is equality of educational opportunity, meaning that

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14 Knapp et al. (1991) operationalized administrative burden as paperwork, extra meetings, planning, and management.
individuals should be awarded for their talent, not for their race, family, gender, religion, etc. However, equal opportunity may require equitable (often unequal or compensatory) services to balance other challenges experienced by children and families prior to school and outside of school (Feinberg and Soltis, 1998). Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* multiple attempts to improve the current delivery system of education have taken place. State and federal governments realized that it would take more than implementation of a marginal program to fix a perceived problem. The “effective schools” era studies were diverse and the varied outcomes left much to be debated, but a few things were learned. Effective schools had clear goals, rigorous academic standards, order and discipline, homework, strong leadership by the principal, teacher decision making, parent support or cooperation, and high expectations for student performance (Chubb and Moe, 1990, p. 16). Since 1990 many school reforms have been initiated at the school or state level, ignoring community-elected officials (Renchler, 2000). The ready schools movement seeks to empower communities and schools to work as a team when implementing current educational reforms.

Unlike many other social program reforms, educational changes are not always incremental. Overhaul in the administration of public schooling can cause problems. The purpose of a revolution is to dismantle and old, ineffective institution and assemble a new institution that meets the needs of the constituency. Reformation takes time, often with little impact in the short-term (Fuhrman *et al.*, 1991). As a result, stakeholders have a tendency to give up an idea before the implementation has been completed and the true program effect can be appropriately measured (Stake, 2003).
[Any] choice plan that upsets the traditional structure of public education generates intense opposition from established groups. As a result, most of the choice plans that get put into effect (or, for that matter, even gain serious attention) are grafted onto the traditional system by making marginal changes in it. Choice becomes part of a big compromise among contending political powers—no one loses . . . (Chubb and Moe, 1990, p. 208).

Education reformers in the 1980s made educators and local leaders external actors. Legislators, governors, and business groups took on leadership positions to which educators accommodated. The reforms encompassed numerous approaches—as diverse as the motives of decision makers. On the surface the method of policy making appeared to be inclusive of local representatives who were invited to participate in task forces and commissions. However, the group members had no real role in shaping the reforms (Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore, 1991). Testing, paperwork, busing, special education, and a myriad of other terms have become associated with strong feelings toward school policy. Anger and resentment run deep around people or events that have significantly altered accepted norms. The aforementioned words become negative symbols of complex emotional reactions to social change. Rhetoric discrediting individual beliefs can result in opposition to change and may cause resistance to policy by the very civil servants who are supposed to implement them (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005, 55-56). By including local actors in statewide policy decisions, implementation is smoother (Fuhrman et al., 1991).
2.5.2 Reform in Funding Public Education

The equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution was enacted to ensure the rights of individuals and the court found it applied to the funding disparities within and among school districts (Odden and Picus, 2004, p. 27). Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Great Society Program. At the time many policy makers believed that lack of education resulted in poverty. As a result in 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was Passed. The most important piece was Title I, which provided additional resources to schools with low-income students. Title IX was another important piece that provided additional funding to districts that educated American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Head Start was also established in 1965 in response to research that indicated children living in poverty are behind their peers academically when they enter school. Federal attention to public school issues provided legitimacy at the local and state levels for stakeholders who faced resistance when they needed special provisions for students with disabilities or unequal access to the benefits of a public education.

Money is always a necessary part of education reform. More money can mean more and/or better teachers, longer schools days and years, smaller class sizes, and updated equipment. Education constitutes the largest portion of most state and local government budgets. It employs administrators, teachers, and other staff members in order to offer “free” universal academic enrichment to all children living in the U.S. In the 1960s the federal government began alleviating some school costs, which reached 9.8% in 1980. By the year 2000 the federal government was covering 6.9% of school-related expenses, state governments generated 50.7% and local revenue accounted for
42.4% (Odden and Picus, 2004, p.6).\textsuperscript{15} In the past, local governments used fiscal resources from new state and federal programs for purposes not coinciding with the programs’ intent. Increases in state regulation associated with increases in state aid resulted in diminished local control (Fuhrman \textit{et al.}, 1991).

2.5.3 \textit{Standards-Based Reform}

Standards can be defined as goals for student learning developed by communities that represent aspirations for child learning (Graue, 1999). Standards-based reform has been accepted as a means of improving public school accountability, a vehicle for closing the achievement gap among economic, racial, and ethnic groups, and an assurance that the U.S. public school system will produce a globally competitive workforce (Hadderman, 2000). Standards are a collection of guidelines outlining what students should know and be able to do (Swanson, 2006). In the political arena, standards are framed for accountability purposes and goals to raise expectations for all students (Graue, 1999). Assessments, accountability measures, and teacher supports, in theory, should align with the standards.

The U.S. government, as done in other nations, has shaped the organization of schools, including the educators’ working conditions. The shift in favor of state responsibility for the administration of education led to a focus on increasing standards in many states. Higher levels of achievement needed to be monitored and enforced

\textsuperscript{15} In Ohio during the 1998-1999 school year local governments picked up the tab for 48.9 percent (Odden and Picus, 2004, p.7).
resulting in policy logic of testing students, teachers, and sometimes administration. Measurable goals are to be set based on academic standards as a support to carefully monitor student achievement. Standards provide a clear target that lets school leaders know where their attention needs to be focused (Lashway, 1999).

Standards for expected behaviors may be established to provide a path to success in reaching policy goals. However, there is no guarantee that all service providers and resource recipients will follow that path. Oftentimes changes will be superficial, other times the changes will infiltrate the organization and be long-lasting (Fuhrman et al., 1991). Professional development that parallels the standards can help school reach targets (Lashway, 1999). However, the mindset behind the compliance to standards must be directed appropriately for standards to be effective. It is important to acknowledge that the establishment of standards for proper conditions to educate children may increase the probability that a child will have a positive kindergarten learning experience; it cannot be guaranteed in every case. For example, standards must be age-appropriate. Meisels (1999) found that following the publication of A Nation at Risk curriculum previously used in early grades began to permeate kindergarten classrooms as efforts to raise standards spread across the United States. His concern is that standards directed at kindergarten classrooms are inappropriate for children of kindergarten age. Also, the development of standards does not guarantee that they will be implemented at the local

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16 Gallagher (1999) provides an example. Limiting a kindergarten student-to-adult ratio may provide staff with the opportunity to spend more time with each child. But if a teacher or assistant is incapable of communicating with a child or is trained to deliver kindergarten in a didactic manner the benefits of a smaller class size will not be observed. Assessments can provide evidence of progress toward goals the standards are intended to achieve.
level. Over fifty years of public education reform has taught researchers that many attempts to improve only last a short while and prove to be largely ineffective. Some go unacknowledged while others become examples of how schools change reforms, not how reforms change schools (Kerchner, 2005, p. 400). Public reporting of results may put pressure on schools to meet targets set forth by state-mandated academic standards. Rewards and sanctions will be presented accordingly (Lashway, 1999).

Standards-based reform has become quite popular among school reformers within and outside of the policy arena since the 1980s. Standards are intended to be “challenging” for teachers and students and, in theory, will motivate the learning process (Spillane, 2004). Proponents of standards implementation agree that standards should be developed from core academic disciplines and should cover what children should know and the skills they should be able to execute (Hadderman, 2000). Many states have the authority to “take over” school districts who do not meet educational standards (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2005). Standards are not intended to prescribe teaching methods or what is taught in the classroom. They are only to determine the end result of local school efforts (Hadderman, 2000).

The National Council on Educational Standards and Testing (1992, as cited in Noble and Smith, 1994) finds the missing “means” as a problem. Schools meeting the standards for educational delivery produce students who meet the academic achievement standards. Cuban and others (1993, as cited in Spillane, 2004) found that some type of school-level compliance measure is necessary to motivate teachers resilient to reform initiatives (p. 11). In Spillane’s (2004) case study of schools in Michigan one principal stated that many teachers were slow to change their behaviors in “hope that this policy
effort too might pass” (p. 64). If they wait it out, the drive for change will simply blow over. Constant, inconsistent, and ever-changing messages from policy makers may make implementation in the classroom seem like an unproductive use of the teachers’ time. Furthermore, little or nothing is ever dropped from school curriculum when new elements are added. Coherence is lacking and oftentimes curricular elements do not connect to the real world for all student populations (Apple, 2001). Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995, p. 11 as cited in Graue, 1999, p. 133) said “Potential negative effects of national standards include the threat to both integrated curriculum and emergent curriculum, the risk of expectations becoming standardized without regard for individual and cultural differences, and the danger of establishing inappropriate performance standards.”

Goodlad (1984), Sizer (1985), and Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore (1991) strongly believe in school-improvement mandates, but not necessarily universal mandates. Within districts, school sites may vary dramatically. They have different teachers, different principals, and oftentimes a greatly varied student population. They will comply with standards in a variety of ways that reflect local needs. Goodlad found that institutionalization of educational changes must be based on the needs of an individual school site. Schools should be allowed to develop their own improvement plans while districts provide a strong foundation upon which individual school stakeholders work together to develop and implement problem-solving strategies for school improvement. Standards and accountability measures are easily administered, but they can inhibit creativity in solving institutional challenges (Nichols et al., 2005; Wiley et al., 2005; among others). In sum, the debate over implementation of standards-based education is a
debate between diversity and equality as the most important consideration in public education delivery.

2.5.5 Testing

Any effort to close the achievement gap is faced with the problem of measuring the phenomenon. Measuring child readiness, family readiness, and school readiness are to be incorporated. However, there is a great deal of evidence related to the limitations of measuring instruments to assess children at a young age (Gallagher, 1999). According to Meisels (1999) high-stakes testing refers to “the use of assessment data to make decisions about enrollment, retention, promotion, incentives for children or teachers, or punishments” (p. 60). High-stakes school accountability policy has assumed a prominent place at the forefront of educational policy debates in many Western liberal democratic nations (Apple, 1998). In the United States much attention has been given to educational accountability, standardized testing, and the equity of such practices since the early 1980s following the publication of A Nation at Risk. Standardized testing is the most widely practiced accountability measure. And despite is broad implementation; the appropriateness of its use is questioned continuously. Civil-rights advocates claim that

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17 Nations employing accountability testing include the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Sweden.
18 Grant (2002) found that the widespread use of standardized tests may have been fueled by suburban parents whose children attend schools with reputations for excellence. “Top quartile spots on this list have real consequences for real estate values, bragging rights, and the like . . .” (p. 15). Most educators and researchers hope that the policy-driven widespread use of standardized tests is for the purpose of helping children rather than helping the real estate market.
most high-stakes tests discriminate against minority youth, teachers in at-risk districts, and other victims of educational inequities (Hadderman, 2000). Results of such assessments have been used to evaluate teachers’ classroom effectiveness, to compare the relative success of schools, to evaluate curricula, and to allocate resources (Urdan and Paris, 1994). They have also been used to prevent students from advancing to the next grade in school and to prevent students from graduating (Hadderman, 2000). Scoring errors deprive students of high school diplomas; cause students to be placed in summer school unnecessarily; and cause teachers and administrators to lose their jobs (Toch, 2006). Regardless of the subject matter, tests can be written to measure it—so long as content validity, objectivity, standardization, and comparability are preserved (Noble and Smith, 1994). Under NCLB (2001) states are required to administer standardized assessments in more grades and in more subject areas. By the spring of 2006 45 million standardized tests were administered annually and the cost estimates for developing, administering, and scoring the tests range from $517 million to $750 million for the 2005-2006 school year (Toch, 2006). The increase in cost resulted from changing the nature of the standardized assessments in addition to increasing the number of tests administered.¹⁹ Toch (2006) found after the enactment of No Child Left Behind (2001) tests are “criterion-referenced” rather than “norm-referenced”. Each state has developed their own tests to align with academic standards and clarify classroom expectations. The testing industry has had to custom-build many standardized tests to meet the varying needs of each state.

¹⁹ Use of norm-referenced tests has actually decreased by 30 percent since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (Toch, 2006).
Graue and Brown (1993) found state-mandated tests to have negative impacts on classroom instruction and that teachers at the street-level of the organization disagreed with the policymakers’ accountability decisions. Disdain of standardized tests may be emotional (Smith, 1991 and Noble and Smith, 1994) or ideological (Cohen, McLaughlin, and Talbert, 1993 and Noble and Smith, 1994). Either way, the general consensus is that teachers do not like standardized assessments. But, regardless of teachers’ discontent, there is some evidence that standardized tests affect their practices. Cimbricz (2002) found that the degree of influence testing has on teachers is dependent on how teachers view the tests and use them. Teachers’ knowledge of subject matter, their approaches to classroom instruction, their experience, and their status within the school organization all affect how standardized tests are perceived (Cimbricz, 2002).

Accountability pressures fostered a dramatic increase in the placement of children into special education classrooms. Testing reduces time for instruction, discourages variety in curricular offerings, and discourages creativity in teaching methods and assessments (Miesels, 1999 and Noble and Smith, 1994). Noble and Smith (1994) found that preparation for standardized tests decreased instructional time by 20 days per year. Zill (1999) disagrees. Surveys of kindergarten teachers indicated that children in their classrooms spend a great deal of time participating in self-discovery activities of their choice. Miesels’s parent surveys illustrated that there is a more drill-oriented academic flavor in classrooms than what was reported by teachers. The perceived negative consequences for poor performance may encourage teachers to instruct with the test in mind—which may narrow curriculum and can fail to facilitate a child’s learning
Nichols, Glass, and Berliner (2005) examined 14 (1990 through 2003) years of standardized achievement test scores in 25 states to determine whether or not the pressure put on educators and their students (an intended consequence of NCLB) via high-stakes testing increased student achievement. They found that states with a larger percentage of minority students implemented accountability systems that exerted more pressure than did other states. A second finding indicated that states exerting more pressure would graduate fewer students. Hoff (2006) found that the state-developed standardized tests assess low-level skills for K-12 students to create an appearance of academic proficiency—a practice that is counter-productive to the student achievement goals set by NCLB (Toch, 2006). States differ from the federal government in their definitions of proficiency, often accusing federal standards of being too ambitious (Linn, 2003a). In the elementary grades in 2005 less than 50% of students in seven states passed at the federal elementary level (McCombs et al., 2005) and the trend continued in 2006 (Swanson, 2006). School districts face disincentives to maintain or increase the difficulty of their assessments, or to set high standards for the definition of proficiency. The standardized assessments may not be used to diagnose students’ difficulties. This means that the tests fail to provide schools with information to improve instruction (Valencia and Buly, 2003 as cited in McCombs et al., 2005; and Toch, 2006).

Measurement experts oppose the use of high-stakes testing because it violates appropriate practice of test validity (American Education Research Association, 1999) and cannot support the demands of policy-makers (Linn, 2000). Additionally, it is
difficult to determine whether or not score improvements on standardized assessments are a true result of student learning or are the outcome of classroom “practice”—teaching to the test (Raymond and Hanushek, 2003 and Wiley et al., 2005). Some findings show that educators oppose the practice because of unintended consequences associated with the delivery of the assessments in public school classrooms (Noddings, 2002 and Pedulla, Abrams, Madus, Russell, Ramos, and Miao, 2003 among others). Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, and Miao (2003) had similar findings. Their research showed that elementary educators found state educational standards to be useful, found that state-mandated testing has brought attention to education issues, and found that testing is successful at holding students accountable for their learning.20 But the good comes at the cost of a narrowed curriculum, pressure put on teachers, and lower school morale. Elementary teachers effectively incorporated state standards in their classroom but found it difficult to incorporate information present on the standardized assessments into their curricula (Pedulla et al., 2003). Grant (2000) found testing only influences what is taught, but not how teachers teach. The fact that testing may influence what material is presented will have long-term effects on the American system of public education.

To date much of the discourse concerning the effects of standardized testing on teachers’ behavior has framed the issue in terms of coercion. That is, teachers feeling pressured to elevate test scores start teaching to test items in ways they would not if left free to exercise their professional judgment. . . [but] some of the changes observed in teachers’ behavior after the implementation of and assessment program may reflect genuine change in teachers’ beliefs . . . (Kowalski et al., 2005, p. 37).

20 The accountability measure was less reflective of the abilities of minority students.
Whether or not one sees the changes in teachers’ beliefs as good or bad depends on one’s perspective of the assessment.

Standardized school readiness assessments are administered in Ohio prior to a child’s kindergarten experience. Most readiness tests differ from developmental screenings in that they are administered in large groups while developmental screenings are administered one-on-one (Meisels, 1999). Meisels (1999) found that developmental screenings are reliable and valid while the readiness tests she examined were not standardized and tended to lack criterion reference, reliability, and validity. The National Education Goals Panel (1995) advocates for kindergarten child readiness assessments to determine a child’s academic abilities when they arrive at school. Knowing the skills children possess at school entry will ensure the curriculum addresses their needs. Readiness assessments, they found, should not determine whether or not a child can or cannot attend school.

*On one hand, a detailed profile of individual child performance can be part of a process of continuous assessment throughout the school year, and the profile can function as a tool for improvement of instruction. On the other hand, an assessment of children’s ‘readiness’ can be simply a ‘snapshot’ taken of what is in our culture at an important developmental transition point. In the latter case, the implicit reference is, again, to how well a community has prepared its young children to be ready for school. Thus, the latter type of assessment takes its place within a framework of accountability* (Murphy and Burns, 2002).
Although the assessments are different their outcomes are the same—failure will indicate future difficulties in school. But readiness tests are more likely to misclassify students and place them into special education classes21 (Ellwein et al., 1991, p.70).

2.6 National Education Goals Panel’s Challenge 2000

The original educational reform goal (during the 1950s and 1960s) of eliminating poverty has regressed to a more manageable goal of improving educational achievement. Higher-level government provides support based on rules, regulations, and monitoring systems. Using these mechanisms, top-down reform has been implemented effectively (Odden, 1991a). Several key developments including President Bush’s and the 50 U.S. governor’s, National Education Goals (1989), the establishment of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (1991) and Congress’s enactment of Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) signed into law by President Clinton established national standards for the education of American children and accountability testing (Hadderman, 2000). The view was that the most disadvantaged students are being increasingly put at-risk for academic failure if not motivated to succeed in a rigorous academic curriculum set forth for all children (Apple, 2001). As accountability pressure increases, readiness for school has become more important so children can take full advantage of learning opportunities schools offer. Scott-Little and her colleagues (2002) believe that readiness is a construction that fits a child with a school. The pieces of the construction include the

21 Children are more likely to be placed in special education if they are African American, young for their class, male, or socially or economically disadvantaged (Meisels, 1999).
community, family, and a child’s capacity for learning. However, every child’s “fit” will be different and schools have the responsibility to adapt, or be “ready” to serve all children.

2.6.1 Overview

In 1990 the National Education Goals Panel was established to assess the progress of the U.S. system of public education toward reaching eight National Education Goals. The first of the goals stated that “by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn” (The National Education Goals Panel, 1997). This goal had three components: child readiness, school readiness, and family and community supports for a child’s readiness. The National Goals Panel (1995) identified an important role of parents—that of being their child’s first teacher. However, the Panel adopted an “ecological” view of child development that involves early childcare, the community, and schools in addition to a child’s family (Emig and Moore, 2000). Research on school readiness at the child and family level, the early care level, and the community level has been going on for over a decade. There is a void in the literature examining kindergarten readiness at the school level. As stated by Zaslow, Calkins, and Halle (2000), “there is not yet consensus on measures of the readiness of schools” (p. vii). If a view of readiness is a function of child competency and opportunities available to a child in their learning environment (at school or home), then an effort must be made to design and conduct assessments of the contexts and the opportunities for child development in them.
Although no one can truly know why information on Ready Schools is scarce, it quite possible that an examination of the delivery processes of public education is foreign to researchers interested in readiness because “ready schools” research is organization-centered rather than education-centered. Gallagher (1999) states, “The current state of knowledge concerning the quality of kindergarten contexts is extremely limited, in part because of the absence of adequate assessment tools” (p. 355). Once the assessment of contexts is complete, it will still be difficult to determine which child outcomes should be a function of experiences in school. In this section research related to ready children and families, and ready communities will be outlined in addition to the preliminary research completed on ready schools.

2.6.2 *Ready Children and Families*

Friedrich Froebel, the man who invented kindergarten, saw the early learning institution as “a place for children to become socialized to formal schooling and to learn naturally through exploration and play” (cited in Wesley and Buysse, 2003). This theme is recognized over and over again in the early childhood and kindergarten literature. In fact the position of NAEYC (1990, revised 1995) on school readiness is that schools must address the inequalities in early life experience, recognize and support individual differences, and establish appropriate expectations of children’s capabilities. NAEYC feels that child-initiated learning with teacher support is the most successful means of kindergarten education. Kindergarten is viewed as a transitional year in which children are to prepare for primary school (SREB, 1994). The National Education Goals Panel
decided that five domains must be considered when defining a child’s readiness for school. These include, health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence, approaches to learning, communicative skills, and cognition and general knowledge.

It is important to note that a child’s school readiness is not to be confused with school eligibility. When the legal age requirement is met, every child is legally entitled to enter kindergarten (North Carolina Ready School Team, 2000). Wesley and Buysse (2003) found that kindergarten has become more academically oriented to the point it resembles first grade.22 As a result, many parents are retaining their children from entering kindergarten until they reach age six (Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk, 2000). Redshirting, more properly called a maturationalist point of view, favors the idea that older children are more developmentally ready to learn. Maturationalists have historically encouraged states to increase the school entry age (Kagan and Neuman, 1997). However, if all schools were committed and adequately prepared to accommodating individual differences among students there would be no reason to hold children out of kindergarten.

There is little consensus on what child readiness for school is (Kagan and Neuman, 1997). How school readiness is defined determines its implementation and policy actors. Kindergarten readiness has been defined by Wertheimer and Croan (2003) as “the abilities of children as they enter school for the first time as these abilities interact

22 Ohio educators addressed the U.S. Department of Education and said that children are making gains as a result of NCLB and are ready to learn first grade material in kindergarten (Associated Press, 2006).
with expectations of the school environment.” The federal government’s Education Research Service (ERS, 2002) and Scott-Little, Maxwell, Bryant, and Ridley (2002) advocate that school readiness is comprised of skills children possess when they arrive at school as well as the combination of family backgrounds, preschool experiences, and encounters in the primary grades that lead a child to later school achievement or disappointment. Kagan and Stewart (2004) argue that kindergarten readiness includes two constructs: readiness to learn and readiness for school. Bohnert, Crnic, and Lim (2003) further defined the differentiation. Readiness for learning emphasizes the developmental processes that form the basis for learning a particular subject matter or content. Readiness for school, on the other hand, implies that each child must attain a specific set of skills before he or she is ready to enter kindergarten.

Keeping “unready” children out of school causes children to delay learning opportunities (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Kagan and Neuman, 1997, pp. 63-64). Schools need to be ready for everyone, regardless of an individual’s present level of development, because some children may never obtain the skills that make them ready in their present context. And since children reach developmental thresholds in random order and at different ages, it is unlikely that any static readiness indicators can be determined (Kagan and Neuman, 1997). NAEYC (1990, revised in 1995) advocates that all children, “except in the most severe instances of abuse, neglect, or disability, enter school ready to learn. However, all children do not acquire the competence needed in the school setting.” Despite competing definitions, the concept of school readiness continues to hold a preeminent place in national discussions about the years prior to a child entering kindergarten. Beliefs about kindergarten readiness have been outlined in the literature
(for examples see Graue and Brown, 2003; Harradine and Clifford, 1996; Mason-Dixon, 2004; and Bardige, 2005). All conceptualizations include the perceptions that readiness resides within the child and unfolds in stages until the child matures; the perceptions that readiness can be accomplished through environmental interventions, provided both individual characteristics of the child and his/her experiences are taken into account; and the perceptions that readiness is simply a construct of ideas implemented by school districts.

According to Bardige (2005); Wesley and Buysse (2003); Zill, (1999); NAEYC (1990, revised in 1995); Lin, Lawrence, and Gorell (2003); and the results of the Mason-Dixon poll (2004) the most essential components of a child’s readiness for kindergarten include good health (mental as well as physical), effective communication skills, and enthusiasm and curiosity for learning. Nowadays purposeful efforts to improve student’s pre-math and pre-reading skills are being emphasized in early childhood education programs. In fact, early childhood teachers are more concerned with teaching pre-academic skills than are kindergarten teachers who want preschoolers to learn the social aspects of learning prior to entering kindergarten classrooms (Lin, et al., 2003). Tutoring preschoolers prior to kindergarten is a fast-growing for-profit industry (Borja, 2005) that is not taking place in the homes of poor children. Parents with less education tend to feel that academics are the schools’ responsibility. Many disadvantaged parents do not want to teach their children wrong—especially if there is a good teacher available to their children (Lapp and Flood, 2004).

Quality early learning experiences boost cognitive abilities. Positive classroom learning behavior, long-term school success, and improved likelihood of long-term social
and economic self-sufficiency have all been linked to quality early education and care
(Kagan and Neuman, 1997). Studies that have examined ethnic differences in child care
show that most families utilize caregivers of the same ethnicity as the family (NICHD,
2004). Although this type of care is successful at preserving cultural traditions and
sustaining parent comfort with the provider, oftentimes the cognitive and social-
emotional components necessary for school success are lost by children who do not have
the opportunity to interact with their peers prior to kindergarten. Half of children going
to school have one socio-demographic factor\(^{23}\) that has been linked to school failure and
15% possess three or more (Kagan and Neuman, 1997, p. 81). There is additional
evidence from several sources that parents’ ideas about readiness are related to their
ethnic, cultural, and educational background, as well as to the ways in which readiness is
perceived by their community (Graue and Brown, 2003). As society becomes
increasingly diverse, so does the body of students enrolling in and attending public
schools.

Bruns and Fowler (1999) address four roles for parents. They include the role of
teacher, information source, decision-maker, and advocate. Though appropriate for most
European-American families, these roles may not be appropriate for all families. Bruns
and her colleague state that some cultures may assume a range of roles in their child’s
education “based on level of acculturation, family tradition, country of origin, or
socioeconomic level” which school transition teams need to take into consideration when
children of ethnic parents register for kindergarten.

\(^{23}\) Factors: mothers with less than a high school education, mothers who were unmarried
when the child was born, mothers who do not speak English, single-parent families, and
families living in poverty.
Gold (1987) interviewed early childcare experts from the National Association for the Education of Young Children on the topic of heightened academic standards for kindergarten and the appropriateness of transitional kindergarten and transitional first grade programs. These programs are classes that were supposed to allow a child to have two years of kindergarten without having to be retained a year before entering first grade. NAEYC found that the state-heightened academic standards for kindergarten were “increasingly inappropriate.”24 The transitional grades in response to the standards had many unintended negative consequences such as segregating children along racial and/or socioeconomic lines and widening the age distribution of children in later grades. However, only 27% of public school kindergarten teachers believe that by the end of the school year all of the children in their class will be ready for first grade (Mason-Dixson, 2004). To make school readiness among children more consistent, van de Water and Krueger (2002) propose beginning public education at age three. Ohio kindergarten teachers reported that children who had not participated in preschool programs were less prepared to succeed in school and saw negative affects on the other children in their class who arrived at school more prepared (Rees and Kharfen, 2004).

Dockett and Perry (2003) articulate that children who experience early success in school maintain higher levels of social competence and academic achievement. The authors attribute early school success to a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten. As iterated numerous times in the literature, many preschoolers experience stress when transferring from the familiar, comfortable preschool environment to their

24 NAEYC (1990, revised in 1995) states, “Raising the legal entry age is a misdirected effort to impose a rigid schedule on children’s growth in spite of normal differences.”
new environment of the kindergarten classroom (Head Start, 2003). The transition to kindergarten from the early school years is important because it is during this time that children establish competencies critical to school success. Often this transition is difficult because early childhood learning environments offer more supports for children and families than schools do. In addition, structural differences between early childhood and kindergarten—such as larger class size, larger child-to-teacher ratios and an increased emphasis on formal instruction and skill acquisition—can make transitions difficult for children (Pianta, 1999).

2.6.3 Ready Communities

Developmental appropriateness of education has, for years, encompassed age appropriateness and individual appropriateness of child-focused learning activities. Since the 1990s contextual appropriateness has been added to the definition. Social and cultural contexts in which children live affect how children learn as well (Graue, 1999). “A strong value in the early childhood community is that curriculum should be 1) multifaceted, to increase the likelihood that diverse students will find connections to it; 2) integrated, because content categories are artificial constructions of adults; and 3) close to child interests, so that it is relevant” (Graue, 1999, p. 125). Intentionally or not, school context is presently affecting how local schools implement policy. Heck, Brandon, and Wang (2001) found that aspects of a local school culture affect how schools choose and implement improvement activities. Decision-making structure, level of teacher involvement, and perceived administrative value on school improvement programs can
enhance or hinder their likelihood of implementation. Policymakers have little control over changing specific aspects of local service agencies.

Although school has become the central part of the lives of children and families, children spend 70% of their waking hours outside of the school environment (Christensen, 1999, p. 143). Christensen (1999) emphasized that school policies designed to involve parents in their children’s education diminish parental responsibility and power within the school. Families have power to transform elementary school if they share responsibility for educating their children (as they do in preschool arrangements). The relationship between families and schools should be discussed as part of a community effort to educate children. The more involved individuals are with the school, the higher ratings they give them (Rose and Gallup, 2006). The failure of a child to adapt to kindergarten may be a result of the school failing to adapt to meet the needs of the community (Gallagher, 1999). Policies provide tools and opportunities for success, but it is up to agency managers and street-level bureaucrats to ensure success.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) illustrated how difficult it is to follow through with inclusive reform. The more individuals to be included, the more difficult it is to get a reform started and keep it going. For example if nine out of 10 participants agree on successive decisions, there is less than a 50% chance the project will come into fruition. (The compound probability: \( .9 \times .9 \times .9 \times .9 \times .9 \times .9 \times .9 = .48 \)) In reality most initiatives are much more controversial. A long list of consecutive decisions can result in fatigue and inaction brought on by endless meetings and banter over decisions over seemingly trivial matters (Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz, 1989). Yet 58% of respondents indicated that they felt the local school board should make decisions for schools over the
state and federal governments, and 67% oppose mayoral takeover and private company takeover (Rose and Gallup, 2006, p. 45).

In an article for *The Plain Dealer*, a Cleveland, Ohio newspaper, Suchetka (2006) reported on a family who lost their access to early childcare—even though at the time 3,000 of the 10,000 state Early Learning Initiative (ELI) slots were empty. Suchetka attributed the problems in the administration of Ohio public preschool provision to changes resulting from a tight state budget in 2003, changes in federal welfare policies, and conflicting goals of the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (who were assigned to run ELI as a joint-department program). This illustrates how goals across collaborating agencies can conflict and how following the letter of the law loses the spirit.

There are instances when collaborative efforts can improve service delivery. Facilitating communication among early childhood teachers and kindergarten teachers will give kindergarten teachers insight on the history and capacity of the children they receive in their classrooms and will give preschool teachers an idea of what kindergarten teachers expect their students to be taught in preschool (Dockett and Perry, 2003). According to Lapp and Flood (2004) and Ogle (2005) ready communities offer (or refine) before- and after-school programs to meet the needs of working families and provide an environment conducive for a child to complete homework.

While it may be challenging for schools to make themselves completely ready for children, establishing linkages with community institutions can assist schools in the process. Working with social service agencies and health professionals to refer and follow-up with children and families can enhance the school experience by removing
hindrances to child learning. Schools can also collaborate with cultural institutions (such as churches, libraries, and museums) to create a learning community (Kagan and Neuman, 1997). Balancing the tradition of command-and-control bureaucratic leadership historically associated with school governance while providing knowledge to participating stakeholders and allowing them to contribute and support the schools in reaching their goals may not always be smooth (Kahan, 2006). Hord (1997) identified the professional learning community as the staff being educated together to direct the efforts of improved student learning. There are five dimensions of Hord’s successful professional learning communities:

1. supportive shared leadership in which school administrators share authority with teachers,
2. shared values and vision for school improvement,
3. collective learning and application of knowledge, and
4. supportive conditions for a professional learning community to flourish, and
5. shared personnel practice in which peers review one another’s work and provide feedback.

Engaging stakeholders can motivate positive change in a community. Kahan (2006) offers 12 suggestions for establishing effective collaborative organizations:

1. pull in social networks,
2. present anecdotes,
3. convey gratitude to all participants,
4. use social activities effectively,
5. make informal rapport the norm,
6. communicate the context for major decisions every time,
7. fetch key stakeholders and give them positions in the interior,
8. welcome all contributions,
9. turn your staff members into leaders,
10. invest in your managers,
11. give staff members the opportunity to reflect with each other, and
12. highlight successes in the transformation process.
Scott-Little, Maxwell, Bryant, and Ridley (2002) add to the common list of ready
community characteristics. They encourage developmental opportunities that bring early
care personnel together with kindergarten teachers and collaboration with parents and
families. They also believe schools should have written agreements with area service
providers that specify individual responsibilities to families and children for a smooth
transition to school. Finally, they have sufficient physical, personnel, and material
resources necessary to meet the needs of every child who enters the educational system—
which will only be maintained with the commitment by school personnel, families, and
policy makers.

School change is more likely to be idiosyncratic than systematic (Purkey and
Smith, 1983). The notion that schools function as social systems with distinctive cultures
are amenable to change is realistic, however it is unlikely that top-down universal
processes will be equally effective in every local context. Schools must internally
change in order to alter their external boundaries and enhance their interactions with their
constituencies. “Beyond contention between the old and new, lasting reform entails a set
of workable arrangements to replace the old order” (Stone, 2001, p. 154). Parties join in
on an effort because they agree on a desired end result. However, the purpose that
provides the common bond is comprised of a number of smaller issues related to
implementation (priority, relations, and trade-offs) that make collaboration a challenging
and sometimes competitive process. The rationality can be “bounded” by immediate
Although kindergarten is not mandatory in all states, it is nearly a universal experience among American children (Zill, 1999). In the 1995-1996 school year, 3.9 million children spent their days in kindergarten classrooms across the United States (Zill, 1999). Sixty-eight percent turned five by the end of the calendar year, 28% were six by the same date and four percent were four years or younger (Zill, 1999). Educators are placing great emphasis on children being as prepared as possible for their initial encounters with formal schooling. Some view a child’s lack of readiness for school as a plight to be eradicated. Others view readiness as a process that occurs throughout the course of a child’s life and is not complete by the first day of kindergarten. Eliminating a lack of readiness may not be practical since in many ways it is out of the schools’ control. Instead, schools must be ready to receive a diverse group of children. Schools must re-create themselves as new organizations while they continue to operate under old traditions and models. Regardless as to whether or not the changes are incremental or an instant overhaul, traditional patterns of work will be disrupted (Kerchner, 2005).

John Dewey proposed public education to be a two-step process. The first is to acknowledge a child’s potential for learning. The second is to provide the best possible facilities for him or her to learn (cited in Stearns, 1939). Schools were intended to provide means for eliminating social classes in the United States and serve as an “apprenticeship for civic life” (Nieto, 2005). As can be seen by the NAEYC (1990, revised in 1995) “Position Statement on School Readiness” the perception of the role of the public school has changed. Schools are now expected to provide comprehensive
services, encourage parents to participate in their child’s learning, and provide a realm of comprehension for children to experience firsthand. Schools can prepare for children by instituting developmentally-appropriate practices with flexible curricula that respects diversity and fits the many differences among children (Kagan and Neuman, 1997).

Practices associated with outstanding school performance in institutions serving at-risk children include higher expectations for students, defined plans for instructional improvement, schoolwide instructional consistency, curricular alignment, and standards-guided instruction (Williams, Kirst, Haertek, et al., 2005). “Ready administrators” are knowledgeable of child development, support teachers in their roles, and promote family involvement (Scott-Little, Maxwell, Bryant, and Ridley, 2002). Effective schools evaluate principals on the extent to which the established curriculum guides instruction and how well assessment data is utilized in the supplementary instruction of struggling students (Williams, Kirst, Haertek, et al., 2005). One-on-one tutoring is necessary for children with severe learning problems. However, tutoring sessions held in small groups have been beneficial to children with less-severe reading challenges (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

In a six-year study that examined 250 schools in 20 states, the National Center for Educational Accountability (2006) researchers selected 140 schools that consistently performed better than demographically similar schools across many grades on state tests. They found that schools who successfully implemented the policy instruments necessary to establish a high-performing school pursued rigorous curriculum and academic goals; established quality collaborations fostering staff selection, leadership, and capacity building; had instructional programs, practices, and arrangements that differentiated
instruction targeted toward students at various achievement levels; utilized information from multiple assessment data sources; and made a conscious effort to recognize students’ needs, intervene, and adjust curricula to better serve them. Kunesh and Farley (1993) outline work completed by the School-Linked Integrated Services Study Group. The Group found that schools must offer comprehensive and integrated services, direct resources toward prevention (rather than treatment) efforts, focus interventions on families (not only children), be responsive and flexible to families’ changing needs, maintain cultural competence, and be outcomes-oriented. Fleming et al. (2004) found that schools must prepare their staff for the complexities associated with working with urban children and families. Teachers in second, third, and higher grade classrooms must continue to support children at-risk for school failure to maintain the gains children make in the earlier grades (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

A child’s academic readiness for kindergarten accounts for less than 25% of the variance in kindergarten outcomes (LaParo and Pianta, 1998 as cited in Pianta and Cox, 1999, p. 4). Entwisle and Alexander (1999) found that disadvantaged children perform as well academically as their more socially and economically advantaged peers throughout the school year. They lose ground over summer vacation when home funds of knowledge displace those provided at school. Although this area of study is fairly new, it is important because it is the first piece of evidence that the affect school has on a child is independent of the effect the child’s home and community environments.

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25 Fifty percent of all children living in the United States live in urban areas (Lapp, Flood, and Block, 2004).
Teachers and administrators must possess the resources and knowledge to support children with a broad range of skills and needs (North Carolina Ready for School Goal Team, 2000). They must be sensitive to community values, recognize individual differences, and effectively educate children by “extending their strengths” and helping them overcome their difficulties (p.5). Time is needed to build positive social relationships between educators and parents. School readiness can be viewed as a “reciprocal phenomenon, involving a process of engagement of the child and the family with the school” (Zaslow, et al., 2000, p.1). Parents involved in a community will voluntarily associate with the school and will recognize both the outstanding and incompetent/uncooperative teachers. Of course small schools (with an enrollment of 350 or fewer students) tend to have more trusting environments because there is more opportunity for students, teachers, principals, and parents to interact (Bryk and Schneider, 1997 as cited in Russo, 2004).

Delayed enrollment affects the age distribution of kindergarten students. There often is disparity in a child’s developmental levels within a single classroom. As a result, schools must be equipped to present a broad array of activities and resources to their kindergarten students to keep some children from being bored and to help others who may be struggling in class. Since the start of the Twentieth Century, teachers have found the acquisition of information related to a child’s school readiness to be very important (Meisels, 1999). Views that assessment data can help teachers be more effective have also been consistent since the 1950s (Meisels, 1999). Even if assessments do effectively identify specific learning difficulties, a vast majority of programs for young children have no technical assistance available to them to help rectify the problems. For example,
Tinajero and Munter (2004) found that culture and language are closely intertwined. Children who come from other cultures may struggle in the classroom not because they have a learning disability, but because the norms, belief systems, and behaviors occurring in the classroom are at odds with a child’s natural learning processes. State departments of education attempt to offer assistance, but are constantly struggling with funding and limited personnel (Gallagher and Clifford, 2000). And although the federal government expects districts and states to be accountable, the increasing demands are unaccompanied by “the necessary tools, strategies, or resources” to achieve that goal (Gallagher and Clifford, 2000). “No matter how successful we may be in our efforts to improve children’s readiness for school, the benefits of such efforts can be undermined very quickly if schools are not ready to help children sustain those gains” (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), 18% of all five- to 17-year old children in the United State live in families where English is not the primary language spoken in the home. This can potentially challenge children once they reach kindergarten if they had not been readily exposed to English prior to entry. Comprehending a lesson when the teacher’s words are not affiliated with meaning, based on a child’s history to that point, may be nearly impossible for the child. Additionally the child may struggle to find words necessary to relay his or her needs or wants to the teacher (Gibson, 2004).26 In general, school experiences should support the continued development of the child’s primary language while providing meaningful experiences with English.

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26 It is important to note that not only foreign languages serve as a barrier to initial child learning. Local dialects may also interfere because neither the children nor the teacher are aware of its affect on the other.
The literature reveals a number of checklists to help schools get ready for children. In 2000 the Ready for School Goal Team in North Carolina developed a self-inventory for Ready Schools. They view school readiness as a compilation of ready teachers, ready curriculum and instructional strategies, ready school environments, ready administrators, and ready families and communities. Vermont also developed a ready schools checklist (Murphy and Burns, 2002). The list consists of four domains: transition to school, instruction and staff development, partnership with community, and resources. Under each section is a series of questions developed by a panel of experts who referred to early childhood literature and from measures developed by other states. All questions were completed by public school kindergarten teachers and principals in public schools offering kindergarten.

The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education developed a ten-point approach for effective schools (cited in Cooper, 2004). The first point is advocating for children. Publicity generated at all levels of government should indicate that all children have the ability to achieve at high levels. Next, assessing the situation involves schools evaluating themselves and the district. Third, districts are to develop an action plan for higher student achievement based on the needs of their district and school. Fourth, schools must take the responsibility for motivating teachers by providing the necessary supports. Fifth, schools must implement proven products and programs to improve student outcomes. Sixth, the school curricula must be aligned with standards devised by each state. Seventh, principals must engage the community to reinforce the belief that

27 The experts included members of Vermont’s departments of health, education, mental health, and health and human service agencies and The University of Vermont staff.
each student has potential. Eighth, schools must implement diverse teaching and learning strategies to reach culturally diverse students to *eliminate achievement gaps*. Ninth, schools must succeed with implementing *No Child Left Behind*. Tenth, and finally, schools must *build local capacity* and develop networks to carry on the efforts of the high-performing school.\(^{28}\)

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 1994) made eight recommendations for schools to ensure that all children are able to make academic progress. They believe schools need to:

1. implement developmentally appropriate curriculum, instruction and assessment practices;
2. disregard the results of norm-referenced achievement tests for the assessment of the progress or potential of preschool or primary-age children;
3. refrain from retaining at-risk children or forcing them to start school later;
4. increase funds for early intervention programs in the primary grades, especially tutoring by certified teachers;
5. increase parental involvement and participation;
6. adopt formal, written policies to improve teacher-parent communication;
7. require that primary school teachers and administrators have formal training in child development and early childhood education; and
8. have increased flexibility in the way they use state and federal funds, but be held accountable for producing the desired results (pp. 3-4).

The National Education Goals Panel states that Ready Schools must:

1. *smooth the transition between home and school*,
2. *strive for continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools*,
3. *help children learn and make sense of their complex and exciting world*,
4. *be committed to the success of every child*,
5. *be committed to the success of every teacher and every adult who interact with children during the school day*,
6. *introduce or expand approaches that have been shown to raise achievement*,
7. *be learning organizations that alter practices and programs if they do not benefit children*,

\(^{28}\) Many of these elements are included in the High/Scope Readiness assessment. Please see the Method and Conclusions sections to compare/contrast the approaches.
8. serve children in communities,
9. take responsibility for results, and
10. have strong leadership (cited in Zaslow, Calkins, and Halle, 2000 and Emig, and Moore, 2000).

The SPARK Early Learning Initiative Team (2006), for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation developed ten characteristics of ready schools. Ready schools:

1. offer a welcoming atmosphere for children and families characterized by friendliness, respect, high teacher and staff morale, and the use of restrained and appropriate discipline;
2. employ school leaders who believe that all children can learn, teachers and staff can develop professionally, and all schools can meet or exceed State performance standards;
3. work closely with early care and education providers to improve the quality of early care and education to help get children ready for school;
4. engage in a variety of collaborative transition strategies for continuity between children’s and parents’ experiences in early care and education and school;
5. connect culturally and linguistically with families and children;
6. empower and engage parents in policy and decision making;
7. partner with community members to provide opportunities and services to children and families beyond what is traditionally available;
8. use assessment results to tailor instruction to individual needs and performance;
9. demonstrate annual improvement on standardized tests and assessment measures; and
10. strive to improve by following a written improvement plan, supporting staff in professional development, and consulting with experts.

Generally, traits of “ready schools” include strong leadership, flexibility of academic programs to meet the needs of students, commitment to child success among teachers and administrators, discontinuation of processes that inhibit learning and taking responsibility for assessment results—among others (Murphy and Burns, 2002).

Pianta et al. (1998) cite three of 10 key elements established by the National Education Goals Panel that will result in “ready” schools. These elements advocate for an “ecological” perspective. First, ready schools must allow a child to move easily from his or her home to the kindergarten classroom. Second, education programs in
elementary schools should be a continuation of early childhood education programs. And third, schools should be able to meet the needs of the community (pp. 4-5). One of the most important indicators of a “ready school” is engagement in transitions practices (Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox, 2001 and Emig and Moore, 2000). These practices include:

1. reaching out to families, preschools, and communities to link them with schools,
2. reaching backward in time, making connections and building relationships prior to the start of school (before-school entry practices typically are rare), and
3. reaching out to families with appropriate intensity.

While there has not been extensive research on best practices for the transition to kindergarten, there has been early childhood evidence that contact between kindergartens and preschools and homes can ease some discomfort children in experience. Schools should be linked to community resources that offer services to assist children in need as soon as possible. Children should be allowed to enter school as soon as they are eligible (Emig and Moore, 2000). The U.S. Department of Education (Kagan, 1992) also found five key strategies of a successful transition program. These programs have implemented:

1. written agreements between preschools and elementary schools detailing their roles in the transition program,
2. a transfer of preschool records to elementary schools to prevent a break in the continuity of service a child receives,
3. year-round, not year-end operations,
4. parent information delivery about public schools and access to social services, and
5. visitation of kindergarten classrooms by preschoolers and opportunities for kindergarten teachers to visit their future students.
The transition from preschool to kindergarten, especially for children with special needs, requires careful planning on the part of school professionals and families with the children so the children are prepared to function in their new environment and children and families do not experience major disruptions to their lives (LaParo, Pianta, and Cox, 2000). Dockett and Perry (2003) found that if school districts follow ten guidelines to transition children from either home or an early care environment to kindergarten, all children will come to school ready to learn. They view starting kindergarten as a “right of passage” in which children must be trained to enter into the next stage of life. They found in their focus groups with parents, teachers, and children that 10 essential steps for effective transition to kindergarten include:

1. the establishment of positive relationships between the children, parents and educators;
2. facilitation of each child’s development as a capable learner;
3. differentiation between school orientation and transition to school;
4. drawing upon dedicated funding and resources;
5. involving community stakeholders (aside from families of school children);
6. effective planning and evaluation of transition activities;
7. flexibility and responsivity to changing community needs;
8. development of mutual trust and respect between schools, families, and the community;
9. reliance on reciprocal communication among participants; and
10. awareness of contextual aspects of the school district’s community and of individual families and children within that community.

Zaslow and her colleagues (2000, p. xii) cite five kindergarten transition studies and developed some transition guidelines offered from the field of early childhood education. These are:

1. Contact should take place between kindergartens and preschools so kindergarten teachers can plan for individual students (Kagan and Neuman, 1998; and Smolkin, 1999).
2. Contact should take place between schools and homes to ensure that
parents are active in their child’s education (Melton, Limber, and Teague, 1999).

3. There should be a connection between school and community resources so that children can receive the services they need as soon as possible.

4. Children should not be held out a year (Gullo and Burton, 1992, and May and Kundert, 1997).

According to the NAEGP’s report (1998, as cited in Zaslow, Calkins, and Halle, 2000) assessments are to be used to determine readiness—but not to determine whether or not a child can enter school as soon as he or she is eligible. They can be used to develop curricula to spend more time on children’s areas of weakness, identify children who may need special services, evaluate programs, and assess academic achievement to hold students, teachers, and principals accountable for educational progress. The NAEGP discourages the use of assessments that are not age-appropriate and are given without complimenting sources of information (such as teacher or parent observations). SREB (1994) confirms guidelines of NEGP. They found that readiness assessments are an effective tool in curriculum planning but using the readiness assessments are a means of delaying a child from entering school is failure by the school to meet the needs of the children it is set up to serve.

Making schools ready for children has many components. School principals have a critical role in developing ready schools. They must encourage teachers to collaborate with early care and early education providers; they are responsible for hiring qualified teachers and maintaining their training. Principals are leaders within their buildings, but also liaisons to the community and to policymakers. They must ensure that local education stakeholders are doing their part to achieve ready children and ready

29 See “Assessment.”
communities to facilitate a ready school. They must keep funders and policymakers abreast of barriers to effective action and implementation that require solutions from “the funding, policy, or regulatory level” (Pathways, 2004). Kerchner (2005) states,

*The tendency toward bureaucratic mire or organizational anarchy is well represented in the literature on contemporary public schools, and when school systems fail to steer the course, students do not learn, or at least not as much as they should. Holding classrooms, schools, or districts together while making them move is part of normal operations, but changing organizations as they continue to work is another task altogether* (p. 399).

In an article written by the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA, 1993) the American Association of School Administrators imply that school readiness is largely the responsibility of the school administrator. Administrators organize collaborations with parents and unaffiliated care providers, organize classrooms, dictate employee compensation and training, and reach out to parents. There is evidence that the most effective ready school efforts have occurred at the local level independent of state and federal initiatives (SECA, 1993). But it must be kept in mind that effective schools education research has been criticized for including narrow and small samples, failing to identify schools that are outliers, aggregating data at a level that is too high, making inappropriate comparisons, and using subjective criteria for determining school success (Purkey and Smith, 1983).

“Collaboration” appears in a great deal of school literature throughout this document. It has been well-established as an essential component of a ready school, but also as a challenging undertaking. Kunesh and Farley (1993) outline the steps necessary for a successful collaboration. The key is that change begins with individuals, not
organizations. The members of the collaborative effort must generate support and recognition, the leadership must facilitate change (and be willing to take risks to do so), establish a vision of how the collaboration should progress, mobilize members at all levels of the effort, establish communication and decision-making processes to constructively deal with conflict, and encouraging member agencies to assist in funding collaborative activities.\textsuperscript{30} Schools can effectively collaborate with early care providers by encouraging staff to participate in joint training and sharing child records (Pathways, 2004).

Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort (2006) examined variations within interagency collaborations in the field of early care and education. They also examined the effect of various types of collaboration on program management and outcomes. In theory, the collaborations will link separate services to a comprehensive delivery system that will reduce service redundancy and increase access to care. The four types of collaborative services are policy-centered integration, organization-centered integration, program-centered integration, and client-centered integration. According to the definitions provided by Kagan (1993), the latter two types of collaborations are the focus of the ready school movement. Program-centered integration involves collaboration at the local level. The strategies include collocation, joint staff, shared information, integrated

\textsuperscript{30} According to Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort (2006) there are various level of involvement that are used interchangeably but are different in the levels of organizational involvement. Cooperation is at the lowest end of the integration continuum and is associated with informal, personal relationships between service organizations. Service integration involves grouping services for mutual clients. Coordination involves calibrating actions but keeping services independent by agency. Lastly, collaboration involves the sharing of authority, resources, and rewards through multiple mechanisms of agency merging.
planning, and common funding. Client-centered integration involves the coordination of services to meet the needs of individual clients (students) and their families. Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort (2006) found that effective collaborations have a central authority, multiple branches working together responding to the same single source of fiscal control, a stable system, and networked services in environments where resources are sufficient. At the formation of a collaborative voluntary staff turnover can often occur as the staff use new connections as a “career door” to other positions and managers take on new responsibilities (Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort, 2006). However, the value can accrue over time in the forms of improved technology, less duplication of service, increased available services, improved facilities, and greater training and benefits for frontline workers.

“Sustained and compelling educational change begins with, among other things, a dialogue and a careful review of the various reform practices chosen by central school-based educators” making sure not to overload schools with the changes (Cooper, 2004, p. 25). Reeves’ (2005) findings concur. High-achieving schools spend more time on the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics—the core classes that will give students opportunities to succeed in other subject areas when they get older. In North Carolina, measures of a school’s readiness for children include class size, percentage of teachers with and early childhood certification, and percentage of principals with education related to early childhood education (Meisels, 2000). Lapp, Flood, and Block (2004) argue that demographic information is not sufficient to determine a ready school. They recommend establishing a plan for each child that includes daily assessment of student performance to identify strengths and needs, an individual evaluation plan for each student, ample
available individual special services, an environment that supports individual growth, and motivating students to take ownership of their academic development.

While poverty and other demographic variables can inhibit learning, there is sufficient evidence that illustrates they are not determinate of student success. Schools with high poverty rates that are able to educate the majority of their students to high levels of academic achievement are persistent, employ techniques that are replicable, and use consistent methods of instruction—meaning reforms are not following “fads.” The implementation is not uniform, but all effective schools serving at-risk students emphasized writing, performance assessment, collaboration, and a focus on students’ learning (Reeves, 2005). Effective leadership, quality teaching, and properly designed accountability systems are key to the success of at-risk students. Every adult in the system was put to work to improve student learning. Professional development is distributed among all participants, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers, to improve classroom management and control student behavior—ensuring every adult leader is regarded as significant to the student (Reeves, 2005, pp. 378-379).

2.6.5 Ready Ohio?

Bardige (2005) found that it is possible for some families of very low income to obtain high-quality early education and care if they are either very persistent or very lucky and can enroll their children in a program such as Early Head Start, a private foundation-sponsored program, or a university-supported early education and care center. In most other developed countries everyone has access to public preschools staffed by
certified teachers who are compensated at the same level as elementary school teachers. The programs are broadly utilized by families with mothers who work as well as mothers who stay home (p. 90). In the U.S., only one child care center out of every 12 provided developmentally appropriate care in 1999 (Bardige, 2005, p. 91) and in states offering free care for low-income families only one in seven eligible children was served (Bardige, 2005, p. 103).

According to the Committee for Economic Development (2006), Ohio is one of only six states that spent the recommended $5,100 per child per year on children attending public preschool. Unfortunately only 10,730 preschoolers across the state were able to attend in the 2004-2005 school year. In the late 1990s Ohio possessed one of the most sophisticated computerized readiness assessment systems (North Carolina Ready for School Goal Team, 2000). Ohio monitored children three and four years of age who lived in poverty. Enrollment records were kept of children in public preschool and Head Start. The state also tracked the immunization records for children as young as two years. In addition Ohio children were screened for vision, communication/language, physical health, and developmental delays (Shepard, Taylor, and Kagan, 1996). Ohio was one of the states that were not using assessment information to discourage children from entering kindergarten at the age of eligibility. Every year the stat sought to assess 100,000 children (North Carolina Ready for School Goal Team, 2000). However, Ohio was one of four states with a large movement to abolish standards-based programs\(^\text{31}\) (Haddermann, 2000).

\(^{31}\) Other states with large movements to abolish state educational standards were Florida, Louisiana, and Texas.
In Ohio, 1995, teachers encouraged the state legislature to move back the cutoff date of kindergarten entry from September 30 to June 1 (Miller, 1995). Opponents argued that changing the birthday requirement is a quick fix to an ongoing problem of establishing age-appropriate curricula. Furthermore, delayed school entry for children whose parents cannot afford preschool could potentially put them even farther behind when they begin school. (Almost 30% of Ohio students have been identified as economically disadvantaged (Wiley *et al.*, 2005).) There was also fear that increasing the entry age will again raise curriculum expectations. Miller (1995) argued that it is not the responsibility of children to be ready for kindergarten, but the responsibility for schools to be prepared to teach all children, ready or not. The school entry cutoff remains September 30 for most local school districts.

In 2004 the Ohio Early Care and Education Campaign was established to expand and improve Ohio’s existing early care and education investments in hope that in the future the quality of life for children, families, and the economy will improve throughout the state. Initiatives being implemented include delivering health services to children and families, social services to treat emotional problems, and voluntary assessment and screenings (Zero to Three Coalition, 2006).

The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (EPERC, 2006) published a *Quality Counts* report for each state participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The year 2006 marked the tenth anniversary of the report. Ohio was given an overall score of B-. Ohio received an A- in standards and accountability, a B for efforts to improve teacher quality, a C+ for school climate and a C for resource equity. Ohio’s strength was in the development of academic standards that
were rated as clear, specific, and grounded in content approved by the American Federation of Teachers. While Ohio provides professional support and training for teachers (including a mentoring program for new teachers), the state does not require a minimum amount of student teaching or related clinical experiences. Ohio was rated high for its maintenance of school buildings and maintenance of student/teacher ratios, but was given an average score for school climate because of lack of parent involvement and student engagement. Ohio scored average on resource equity because, as in most states, wealthy school districts spend more per student than do economically disadvantaged districts.

While recent research shows that Ohio is neither the best, nor the worst state in terms of offering early childhood education and care and is making progress to improve schools overall, nothing has been done to examine how ready public schools are for children. A void in the literature is present. We understand what children need to be successful in school, but there is no information regarding how Ohio public schools prepare for the arrival of students from home or early care facilities . . . ready or not. Furthermore, there is nothing written on the types of communities that yield ready schools. Both will be addressed in this study.

2.7 No Child Left Behind

Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was enacted after the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), it has influenced its implementation (which has already exceeded the deadline by seven years) by putting ramifications to noncompliance
with established standards. Public education may or may not be failing children in the United States (Berliner and Biddle, 1995). The blame for perceived student failure has shifted with each highly-political reform. The U.S. became frustrated with the pace of local education reforms so President George Bush and the nation’s governors, led by Bill Clinton, met at a summit in Charlottesville, Virginia to explore means of promoting national education reform. Standards-based reform has been the national goal ever since (Toch, 2006). The central topic of education improvement policy since the early 1990s has been responsibility for student performance. Elmore (2004, p. 2) describes this movement as a “shift in the focus of federal, state, and local policy from the distribution of inputs (mainly money) to outputs (generally in the form of test scores).” This bipartisan movement prompted the first reauthorization of the Education and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) in 1994 which was renamed the Improving America’s Schools Act. The next ESEA reauthorization in 2002 has resulted in federal whole-school reform. No Child Left Behind (2001) has taken the use of standardized testing to new heights in U.S. public schools by doubling the amount of accountability measures set forth in the Clinton era (Toch, 2006). Schools need to illustrate Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) to secure state and federal dollars necessary for operations.

2.7.1 Overview

President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) into law on January 8, 2002. This legislation is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. ESEA was a piece of federal legislation
signed by Lyndon B. Johnson that was the largest and most important piece related to education of its time. Its primary purpose under Title I\textsuperscript{32} (which appears in NCLB) was to assist the nation’s poorest children by offering additional help in reading, writing, and mathematics (Allington and Nowak, 2004 and Cooper, \textit{et al.}, 2004). The portion of the NCLB legislation receiving the most attention is also Title I, the portion of the legislation intended to assist disadvantaged students. The Act has received both praise and criticism. Since its enactment, over $200 billion has been spent to assist at-risk elementary and secondary school students through competitive grants to states that submit plans to implement scientifically proven programs (Allington and Nowak, 2004 and Cooper, \textit{et al.}, 2004, p. 19). Elmore (2002) accuses NCLB of making the same mistakes as ESEA. He found that large-scale interventions are uneven in implementation and difficult to sustain and that no single intervention is more successful than another “proven program.”

Despite court battles, eight reauthorizations, changes, and augmentations, its purpose has remained in tact. NCLB furthered the work begun by ESEA by requiring states to develop accountability measures for local districts (Cooper \textit{et al.}, 2004). The move toward a system that emphasized explicit performance standards, systematic standardized testing, and consequences for results has reached the national agenda for the twenty-first century. NCLB (2001) has created ambitious goals for progress and accountability for success. In a nutshell, the act has four pillars. They are “(a) accountability for results, (b) tempered by flexibility and local control, (c) increase in

\textsuperscript{32} The purpose of Title I, Part A is to improve academic success of students at risk for school failure. Schools that receive Title I funds that do not make progress toward achievement for two consecutive years must offer students the option of transferring to another school or provide supplemental services (GAO, 2006). Title I has been nicknamed Reading First (Allington and Nowak, 2004).
choices available to parents of children attending Title I schools that fail to meet state standards, and (d) an emphasis on educational programs and practices that have been clearly demonstrated to be effective through vigorous scientific research (Phye, Robinson, and Levin, 2005 and Nichols, Glass, and Berliner, 2005). School districts across the country are accountable for how well their students learn. These include achievement testing for students to meet specified academic standards.\textsuperscript{33} Schools that do not perform well or do not make adequate “annual yearly progress” (AYP; NCLB, 2001) will lose funding as children are allowed to transfer to better performing schools (Cooper \textit{et al.}, 2004; Nichols \textit{et al.}, 2005; Wiley \textit{et al.}, 2005; among others).

In April of 2005, 41 out of 50 states (82\%) had registered at least one complaint about NCLB mandates (Wiley \textit{et al.}, 2005). The National Education Association, the largest union in the U.S., was not invited to participate in the development of NCLB and 70\% of its membership opposes the law because the organization believes that testing is an inappropriate accountability measure (Honawar, 2006). Toch (2006) and Hoff (2006) found that state-developed standardized assessments focus on low-level skills to illustrate proficiency and avoid sanctions required under NCLB. The National Education Association has recommended a combination of other tools to measure accountability.

\textsuperscript{33} It is important to note that the premise of NCLB was not new, although accountability measures and district mandates were implemented and are particularly challenging for school districts. The Bush administration’s early childhood initiative, “Good Start Grow Smart,” requires a new accountability system for Head Start to assess standards of learning in literacy, language, and numeric skills (http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/earlychildhood/). This was a significant departure from the original premise of Head Start, a program which sought to improve the health of children and social adjustment in peer settings (Wesley and Buysse, 2003).
These include teacher-designed classroom assessments, student portfolios, and statistics related to graduation and post-secondary enrollment (Honawar, 2006).

2.7.2 School Funding

Ohio House Bill 3 was enacted by the General Assembly in 2003 to comply with NCLB. Section 10 of the legislation required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to submit a financial analysis to the General Assembly within 90 days of its enactment. Driscoll and Fletcher (2003) submitted the financial report that calculated the costs of implementing NCLB in Ohio. To comply with the federal legislation, the state had to implement a system of statewide achievement testing, expand the provision of intervention to low-achieving students, and develop standards against which annual yearly progress (AYP) is to be measured (Ohio House Bill 3, 2003; Driscoll and Fletcher, 2003; and Wiley, Mathis, and Garcia, 2005). The Driscoll and Fletcher (2003) study assessed the marginal costs of NCLB (2001), which are the increases from the costs of the pre-existing system. The authors divided NCLB costs into two categories. The first are direct costs. These costs include administering the battery of achievement tests, administrative, teacher, and paraprofessional costs. Second are the “intervention” costs (p. iii). These are additional resources required to help students who are failing to succeed in the current system of Ohio public education and are in need of intervention. Driscoll and Fletcher (2003) estimated that direct costs will total $105.4 million and that intervention costs will total $1.4 billion. The cost of bringing all Ohio public school children to 100% proficiency by 2014 is $1.5 billion (in 2004 dollars). Only $44 million
of the needed $1.5 billion (34%) is to be provided by the federal government (Driscoll and Fletcher, 2003, p. vii). However, there was one fatal flaw with the study acknowledged by the authors. Their cost estimate assumed that all children will arrive at school with the same level of readiness, which decades of early childhood literature has proven false. Driscoll and Fletcher were not able to predict the cost of services necessary for children who have not yet entered school. In short, they did not know what Ohio children needed to be ready for school, nor did they know what schools would need to help bring less prepared children up to the level of their peers.

Organizational conditions often clash with administrators’ abilities to make changes. Street-level bureaucrats develop practices that allow them to perform the work they are required to do with limited (insufficient) resources, often by modifying goals, narrowing the clientele, and rationing services (Sorg, 1983). Americans listed lack of financial support, funding, or money as the biggest challenge to administering public education (Rose and Gallup, 2006). Many school leaders (72%) said lack of funding is a problem—especially when mandates are not fully funded (Lecker, 2002, p. 33). No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) grants more money to states to be distributed at the local level than has any other education policy in history (Paige, 2003). Since NCLB passed in 2001, the federal government has spent $13 billion dollars annually for Title I (GAO, 2006). However, the money provided to states under NCLB is just a small fraction of the cost incurred by states to implement the mandates (Wiley et al., 2005; and Education Week, 2005). The billions of dollars spent by the federal government under Title I of NCLB amounts to 2.6% of total education spending, which means that NCLB accounts for a less than one percent increase from federal spending prior to the legislation.
(Mathis, 2005). In fact, most states have experienced financial problems providing supplementary services to child exhibiting learning deficiencies and also providing student transfers out of “under-performing” schools (Nichols et al., 2005). Toch (2006) recommends that funding for testing should be increased from its current level of $408 million to $860 million annually to ensure that states have the resources to develop high-quality criterion-referenced assessments.

There is little argument that No Child Left Behind (2001) has focused national attention on the wide difference in school quality between schools in wealthy areas and schools in disadvantaged areas. President George W. Bush successfully convinced Congress to support the NCLB. However, Congress has cut Title I funding that support NCLB. As a result, only one-third of eligible children receive NCLB services (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin, 2005, 186). Congressional failure to fund mandates has occurred before in recent history. In 2000 the educational appropriations bill H.R. 3064 contained a movement toward reduction in the number of students per classroom (Levin, 2000). However, the budget was frozen at the 1999 level and then was cut by one percent. There was not enough money to support 29,000 new teachers hired as part of the initiative to reduce class size. A further problem was that the money intended to be used to reduce the number of pupils per classroom was allowed to be used for any education need. Cleveland, Ohio used their money to finance school vouchers, not hire more teachers (Levin, 2000).

Currently states are to put federal dollars toward provision of additional support programs for low-achieving students (under Title I, but this criteria was also required in Goals 2000). The problem is that it is quite challenging to provide additional support
programs when state and local tax revenues have already been spent. Education is an easy area from which states can cut funding when they are running low on money because the burden can be shifted onto localities. Local school districts can be forced to make up for school funding deficits via local property taxes. When this happens, wealthy districts are in a far better position than poor districts because they have a much larger tax base on which to draw (Carey, 2004).

Cubberley (1906, p. 17) recommended that the state provide aid to schools, especially impoverished districts. He was one of the first to notice the local spending patterns for public education and found that children in wealthier districts (which were urban at that time) were getting an education requiring a greater amount per pupil than were children in the poor districts (which at that time were rural). One hundred years later school funding is still an issue of public debate. Cubberley’s work overlooked the loss of local autonomy in his analysis of state intervention, but was effective in alerting the states of their responsibility to children and education. If we return to the mid-1800s and Horace Mann’s ideas that education is the mechanism by which children of meager beginnings can prosper in society, it is generally accepted that the state must provide for the education of children who do not have access in their communities.

2.7.3 Accountability

“School leaders now must not only do well, but also demonstrate that they are doing well” (Lashway, 1999). Accountability is the requirement of an individual or organization to legitimatize performance to a higher authority. A combination of
political penalties, the strength of the bond between state and district, and political culture affect the attention that districts give to various external accountability demands. Bureaucratic sanctions can cause urgency in transmitting accountability information, as can fear of political repercussions from the community if the school is not performing as well as they feel it should. External accountabilities enhance student learning so long as leaders use them to build interpretations that highlight the importance of such learning (Firestone and Shipps, 2005).

Teachers working in a high-stakes testing environment understand that test scores are important because they are the measures by which classroom learning is meeting state standards (O’Neal, Nelson, Gaines, and Valentino, 2004). Historically teachers and principals followed professional standards in order to validate their performance. Nowadays accountability is used synonymously with results. The justification is that individuals with a clear goal and well-defined consequences for failure will perform better (Lashway, 1999). The theory behind this movement is that administrators, teachers, and students will take learning more seriously and work harder to earn incentives and avoid punishments⁴⁴ (Raymond and Hanusek, 2003). An interesting discovery is that historically local districts often go beyond compliance of state and federal education reforms and are actively responding. Local schools can utilize statewide reforms to reach local goals by orchestrating state policy around local priorities (Fuhrman et al., 1991).

⁴⁴ Negative consequences for students include placement in remedial instruction or special education and educators may be removed from the school system (O’Neal, Nelson, Gaines, and Valentino, 2004).
Lashway (1999) argues that even though accountability efforts are generated at the state level, improvements can only be made at the local level. We have learned from Allen Odden’s (1991) book that state policy initiatives can alter local behavior, but the changes in local behavior may make little or no difference on student performance. Policy that was effectively implemented as intended in the 1980s encouraged local change processes and leadership in individual schools. Unsuccessful initiatives in the 1960s and the 1970s were characterized by state and district leadership. Odden and his colleagues taught education policy researchers that attention needs to be given to the substance of public education reform programs as well as to local implementation processes. Local school leaders must monitor indicators, offer aligned professional development with goals, and encourage the school and community to buy in to the changes, creating a “culture of accountability” (Lashway, 1999).

Despite opposition to the standards movement in public education, recent evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates gains in student achievement have been made over the last 10 years (Maurer and Lillie, 2006). Achievement gains in mathematics (overall) and for low-income and minority students were the highest. The effects on reading were less dramatic. Swanson (2006) attributes lesser reading gains to the outside-of-school influence that impact learning language arts. The next step, according to the sponsor of Editorial Projects for Education (as cited in Maurer and Lillie, 2006) is to compare reform efforts in each state and identify the approaches that have the greatest, positive impact.
2.7.4 School Autonomy and Authority

Since the inception of the Common School, public education has been the responsibility of local officials and school boards. The federal and state governments have increasingly become more involved during “reform” periods in which the nation was perceived to be at risk. Implementation, since that time, is no longer a concern of an agency manager and the street-level bureaucrats. Because decisions were made based on theories of organizational hierarchy, scientific management, and humans as rational actors, it is no wonder that poor managerial control and market failures were blamed for unintended policy outcomes (McLaughlin, 1987). The true problem was that implementation was unpredictable and often resistant. Variations in interpretation and action were the norm as organizations varied in their “capacity and will” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 172).

Examples of high-level government intervention in schools are the return of World War II soldiers needing training (Cooper et al., 2004), the 1967 launch of Sputnik, and the publication of A Nation at Risk (Nichols, Glass, and Berliner, 2005). During these periods the federal government filtered monies through the states to local governments to improve school districts who the federal government often blamed for inferior technological advancement. Chubb and Moe (1991) found high-level officials’ involvement in local school operations to be problematic. They argued that bureaucracy hinders effective organization. It snuffs out productive potential that already exists in the school personnel by failing to grant schools autonomy to utilize the professional knowledge and meet the needs of the clients served. They would prefer that a
decentralized market system be put in place that would cause schools to compete for parents and students. McLaughlin (1987) argues that reform is an evolutionary process in which implementation alters policy problems, resources, and objectives (p. 174). He found that the public and policy makers give up on programs too quickly and that summative analysis is inappropriate in the early years of implementation. Additionally, he found that time and resources should be put toward evaluating the implementation process to determine if local-level employees and managers are committing to the effort through their actions. Although no two local programs will be identical, the same overall goal can be reached.

Research indicates that bureaucratic change initiated from above usually encounters resistance. Lindblom (1959) found incremental change in administrative practices to be more effective than a central overhaul. Alternatives for action evolve naturally, typically through practitioners who identify the problems at the “street-level,” and problems are solved gradually over time. Universal solutions favored by central authorities often do not solve local problems and, as a result, problems are modified to fit preferential solutions. Centralization and ends-focused policy have potential to morally destroy local school communities, rationale “scientific” linear planning often fails in real-life situations (Lindblom, 1959). Kerchner (2005) has drawn a few conclusions about the educational reforms taking place since the publication of \textit{A Nation at Risk}. Educators rarely take the option when participation is optional. Changes are not accepted gradually in education as they are in economic development. In fact, many supporters of changes get bored and disgusted when changes occur too slowly. Mandates give the appearance of change, unlike the gradual process of allowing a teacher or principal to adopt new
programs, ideas, or curricula on their own but mandates take controls away from school personnel. Since personnel are not in charge they do not always understand the demands or why they are important—nor do they have an interest in whether or not the reform succeeds (Kerchner, 2005). Brining in outside organizations to meet state and federal demands gives a public appearance of change while teachers and principals go about their day as they did prior to the “reform.”

Organizational change does not occur when technical changes in structure and process are undertaken, but when policy participants within and beyond the organization construct new understandings of what change means (Riehl, 2000). Westhuzien and Theron (1996) found that principals did not perceive either internal or external factors as creating resistance to change. Employees tend to resist and changes that upset the status quo regardless of the nature of the nature of the change. However, there was evidence that management were more successfully able to use psychological factors in effectively implementing change—such as perceived decreased job security for noncompliance. When other teachers and schools see positive changes in students, then they may choose to adopt a program they once did not want to take part in (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996). Implementation requires both pressure and support in order to provide incentives for street-level bureaucrats to implement macro-level policy as it is intended (McLAughlin, 1987). The authors in Odden’s (1991b) book titled Education Policy Implementation demonstrated eight factors that are critical in the successful implementation of education reform at the local level:

1. Ambitious efforts are better. They attract the interest of teachers without narrowing focus on a problem that went unnoticed or demanding a complete system overhaul.
2. Local change efforts must fit the school where the effort will take place.
3. High-quality, research-based, proven effective programs work better.
4. Top-down implementation can work, if the effort it done correctly.
5. Central office support and commitment, as well as site administrator support, commitment and knowledge are needed throughout the program. They pass new policies, allocate money, time, and personnel resources, and schedule activities and administrative functions that either help or hinder the change process.
6. Teacher involvement in the design process is critical.
7. Ongoing intensive professional development and feedback is necessary for reform. Teachers need technical knowledge for implementation.
8. Teachers and administrators work together in successful change efforts.

The centralization of authority has resulted in a loss of autonomy and personality as rules and regulation come from remote sources at the expense of long-standing local traditions. Local school districts are now run, in part, with federal and state money to supplement local revenues. As a result, accountability measures have emerged. Sergiovanni and his colleagues (2004, pp. 9-10) illustrate that schools have remained in local control long after other government entities have been far removed from voters. Universal education, in order to preserve the bureaucratic ideals of efficiency, effectiveness, and equality, has resulted in impersonality. Kerchner (2005) found that radical systematic overhaul has been focused on school governance, not school operations. Successful school reform is more likely to take place if organizations learn from their own experiences and make changes by learning from past failures. Spillane (2004) argues that localities, involving the will of parents, communities, and teachers, had their chance to educate the nation’s youth throughout the Twentieth Century—who failed to perform comparably to foreign nations.

States have come to view local control as a means-ends game (Sergiovanni et al., 2004, pp 46-47). States set the standards in which local districts are to meet then tell the
schools they can use any means necessary to meet the standards. There is a single goal (100% proficiency) to be reached via a single system of implementation (standards-based assessment) regardless of the means of implementation (Nichols, et al., 2005). The problem is that standards and assessments control curriculum, how financial resources are utilized, who get promoted, and how a good school is defined. Although the rhetoric may be local control, the “ends” approach gives centralized governments control over the means (Sergiovanni et al., 2004). Ratvitch (2005, cited in Olson, 2005) found that under NCLB the federal government needs to have more central control. “Fifty states, 50 standards, 50 tests” has not been successful when compared to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Olson (2005) concurs and states that NCLB motivates states to implement low performance standards in order for it to appear that all students reach a level of proficiency.

2.7.5 School Personnel Necessary for Positive Outcomes

School principals are held accountable for the success of their schools. Schools with large numbers of poor and minority students tend not to perform as well on accountability measures (Reeves, 2005). Particularly in urban school districts, culturally and linguistically diverse students are overrepresented in special education classrooms—most often classified in the areas of mild mental retardation, learning disabilities, and emotionally disturbed (Utley, Obiakor, and Kozleski, 2005). This achievement gap can be perpetuated by inaccessibility to quality educators. Teachers in high-poverty, low-
performing\(^{35}\) schools are 66\% more likely to lack certification and are about twice as likely to have three or fewer years of experience as teachers in other schools (Cortes and von Zastrow, 2006). However, it is possible for schools in high-poverty areas to produce successful students. Reeves (2005) found that high-achievement schools serving at-risk students consistently focused on improvement. Schools choose five goals a year, from a menu, in which they would measure improvement. By using a few indicators of improvement at a time the improvements were less intimidating than the “typical” school improvement plan that contains large numbers of unfocused efforts to improve.

According to Cortes and von Zastrow (2006), teachers are not trained for challenges they face in high-risk districts; the working conditions (meaning the school buildings) are not sufficient and the pay is inadequate. Furthermore, poor-performing schools often lack strong leadership and support for teachers. One challenge that schools are facing since the enactment of NCLB is that in some schools ineffective principals need to be removed in order for progress to be made while other school principals need greater authority, resources, support, and mentoring in order to achieve the goals set forth in the legislation (Cortes and von Zastrow, 2006). School administrators and teachers need professional support and incentives to work in disadvantaged schools. Reeves (2005) found five characteristics to be true of the at-risk, high-achievement schools he studied. These schools focus on academic achievement, offer clear curriculum choices, conduct frequent assessments of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement.

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\(^{35}\) The alternative to high-poverty, low-performance schools are called 90/90/90 schools. They are characterized by 90\% or more of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch, 90\% or more of the students are from a minority group, and 90\% or more students have met or achieved high academic standards according to independent tests (Reeves, 2005).
improvement, emphasize nonfiction writing, and utilize collaborative scoring\textsuperscript{36} of student work. These schools physically displayed evidence of academic achievement in schools as well as vocalized it as a priority.

2.8 Developing a “Ready School” Research Agenda

No Child Left Behind (2001) affects all parts of the educational process from kindergarten through high school graduation. One part of NCLB emphasizes the importance of literacy and children’s preparation to read as a key goal during preschool and kindergarten. This is new ground for many schools that do not provide public preschool. Most early childhood programs are provided by social service agencies (Wesley and Buysse, 2003) so early education experiences are not uniform. Yet the NCLB testing policies assume that all children will be similar when they arrive at school (Driscoll and Fletcher, 2003) even though the Educate America Act (1994) already acknowledged that children do not arrive at school with equivalent preparation for learning. The overarching premise is to hold teachers, schools, and districts accountable for children’s educational performance. Accountability measures were put in place to ensure that underprivileged and/or minority children learn as much through the public education system as there more advantaged peers. In short, accountability is serving as a vehicle for educational equity (Skrla and Scheurich, 2004, 2-8). The problem is that socially and economically disadvantaged children must improve at a faster rate than their

\textsuperscript{36} Collaborative scoring is the practice of teachers exchanging student papers and the principal reviewing them regularly to ensure that all children are reaching a level of proficiency.)
advantaged peer in order for all students to reach federally-mandated education goals at the same time (Wiley et al., 2005). Many schools do not have the necessary tools (money, training, etc.) to make this happen. The National Education Goals Panel (1995) believes that “child outcomes should not and cannot be the sole measure of America’s progress toward the first Education Goal. While specifying child outcomes is a necessary step . . . it must be coupled with a commitment to examining social and institutional readiness . . . .” (p. 41). Schools and communities must be prepared to educate diverse children. And, the schools must take responsibility for partnering with the community—schools must be “ready” for children.

2.8.1 Stakeholders

Stakeholders in public schools include parents, students, administrators, teachers, the business community, legislators, and many others (Feinberg and Soltis, 1995). In this situation, street-level school workers and managers (teachers and principals) are few among a number of other voices with interest in the public school system. Dealing with the tension between professional autonomy and democratic accountability to public values presents principals with a task that is complex and demanding. Goals associated with professionalizing the position and effectively delivering service to meet the needs of a complex and diverse community often conflict. At the same time, concurrent policy demands conflict with one another.
2.8.2 What is Known

Elmore (2004, p. 3) states that “the problems of the system [of public education in the United States] are the problems of the smallest unit.” Policy effects are constrained by everyday classroom operations. Communities, schools, and classroom instructors have much insight to offer policymakers. As mentioned earlier, classrooms are to be viewed as “miniature public spaces” where any measure of educational effectiveness or reform must be grounded (Rose, 1995, p. 5). Implementation tools such as parental involvement, parental choice, and coordinated services were established to increase community-school linkages. Effective schools used parents to support child learning, and effective principals destroyed the community buffers impeding parental involvement (Driscoll and Goldring, 2005, p. 63). Effective schools must prove that they are indeed effective to their community as well as to higher authority. The current means of illustration is test scores.

Testing, according to the majority of the literature reviewed, does not promote learning. There is debated evidence that testing may be an effective tool to assess children and assist teachers in developing a curriculum that meets the students’ needs. Assessments identify children who may need special services so intervention can begin as soon as possible (Meisels, 1999). But, evidence exists that there are troublesome limitations to the effectiveness of measuring instruments for children younger than 6 years (Gallagher, 1999, p. 355). Cuban (1992 as cited in Meisels, 1999) acquainted readers with education assessment history. He found that 84 standardized tests intended to measure children’s preparedness for school and to place children into groups based on
individual abilities started as early as 1919. They have always been intended to help teachers be more effective in the classroom—not as a means to deter parents from enrolling their child in school once they are age-eligible.

The Ohio Department of Education has followed through with the first part of the school readiness assessment process. In 2005 the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for Literacy (KRA-L) was universally mandated for all public kindergarten teachers to administer to each of their students. In some ways the state put the cart before the horse. Ohio is measuring how ready children are, but have not yet measured the supports schools have in place to support differences among children indicated by the assessments. Ohio is not alone in this dilemma. Assessing the readiness of schools for children has not been done in very many places, in part because information about what schools need to be ready for children is limited. With that being said, this study will explore Ohio public elementary schools that offer kindergarten to answer the research question: “What elements present in the social context of Ohio public elementary schools can be linked to the schools’ readiness?”

2.8.3 What to Expect

The literature reveals a gap in our knowledge regarding the extent to which ready school standards of practice have been implemented. The methodology incorporates a substantial number of ready school indicators taken from the High/Scope Ready School Assessment (2005) using explanatory statistical methods. This is described in greater detail in Chapter III.
This study also goes beyond descriptive information and takes another small step forward on the new path of research by introducing a study of the effect social context has on schools’ readiness for children. Bringing policy into fruition across multiple levels of government is a challenge that is confounded when social problems confound the outcomes. Best practices may not be compatible with the culture of the school’s daily operations as social concerns are interrelated with educational issues. Therefore, the extent to which social context affects schools’ readiness for children is measured using nine predictor variables established in the literature as being predictive of effective schools. Christenson (1999) found that the achievement gap between children from high- and low-income families increase with each year in school. For this reason, the percent of students in a school flagged for disadvantage will be included in the regression model. However, this variable may not account for differences in student achievement among areas of moderate to extreme wealth. Median household income of the school service area will also be used to predict readiness. The literature also says that schools in urban areas tend to struggle to reach out to the community when compared to schools in small communities (Anyon, 2005; Carey, 2004; Russon, 2004; and Strike, 1989 among others) so population size of the community surrounding the school is the third independent variable to be included. Lutz and Mertz (1992) found that communities with aging populations and/or migrating populations are often home to struggling schools. These districts with declining fiscal resources and enrollments have to cut staff and sometimes close schools. Additional supports for children are less available as schools struggle to stay in the black. Student mobility, the percent of individuals in the work force, and the amount of local revenue per pupil are the forth, fifth, and sixth explanatory variables in
the regression model. Effective schools are deemed so by results on standardized proficiency tests, which Hadderman (2000) and Urdan and Paris (1994) among others claim to discriminate against minority youth. In other words, schools that serve a large minority population tend to be less “effective” by government definition. The percent of minorities attending school is the seventh explanatory variable. Children who come from homes where English is not the primary language spoken are known to struggle in comprehending lessons are teachers’ words do not have any association with the child’s world (Gibson, 2004). In addition, first generation immigrants perceive school readiness differently that other Americans (Graue and Brown, 2003). It makes sense that the percent of students in school without limited English proficiency may be predictive of schools’ readiness. Finally, groups that have been effectively served by the public school system are more likely to support it (Zill, 1999). Individuals who have graduated from higher education institutions must have first been able to achieve a minimum level of proficiency in primary and secondary school. The percent of individuals within a school community that possess at least a Bachelor’s Degree should be predictive of schools’ readiness for children. Figure 2.1 illustrates all nine predictive variables and their expected direction of influence on the school readiness scale score.
Ohio public elementary schools offering kindergarten will be randomly sampled for inclusion in the study. The principals in the schools, representatives of the entire unit, provide data used in the analysis. Examining schools as part of a social and political context will provide an illustration of the nature of communities that foster ready schools to help policy makers make implementation decisions to ensure that Ohio public schools are prepared to receive diverse children—whether they are ready or not.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a methodological design to address the research questions posed in the first chapter, thereby extending assessment of Ohio school readiness and measuring the extent to which social context affects the degree to which schools are prepared to receive diverse children. Readiness, as can be seen from the literature review, has many definitions. For the purpose of this study “readiness” is defined by the eight indicators suggested by the National Education Goals Panel (1995). Schools will not be identified as either “ready” or “not ready”. Instead readiness is a scale in which a school’s level of readiness is determined by a short form of the Ready School Assessment, originally developed by High/Scope (2005). Schools exhibiting multiple readiness indicators are “more ready” and schools exhibiting fewer readiness indicators are “less ready.” The mean score of each Dimension will be summed to create a scale score. Nonparametric measures will test the reliability and additivitvity of the scale items.

In accordance with the research questions, the methodology addresses the ability of schools to meet the needs of a diverse community and effectively educate children.
First, the baseline assessment of the current state of Ohio public school’s readiness for children can assist educators and policy makers in developing a plan to make all Ohio schools “ready.” Then the study takes school context into account to provide policy makers with insight as to how the nature of the community in which a school resides affects schools’ readiness for children. In other words, equity between schools will be assessed. Finally, street-level public managers, principals, make policy recommendations they feel will assist them in making their schools ready schools. The four contributions to the literature will be reviewed in Chapter V.

3.2 Study Period

Data collection occurred at a single point-in-time to capture the current state of Ohio public schools’ readiness for children, from which steps to improve school readiness can be taken in the future. Respondents (principals) receiving web surveys were notified via telephone call that the survey would be e-mailed to them with the hyperlink to the survey on January 17, 2007. It was intended that principals without e-mail addresses listed on the Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS) would also receive a call prior to the arrival of their surveys via post. However, a number of elementary schools across the state scheduled inservice events and parent/teacher conferences the Thursday and Friday prior to Martin Luther King Junior Day. Not all schools could be contacted prior to January 17 so paper survey recipients were not called as originally intended. Instead, their call was a reminder to submit the survey (which electronic survey recipients received via e-mail). The data collection took place from January 17 through
February 15, 2007. This will be treated as a base year against which future school readiness improvements can later be measured.

3.3 Population and Sample

This study focuses on the Ohio public elementary schools offering kindergarten education. A point of entry into studying the world is the unit of analysis (Babbie, 1998). In this study the unit of analysis is the schools in which a single informant, the principal, will describe the school’s state of readiness. Although this has not been done in education research, having a representative describe a condition or experience on behalf of a larger unit has been used in other areas of study. Uphold and Strickland (1989) argued that individual informants can provide important data about family dynamics. It is important, however, to make an effort to seek the most knowledgeable individual about the phenomenon of interest. McClement and Woodgate (1998) argue that use of single informants is incongruent with systems theory. However refusal rates are higher when two or more members of a group are required to participate. Therefore the use of single informants can be justified in terms of feasibility (Fisher, Terry, and Ransom, 1990). In short, representative response about a larger unit provides more information than no response about a unit. Reducing the unit of analysis to principals is not possible as the explanatory variables illustrate the context of the school as a unit, not the principal as an individual.

37 A few surveys arrived after the close of data collection. They were included in the analysis.
School principals answered questions about their local school on an online survey.\textsuperscript{38} Those that did not have an e-mail address were mailed a hard copy with a postage-paid return envelope. In Ohio there are 613 districts and 4,071 total schools (Standard and Poors, 2004). There are 1,732 public elementary schools that offer kindergarten (Ohio Department of Education, 2006). Only public elementary schools with kindergarten classrooms are included in the study. For 95\% level of confidence and a margin of error of 5, 315 schools needed to be included in the sample (Creative Research Systems, 2003, and Welch and Comer, 2001). To ensure that a sufficient number of surveys are returned to perform analyses, 948 schools were randomly sampled. The population was downloaded to Excel from the Ohio Education Directory System via the Ohio Department of Education website (2006). Data were then transferred to SPSS statistical software to select the random sample for this study. A response rate of 33\% was necessary to conduct the analyses at the desired level of confidence.\textsuperscript{39}

3.4 Instrument

Surveys explored the distribution of “ready school” characteristics as reported by the school principal and clarified the distribution of authority, responsibility, and resources among schools in many contexts. They may also reveal variations in sensitivity to external accountability demands depending on the school’s condition and policy context. For this study short version of the High/Scope Ready School Assessment (RSA;

\textsuperscript{38} The details of the online survey process are included in the Instrument section.
\textsuperscript{39} For a confidence level of 95\% and a confidence interval of 6, 231 responses were needed.
High/Scope, 2005) will be used to collect data on the current readiness state of Ohio public schools. The Original RSA provides a baseline for school readiness when completed the first year. In subsequent years the RSA serves as a measure of progress in implementing ready school improvements. It illustrates schools’ strength in eight Dimensions and 23 Sub-Dimensions of school readiness as initiated by the National Education Goals Panel (see below).

The original RSA is completed in two answer booklets, a Team Handbook and a Questionnaire. It suggests that assessments should be completed by school improvement teams with hard copies of evidence (documents, vignettes, programs, event dates, etc.) to be attached. This will not be required in this study. Because the sample for this study will be larger than an individual school, requesting that the assessment be completed by teams was not feasible for this research endeavor. Instead the assessment was completed by principals, alone, and no evidence was reported. Although the information may be less reliable, the likelihood of completion was greater since principals were allowed to complete the survey on their own. The sample was too large for the researcher to conduct the RSA with teams from each school given available resources. Because the literature tells us that school principals are a critical component in getting schools ready for children, the adjustment in the RSA seems reasonable for this study. To test this theory and to ensure that the short RSA provides results consistent with the original form, the short form was tested for internal reliability and also tested for consistency with the

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40 The development of the short form of the RSA is explained at the end of the Instrument section.
41 High/Scope has granted permission to use the RSA in a manner varying from the original form.
original form in a rural school district in northeastern Ohio. The original RSA was completed at two elementary schools taking part in the reliability assessment. Principals’ responses to the short-form was compared to the responses on the original RSA completed by the school readiness teams.

There are two indicator scales used on the RSA that will also be used in the Short Form RSA (sRSA) and their selection is determined by the question asked. The rating scales are:

1. Yes, No, Don’t Know (DK)
2. Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often, Always, DK

Indicators are scored by selecting and marking the scale level that best fits the related events and conditions in each school. The scale levels are defined in the High/Scope Administration Manuel (2005).

Seventy-one schools, varying in size, income, and district location (urban, rural, suburban), in 16 states pilot-tested the RSA. After two revisions the current version was assessed for ease or difficulty to use. On a scale of 0 (very easy) to 10 (very difficult) assessment respondents gave the RSA a 4. For scoring rules the clarity scale was 0 (clear) to 10 (vague). The assessment respondents’ mean score was 3.

The Ready School Assessment is a valid and reliable tool when used as developed and intended. It is not possible to compare the validity of the RSA with other ready school instruments because it is the first measurement tool that assesses schools’ readiness to receive children. However, and advisory panel of stakeholders participating in all levels of the educational process was consulted for feedback and guidance in developing the RSA. “This preliminary review and revision work gave the instrument a
strong footing in reality and a good measure of face validity. It also reinforced the content validity derived from its grounding in the literature and research on the ready school topic” (High/Scope, 2005, p. 11). The instrument was tested for reliability by means of internal consistency. Croanbach’s alpha was computed for each of the RSA dimension scales. The results showed that the instrument, in its original form, is reliable. The values of internal consistency ranged from .75 to .93 (High/Scope, 2005, p. 11).

In developing sRSA, the eight Dimensions of Ready Schools are maintained. These are Leaders and Leadership; Transitions; Teacher Supports; Engaging Environments; Effective Curricula; Family, School, and Community Partnerships; Respecting Diversity; and Assessing Progress. The Twenty-Three Sub-Dimensions are also maintained in the short form. Presented in order of their respective Dimension the Sub-Dimensions are:

1. Leaders and Leadership
   a. Principal commitment
   b. Professional climate
   c. Early childhood training and experience
2. Transitions
   a. Activities
   b. Contact with preschools
   c. Entry and promotion
3. Teacher Supports
   a. Professional development
   b. Contact with others
4. Engaging Environments
   a. Safety and health
   b. Materials
   c. Classroom climate
   d. Active learning
5. Effective Curricula
   a. Curriculum training
   b. Monitoring fidelity
6. Family, School, and Community Partnerships
   a. Family involvement in school
b. Parent-school communication  
c. Outreach  

7. Respecting Diversity  
a. Teaching diversity  
b. Supporting a diverse environment  
c. Working with special needs  

8. Assessing Progress  
a. Assessment mechanisms  
b. Using assessments  
c. School improvement  

Where the short form begins to differ from the original version is in the Indicators. The original RSA is comprised of 129 Indicators, three to eleven Indicators for each Sub-Dimension. The short form is comprised of the Indicator(s) for each Sub-Dimension with the greatest factor loadings determined by High/Scope in their reliability analysis of the original RSA. There are a couple of exceptions to the selection rule. Neither the Leadership nor the Assessment Dimensions were included in the Ready School Assessment Administration Manual so all indicators are included for these Dimensions. Because of incomplete Indicator information from the pilot assessment in the Effective Curricula Dimension, the two highest “true” Indicators were selected from the Monitoring Fidelity Sub-Dimension with the corresponding Indicators from the Curriculum Training Sub-Dimension. A total of 60 Indicators are included on the short-form RSA (see Appendix A).

The self-assessment process of the RSA provides a foundation, grounded in theory and tested in reality, for further collection of evidence pertaining to ready schools. We will know which schools are more ready to receive children, but much can be learned from the schools’ context and how it is influenced by other school policy. To measure the effect of context, results of the sRSA were paired with the most current school
demographic data collected annually by the Ohio Department of Education and the U.S.
Census Bureau. Specifically, the variables extracted from ODE (2006) for each school
include student mobility, student race/ethnicity, student economic disadvantage, student
limited English proficiency, and school revenue per pupil. All information was reported
during the 2005-2006 school year. Variables from the U.S. Census include population
size, education level, working adults, and median household income.

At the close of the survey principals were given the opportunity to comment on
how state and federal policy has affected their school on the eight Dimensions presented
by the sRSA. Additionally principals were allowed to comment on the current state of
their schools’ readiness and what they need from policymakers to improve their readiness
efforts. The sRSA took between 10 and 20 minutes to complete.

3.5 Data Collection

This section briefly outlines the method of assessing schools’ readiness for
children. In particular, it addresses how web surveys can be utilized to improve the data
collection process and it also illustrates why school principals are an ideal group to use
this new technology in information gathering.

3.5.1 Web Surveys

Because of the growing popularity of the Internet, web-based surveys have
become a low-cost option for researchers to employ in data collection because costs
related to postage and human labor required for mail and phone surveys are virtually eliminated. There are pros and cons in using a web survey. Fricker, Galesic, Tournageau, and Yan (2005) found that participants were more likely to leave a web survey unfinished than they were to give an incomplete phone interview. However, the web-based surveys had fewer non-response items than did phone surveys. And, as is true with paper surveys, keeping the survey short reduces incidence of non-response—as does minimizing free-response questions.

The true cost of web-based surveys is difficult to measure. Labor is required to build the forms, to manage e-mail addresses, to send solicitation and reminder e-mails, and to watch over the networks (Umbach, 2004). However, easy-to-use software applications simplify publishing web surveys on the Internet (Berry, 2005 and Nardi, 2003). While the cost savings in conducting a web survey are a challenge to evaluate, time savings are undisputed. Invitations to participate in web-based surveys reach the respondent almost instantly, as does the submission to the researcher. The document address can be saved in an e-mail so the instrument will not be lost by the respondent (Umbach, 2004). Berry (2005) found the process of web survey data collection to have additional steps added to the traditional paper survey. These include securing servers, limiting non-sample respondents’ access, and developing a troubleshooting protocol. However, the data entry step is essentially eliminated. The responses are recorded and ready for analysis as soon as the instrument is digitally submitted (Umbach, 2004 and Berry, 2005).

In the present day and age of educational accountability, Ohio public schools must send information via the Internet to the Ohio Department of Education. Although
Internet surveys are limited to populations with access to computers and knowledge of how to use the Internet, this was not a great problem in this study because most school officials have access to a computer and knowledge of how to use the Internet. As the education level of the individual increases, so does their likelihood of knowing how to use a computer and the Internet (Zhang, 1999; Nardi, 2003; and Berry, 2005). Public school principals possess at least a Bachelor’s degree and most possess a Master’s degree. It was assumed that the majority have at least minimal aptitude for using e-mail and the Internet. Evidence of this lies in the Ohio Educational Directory System that lists school (work) e-mail addresses for 78% of elementary school principals in schools offering kindergarten (ODE, 2006). While a disadvantage to using a web survey is limiting respondents to those with access to a computer (Huang, 2006), the clear advantage is the physical distance in which a sample can be obtained, as well as a sample size, is virtually unlimited (Umbach, 2004).

In addition to the ethical considerations, such as participant privacy and confidentiality that are a risk in any type of survey research, web-based surveys have a unique set of baggage. One risk is that the survey solicitation e-mails may be viewed as spam by the respondents (Umbach, 2004). To prevent this from occurring, principals were called ahead of time to alert them to the e-mail and the subject line to identify that a survey as part of a University of Akron school study is attached. The survey was sent out in a list serve so respondents’ machines would not detect a multiple address block as spam. No information about respondents (such as where they completed the survey and how long it took them to do so) was collected without them knowing (Umbach, 2004). Ohio principals in charge of schools offering kindergarten received two forms of
solicitation for participation if they were to receive an electronic survey. Two to four days prior to the survey posting on the World Wide Web principals of sampled schools received a phone call at their school informing them of the study and calling their attention to the subject line of the e-mail they were to receive with the hyperlink to the survey. During the call the research team attempted to confirm that the e-mail address listed in the Ohio Education Directory System was current. (If not, the address was updated.) In instances where the principal was unable to speak with the research team a message was left either on voicemail or with an office assistant. In the instances that the school principal did not use e-mail or the Internet, he or she was mailed a hard copy of the survey instrument. The principal was also notified of the incentive for participation.

Because an unexpected number of school offices were closed due to parent/teacher conferences and inservice activities the Thursday and Friday prior to Martin Luther King Junior Day, the research team was unable to reach schools intended to receive a hard copy of the survey. The concern that e-mail recipients with no relationship to the Principle Investigator or The University of Akron would discard the e-mail solicitation as spam was greater than the concern over discarding of a hard copy without opening it first. As a result, solicitation calls were made only to electronic survey recipients. The calls to hard copy recipients served as reminders that they otherwise would not have received. Electronic recipients received e-mail reminders.

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42 No password was needed because the only means of accessing the survey was through the e-mail. It was not posted on a web page for Internet participants to find and complete who were not part of the sample.
43 Huang (2006) investigated whether answering questions on web surveys yielded the same responses as the same questions asked on paper-and-pencil surveys. No statistically significant difference existed.
To ensure the results could be generalized to the population of interest the online survey could only be accessed through the e-mail. Normally a password is required to access the survey on the web (Berry, 2005). However, since there was little likelihood of outsiders finding the secure link online no password was necessary. There was a risk that a participant in the study would complete the survey multiple times (Sheehan and Hoy, 1999). Four principals did so. But because participants were asked to identify the school and district in which they work, repeat cases were identified and removed. Participants were informed that all their response information will be confidential.

3.5.2 Improving Response Rate

To eliminate principals’ frustration, the majority of questions could be completed with the click of a mouse. All free response questions were located at the end of the instrument. To decrease the likelihood that participants would find a survey to be too long a timer was displayed at the bottom of each page of the web survey. Since shorter surveys tend to yield higher responses it makes sense to minimize the number of questions a respondent may read (Crawford, Couper, and Lamias, 2001). This is why the sRSA was developed.

Dillman (2000) said that costs, benefits, and trust are the three crucial elements to participation in survey research. (Costs are what a respondent must give up to obtain the benefits and trust is the belief that the benefits will outweigh the costs over time). The

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44 Those who completed the survey multiple times made note that they were not sure the correctly entered the incentive drawing the first time. Second participations were done consciously to win the $500 in school supplies.
literature demonstrates varying results in response rates when offering incentives, rewards, compensation, or token of value to increase a respondent’s motivation for survey completion (see Church, 1993; Smith and Kiniorski, 2003; and Porter and Whitcomb, 2005). While the evidence is mixed on whether or not the use of an incentive increases responses on web surveys, there is no evidence that offering an incentive decreases the rate of response. As a result, an incentive was offered. Principals who completed the survey could choose to enter a drawing for $500 in school supplies. Their personal information necessary for the drawing was kept in a database separate from their responses to the questionnaire so responses would not be linked back to the survey respondents.

Porter (2006) expanded on the cost/benefit interpretation specifically for web surveys. He found that individuals are more likely to participate in a survey if the researcher asks for help, gives a perception of scarcity (like saying “you are part of a select group”) and gives participants a deadline. In addition it is helpful to personalize the e-mail solicitation, contact participants often, and avoid sending solicitations on Mondays and Fridays. The purpose is to make each respondent feel important. In return for participants’ time (cost), the research team makes participants feel important (benefit) through personalization, constant contact, and by avoiding busy periods in respondents’ schedules. Unfortunately The University of Akron list serve did not have the capacity for personalization. All other feasible guidelines were followed.

Garson (1998, updated in 2006) lists 11 guidelines for improving survey response rates. First, the survey must have legitimate sponsorship. This survey was sponsored by The University of Akron with the approval of the Ohio Department of Education—two
legitimate sponsors recognizable to Ohio principals. Next, a short justification must accompany a survey. Participants received two or three: a phone solicitation, an e-mail solicitation, and the survey cover letter. Third, potential respondents should be notified in advance that the survey is coming. All web participants received a call ahead of time. Forth, the survey should be short and the researcher must be honest about the time necessary to complete the instrument. While the sRSA may not have been “short,” it was certainly shorter than the original version. Principals were told the approximate time necessary to complete the instrument. Fifth, the researcher should assure confidentiality/anonymity. Confidentiality was assured in the cover letter and e-mail solicitations. Sixth, the researcher should offer to reschedule at the respondents’ convenience. Because of the nature of the survey, there was no set time for the principal to participate. However, those that did not prefer to receive an e-mail were given the option of a hard copy. Respondents could choose their means of participation. Seventh, the researchers should send reminders and provide additional copies of the survey. This was done for each respondent group. To meet the eighth and ninth guidelines the instrument began with non-threatening questions and offered to provide respondents with the results later on (although no one requested them). The tenth guideline was not doable in this study. Certified mail was too expensive to use to send out hard copies of the survey and priority e-mail was not available for the list serve through The University of Akron. Finally, an incentive for participation was offered as guideline 11 suggests.

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Porter (2006) made a point of mentioning confidentiality, but not over-emphasizing confidentiality. An over-emphasis may intimidate respondents and give an impression that instrument question contain sensitive material or questions that respondents are not comfortable answering.
Porter (2006) adds a few web-specific guidelines. First, solicitation e-mails are to be kept short. A detailed description will be in the cover letter of the survey. Also, the hyperlink should be put at the top of the e-mail. If individuals do not see it right away they may not read enough of the e-mail to get to it.

To ensure that the response rate was as high as possible for this study, multiple methods shown to improve return/response rates were employed. Principals of schools selected as part of the research sample received a phone call at their school notifying them of the study prior to the e-mail solicitation. Both the phone message and the e-mail solicitation contained information regarding the study’s approval by The University of Akron IRB and the Ohio Department of Education. Both messages offered opportunities to request paper copies of the survey instrument if participants were not comfortable completing the instrument on the Web, and the link to participate in the survey appeared in the e-mail document. Approximately two weeks following the initial e-mail solicitation for participation in the study, a follow-up e-mail was sent to principals who did not respond to the initial e-mail. Two more reminders were sent 7 and 14 days after the initial reminder. For participants who received hard copies of the instrument a reminder phone call was made 10-12 days before the incentive drawing date (the anticipated close of data collection). Respondents who no longer had the mailed survey either gave an e-mail address or a fax number to which a new instrument could be sent. As can be seen in Chapter IV, the tenacity of the research team yielded a high rate of response.
3.6 Research Questions

This study addressed a broad research questions in which multiple sub-questions were addressed. Public access data from the Ohio Department of Education (2006) and the U.S. Census (2003) supplied the information for the independent variables and the score on the short form of the High/Scope Ready School Assessment (2005) serves as the dependent variable.

1. What elements present in the social context of Ohio public elementary schools can be linked to the school’s readiness?
   a. How does school funding relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   b. How does the economic status of pupils relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   c. How does the race/ethnicity of students relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   d. How does the presence of limited English proficiency in schools relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   e. How does community migration relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   f. How does the population size of the community served relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   g. How does the level of education of the community served relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   h. How does the employment status of the community served relate to schools’ readiness for children?
   i. How does household income of the community served relate to schools’ readiness for children?
3.7 Analytical Method

The statistical analysis proceeds in three steps: a review of descriptive statistics of the participating school districts followed by an analysis of the sRSA (the dependent variable) and an analysis of the research questions. In the first step a review of descriptive statistics provides a general overview of the patterns exhibited by participating schools in groups and overall. Schools that elect to not to participate will not be included in the analysis. The descriptive statistics offer preliminary information regarding the degree of variability between participating school districts.

The research question seeks to explain how the characteristics of the communities served by local elementary schools are related to the school’s readiness to receive diverse children, as identified by the sRSA. From the literature, we have learned that schools located in socially and economically advantaged areas tend to be more “effective,” as defined by school researchers since the 1980s. However, the literature also illustrates that children living in these “advantaged” areas need fewer services to achieve academic proficiency because they arrive at school ready to learn and live in environments that support learning. This means that schools in economically and socially advantaged areas may not have to be as “ready” as schools located in areas with a more socially and economically disadvantaged areas to achieve the same level of student learning. But because Ohio public schools located in advantaged areas tend to have fewer problems generating funding for school programs and teacher training and are more likely to have parents and communities involved with the school, it is likely that these schools will be more “ready” for children even though the children living in the area served by the school
may need fewer readiness supports than do children who live in disadvantaged areas.

With this in mind the following hypotheses have been developed:

a. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies directly with the revenue per pupil. The more local revenue there is to spend per pupil the greater the school readiness score.

b. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies indirectly with the percentage of students flagged for economic disadvantage. The greater the percent of students flagged for economic disadvantage, the lower the school readiness score.

c. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies indirectly with the number of minority students attending the school. The greater the percent of minority students attending the school, the lower the school readiness score.

d. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies indirectly with the number of students with limited English proficiency attending the school. The greater the percentage of students with limited English proficiency in attendance, the lower the school readiness score.

e. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies indirectly with the number of mobile students attending the school. As the number of students who have attended school less than one year increases the school readiness score decreases.

f. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies indirectly with the population size of the community served. The larger the population of the community, the lower the school readiness score.

g. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies directly with the percentage of community residents possessing at least a Bachelor’s Degree. The greater the percent of higher education degrees in the community, the higher the school readiness score.

h. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies directly with the percentage of community residents in the labor force. The greater the percentage of individuals who are working the greater the higher the school readiness score.

i. \( H_A: \) School readiness for children varies directly with the median household income of the community served. The greater the median household income, the higher the school readiness score.

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to assess the impact of the aforementioned social context variables on schools’ readiness, as determined by the sRSA. The
independent variables were tested for multicollinearity. A high correlation is an indication that two variables are measuring the same phenomenon so only one variable must be maintained (Welch and Comer, 2001, p. 53). If the conclusion cannot be reached that two variables measure the same phenomenon, then both will be maintained in the regression equation and will be scaled. An examination of the statistical significance of observed differences each variable will be substantiated with the results of the $F$ test for a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

3.8 Testing of Hypotheses

This section defines the statistical hypotheses associated with the research question and the methods employed by the analysis to evaluate those statistical hypotheses. The null hypothesis for the research question is that no relationship exists between social context and schools’ readiness for children at this point in time.

$$H_0: \mu_a = \mu_b = \mu_c = \mu_d = \mu_e = \mu_f = \mu_g = \mu_h = \mu_i$$

The direction of the outcome has been suggested for each independent variable from findings residing in the literature. Therefore, it is appropriate to use a one-tailed test to measure statistical significance.

The alternative hypothesis is that at least one of the means is different. In this regression equation there are nine regressor (predictor) variables. School readiness is the response variable $y$ that is predicted by social context variables $x_1$ through $x_9$. The parameters or regression coefficients are denoted with $\beta$. $\beta_0$ represents the intercept and $\varepsilon$
represents the error. Social context variables predicting school readiness can be explained using the following empirical model:

\[ y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta_5 x_5 + \beta_6 x_6 + \beta_7 x_7 + \beta_8 x_8 + \beta_9 x_9 + \epsilon \]

The evaluation of multiple hypotheses from a common dataset is associated with cumulative increases in Type I error, and hence to an increased probability in finding at least one statistically significant result by chance alone. Because the independent variables have been extracted from two different sources and are to be compared against newly collected information this effect should not occur. The test results are evaluated at the \( p < .05 \) level of significance.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter opened with a restatement of the research questions outlined in Chapter I and presented the methodology for data collection and analysis. The methodological approach is designed to examine the relationship between the social context in which a school resides and schools’ readiness for children at a single point in time for a representative sample of Ohio public schools offering kindergarten. In particular it will measure whether or not a school is “ready” based on the recommendations of the National Education Goals Panel (1995).
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the effect social context variables have on schools’ readiness for children as measured by the Short Form Ready School Assessment (High/Scope, 2005). Before the research questions are attended to, survey response and demographic descriptive statistics are presented. Reliability concerns in the dependent scale and multicollinearity among the explanatory measures are also addressed. The research question asks “What elements present in the social context of Ohio public elementary schools can be linked to the school’s readiness?” It is to be answered via multiple linear regression analysis.

4.2 Survey Response

A total of 948 Ohio public elementary schools offering kindergarten were randomly selected to receive a short form of the High/Scope Ready School Assessment (sRSA). Principals, as representatives for the school, completed the sRSA on behalf of
the organization. Of the 948 schools that were sent surveys, it was later discovered that there was a mistake in the Ohio Education Directory System (OEDS) and two sampled schools were not elementary schools. Two surveys were returned by the post office after the close of data collection for not having enough postage that had not been delivered. As a result, the sample size is 944.

Three hundred three surveys were returned. Four principals completed the online survey two times even though they only oversee one building. The first submission was kept in the analysis. The true response rate for this study was 31.7%. Of the 299 returned surveys, two respondents indicated reasons why they would not complete the instrument. One principal indicated that he or she was the third interim principal at the school since the beginning of the year (third in five months) and did not feel that enough was known about the school to complete the instrument. Another principal indicated that he or she would not complete a survey that did not come directly from a district office. Finally, five principals skipped some Dimensions of the survey. Only 292 (96.4%) of the 303 surveys returned were complete.

Of the schools who returned surveys, the mean number of years the respondents had been principals is 11.09 and the median number of years is 9.00. The principal(s) with the least experience had been a principal for .50 years and the principal(s) with the most experience had been a principal for 39.00 years. Principals have worked in their current building a mean of 6.36 years and a median of 5.00 years. The greatest amount of time a respondent has worked in their current building is 27.00 years. The fewest number of teachers in a response school is 4.00 and the greatest number of teachers in a response building is 90.00. The mean and median numbers of teachers are 25.96 and 25.00
respectively. Mean student enrollment in participating schools is 394.48 and median enrollment is 379.00. The smallest participating school accommodates 63 students while the largest participating school accommodates 980 students.

4.2.1 Means of Response

According to OEDS 78% of elementary school principals in schools offering kindergarten (ODE, 2006) have school e-mail addresses. It was learned that many more sampled principals use e-mail but did not have addresses listed on OEDS. At least 108 schools without principals’ e-mail addresses listed on OEDS had principals with working e-mail addresses. The 108 obtained were either from school secretaries or from principals themselves. For schools in which no e-mail address was obtained, some administrative assistants either did not know the principal’s e-mail address, did not feel comfortable giving it out, or did not know if the principal used e-mail. Therefore, it can be concluded that the OEDS e-mail list was incomplete and the statement that 78% of elementary school principals was low.

Originally 755 of the 944 (80.0%) surveys were e-mailed to principals and 189 (20.0%) were sent via post. However, some principals who received electronic surveys were unable to complete the instruments online. This occurred because the 2Way web software was not compatible with Mac computers, nor was it compatible with Internet browsers other than Microsoft Internet Explorer. Individuals who contacted the Principle Investigator and indicated that they had a problem were sent a hard copy. Principals without OEDS-listed e-mail addresses received a hard copy from the start. Ten days
prior to the close of the study, principals who had not returned their paper surveys were called a second time and were asked for an e-mail address. They were then sent an electronic copy of the instrument with the final reminder received by the sampled schools on the electronic survey list. As a result, 16 principals on the electronic survey list completed hard copies of the survey and 16 principals on the hard copy survey list completed electronic surveys. Table 4.1 illustrates the number of responses for each survey type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The response rate varied between the two methods of distribution. For individuals originally receiving paper surveys, 78 of 189 (41.3%) were returned. According to Garson (1998, updated in 2006) stated that 10% is considered to be “good.” Of those 78 returned 62 (79.5%) were paper and 16 (20.5%) were electronic. For individuals receiving electronic surveys, 221 of 755 (29.3%) were returned. Of those 221 returned 205 (92.8%) were electronic and 16 (7.2%) were paper. There are a few reasons why the response rate for individuals originally on the electronic survey list is low. First, there was an 8.5% e-mail address failure rate. This means that the list-serve was unable to deliver the solicitation e-mail with the link to the electronic survey to 64 recipients. Because the list could not identify which addresses did not work it is impossible to know which principals did or did not get the survey. In addition, the list was accidentally set up
as a discussion list as opposed to a one-way list as it was intended to be. Any principal who replied to the solicitation e-mail sent their message to the entire recipient group. Although the problem was acknowledged and rectified within 20 minutes of the solicitation e-mail, 43 principals indicated that they were unhappy about getting a large number of e-mails in their inbox and refused to complete the survey. Finally, the survey was not compatible with Mac computers and did not work on any browser but Internet Explorer. It is unknown how many principals tried to access the survey and did not contact the Principle Investigator when they experienced difficulty. Because of the failed e-mail addresses, the list serve mishap, and the incompatibility of equipment, the response rate for members of the electronic list was lower than that of the paper list.

4.2.2 Time of Response

Most surveys were returned during the first 10 days of data collection. The mean number of days to respond was 9.5 and the median number of days to respond was 6.0. Figure 4.1 illustrates the rate in which all surveys were returned.
There was some variation in how electronic and paper surveys were returned. Table 4.2 illustrates the variation in time elapsed for the paper and electronic surveys to be returned.

**Table 4.2 Days Elapsed for Survey Return by Method of Survey Return**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>12.46</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 0 indicates that the survey was returned in less than 24 hours from initial solicitation.

**Figure 4.1 Rate of Survey Response**

There was some variation in how electronic and paper surveys were returned. Table 4.2 illustrates the variation in time elapsed for the paper and electronic surveys to be returned.

**Table 4.2 Days Elapsed for Survey Return by Method of Survey Return**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>12.46</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 0 indicates that the survey was returned in less than 24 hours from initial solicitation.
Overall it took longer for paper surveys to be returned that it took the electronic surveys. There seems to be a trade off. Web surveys require proper equipment and knowledge of the Internet, but are less expensive and are completed faster than are paper surveys mailed to potential respondents. Paper surveys are slower to be returned and are more expensive to administer but the only tool necessary is a pencil or pen. In this case the time and expense yielded a much higher rate of response. Figure 4.2 graphically represent the variation in response time by survey method.

Figure 4.2 Days Elapsed for Survey Return by Method of Administration

Method of Survey Return: Electronic
The graph of the electronic surveys shows a dramatic increase in the number of responses on days in which three reminder e-mails were sent out. The large increase on day 24 occurred as a result of paper survey recipients being sent electronic copies. Fewer surveys were returned on weekend days than on weekdays for both groups. There was a difference in how the surveys came back between the two groups. The paper surveys were returned in large groups at the beginning and end of the data collection period. The bulk of electronic surveys were completed at the beginning of the data collection period and the response gradually declined over the study period. The exceptions were the days that reminder e-mails were sent out. Surprisingly, a small number of surveys were
returned after the incentive drawing—some were paired with a note of apology for being late!

4.2.3 Respondent Demographics

The State of Ohio Department of Education (2004, updated 2006) reports that there are 613 school districts offering kindergarten through grade 12. Schools, not districts, were randomly selected for this study. However, the district is the means by which the Ohio Department of Education breaks down the typology. For comparison purposes the entire sample and the responding schools were collapsed into districts to illustrate how they compare to the districts they are to represent. The breakdown of the district typologies can be viewed in Table 4.3. The “Ns” in the table represent districts. Some districts had more than one school respond.

Table 4.3 Ohio School Typology by District Type and Representation in Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Type</th>
<th>Ohio% (N = 613)</th>
<th>Sample% (N = 414)</th>
<th>Response% (N = 216)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Island, small population</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Rural/agricultural – high poverty, low median income</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rural/agricultural – small student population low poverty, low to moderate median income</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Rural/small town – moderate to high median income</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Urban – high poverty, low median income</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Major urban – very high poverty</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Urban/suburban – high median income</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Urban/suburban – very low poverty, very high median income</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sample and response percent are generally representative of the state as a whole. A one-sample t-test was conducted to determine how well the sample and respondents represent the state. All but two groups were statistically significant (p<.01). The Island typology is not represented (p=.300) and the Major Urban typology is slightly overrepresented (p=.054). Urban/suburban districts are represented slightly more often in the sample than are rural districts. Urban districts have many more schools within a district than do rural districts. Since schools, not districts, were sampled it makes sense that urban districts may be represented more than rural districts under these conditions.

Although the ODE typology provides an idea of the size, population, and income of participating districts. It does not provide information related to geographic location within the state. Maps of respondents can be viewed as Appendices B, C, and D. Appendix B illustrates the schools sampled and their response saturation by zip code area. Appendix C illustrates the number of schools sampled in each county. Appendix D illustrates the responses received from each county. Urban areas received and returned a greater number of surveys than did rural areas of Ohio. Of course, there are more schools in urban areas than in rural areas. However, the sample may not adequately represent southeastern Ohio. This is the most rural area of the state. Eight counties in this area of the state did not return any surveys and the nearby southeastern counties returned one or two surveys. A total of six instruments were received from this part of the state.
4.2.4 Power Analysis

The power analysis if this study was prospective, not retrospective. As stated in Chapter III there are 613 school districts in Ohio and 4,071 total schools (Standard and Poors, 2004). According to OEDS there are 1,732 public elementary schools that offer kindergarten (Ohio Department of Education, 2006). However, it was learned that the OEDS data may not be entirely reliable. Only public elementary schools with kindergarten classrooms are included in the study. For a 95% level of confidence and a margin of error of 5, 315 schools were needed in the sample (Creative Research Systems, 2003, and Welch and Comer, 2001). For 95% level of confidence and a margin of error of 6, 231 responses were needed. Enough responses were generated for the latter power. This means that if 50% of the sample selects an answer to any individual item on the survey then we know that 44% to 56% of the population would have selected the same answer (Creative Research Systems, 2003).46

Retrospective power analyses involve computing the power of a test based on observed data. Lenth (2000) criticizes the use of retrospective power analyses in social science research. He illustrates that as p-values increase, retrospective power decreases, meaning that power will always be low in a non-statistically significant result. He found that power is a function of the p-value, not an excuse for a non-significant result. Hoenig and Heisey’s (2001) findings concur with Lenth (2000). They find interpreting tests with non-statistically significant results to be dangerous. They say that the logic statement “if power is low one might have missed detecting a real departure from the null hypothesis

46 50% - 6% = 44% and 50% + 6% = 56%.
but if, despite high power, one fails to reject the null hypothesis, then the null is probably true or close to true” (p. 3) is a fallacy. Focusing on a standardized effect size ignores considerations necessary in designing a study. Power calculations can tell the researcher how nature might be characterized in a study, but statisticians argue that information in the data cannot be used to describe the likely state of nature. Instead, confidence intervals should be used to determine the extent to which observed values are clustered around a null value. Hoenig and Heisey (2001) explain that retrospective power calculations provide no additional insight beyond the construction of a confidence interval. With this in mind, construction of a confidence interval for the regression model will be used in place of a retrospective power analysis.

4.3 Short-Form Ready School Assessment Results

The original Ready School Assessment (RSA) is comprised of eight Dimensions and 23 Sub-Dimensions. The original RSA is comprised of 129 Indicators, three to eleven Indicators for each Sub-Dimension. A short form was comprised of the Indicator(s) for each Sub-Dimension with the greatest factor loadings determined by High/Scope (2005) in their reliability analysis of the original RSA. The Short-Form RSA (sRSA) is also comprised of eight Dimensions. This section will describe the reliability assessments conducted to ensure that the sRSA measures the same thing as the RSA and will assess the normality of the sRSA distribution. In addition, psychometrics were assessed to create a single sum score.
4.3.1 *Assessing Reliability of the sRSA*

Two forms of reliability assessments were used to measure the extent the instrument is consistently measuring what it is supposed to. To assess the consistency of the sRSA with its original form, the new sRSA was administered to two elementary schools in a rural/agricultural – low poverty district where the original RSA had been administered six months earlier. The result overall and the results of each Dimension were then correlated with the original scores. The scores of the RSA and sRSA for each school can be viewed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 RSA and sRSA scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Leaders and Leadership</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Teacher Supports</th>
<th>Engaging Environments</th>
<th>Effective Curricula</th>
<th>Family, School and Community Partnerships</th>
<th>Respecting Diversity</th>
<th>Assessing Progress</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RSA</strong></td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>22.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sRSA</strong></td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>24.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RSA</strong></td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>22.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sRSA</strong></td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>24.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All correlations that could be run were statistically significant at p<.01. There were problems with Transition, Effective Curricula, Diversity, and Assessing Progress Dimensions because the values were identical between the two schools on the first administration, second administration, or both administrations. It appears that there is minimal difference in the outcomes of the RSA and sRSA.
To assess internal consistency the correlation among the items on the assessment were also calculated. Since the sRSA attempts to measure a construct (schools’ readiness for children) using multiple indicator variables it is necessary to demonstrate that the items measure the same phenomenon. While the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation developed the theoretical grounds for the RSA Dimensions being combined to measure schools’ readiness for children, it is important to measure the extent to which multiple indicators can be used to measure a concept. Cronbach’s alpha was used to test the average correlation among the items on the sRSA assessment. Cronbach’s alpha is a measure of internal consistency that shows all items on an instrument measure the same thing (George and Mallery, 2005). An alpha level greater than .7 was acceptable for the items to be considered one-dimensional (Nunnally, 1978). Only in achieving the designated consistency were the items then accepted in combination for use on the readiness scale. This step was particularly important because increasing the number of items on a scale can improve the alpha level (Garson, 1998 updated in 2006). In this study the number of items on the assessment decreased to make the assessment more manageable for respondents. Therefore reliability among the items is of great importance. The result of the internal consistency analysis is shown in Table 4.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.829</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SPSS did not indicate that the scale would improve if any item were removed from the scale. The alpha level exceeds .7 and the sRSA is deemed to have internal consistency.
The instrument has proven to be internally consistent as well as reliable with its original form.

As is true of most survey instruments the sRSA has limitations. First, as mentioned in Chapter III, the RSA is the only school readiness measure in existence. It is the only comparison for the sRSA in terms of reliability. Additionally a universal definition of a ready school has yet to be established. High/Scope defines readiness by eight Dimensions. While the Dimensions are grounded in the literature the concept is very cutting edge and validity of the measure (which was only about a year old at the time of this study) may be questioned as schools’ readiness for children becomes better understood through future research. Another limitation is the dependence on school principals to respond to the survey on behalf of the school. A single respondent may give a biased opinion. However, it is likely that the response rate would have suffered if ready school teams were to be necessary in order for schools to participate. Finally, this is the first time the mean Dimension scores were summed to create an overall readiness score for each school. Fortunately statistical tests exist to measure the additivity of a scale.

4.3.2 Dependent Samples

Dependent samples are partly a function of the response of the nth subject in an earlier sample that is to be related to the response of the nth subject in the current sample (Garson 1998, updated in 2006). In this study, the overall sRSA score is to be related to each Dimension score. In some situations involving correlated samples the violation of one or more assumptions may cast doubt on any ANOVA result (Lowery, 1999 updated
in 2007). U.S. Economist Milton Friedman developed a nonparametric rank-based statistical test that is used to detect differences in treatments across multiple test attempts (Wikipedia, 2007). The Friedman test\(^47\) tests the null hypothesis that the measures coming from k dependent samples come from the same population (Siegel, 1956). In layman’s terms, it measures whether three or more groups differ significantly from each other based on the rank of groups instead of the distribution of values (George and Mallery, 2005). This procedure involves ranking each row of answers and considering the values of ranks by columns.\(^48\) The Friedman statistic tests the hypothesis that there is no systematic difference in the ratings using a chi-square. Results of the Friedman test are illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Friedman Chi-Square for sRSA Sub-Dimensions (Dependent Samples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Dimension</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Friedman Test Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders and Leadership</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Supports</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Environments</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>Asym. Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Curricula</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, School, and Community Partnerships</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting Diversity</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing Progress</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the Friedman test illustrated that no systematic difference among the dependent ratings exists (p<.05).

\(^47\) This is also call the Friedman two-way ANOVA.

\(^48\) Mann-Whitney guidelines for assigning ranks of responses are followed in the Friedman test (Lowery, 1999 updated in 2007).
4.3.3 Additivity

Each individual item on a scale should be linearly related to the total score. To ensure each Dimension of the sRSA is linearly related to the total score Tukey’s test for nonadditivity was employed. This measure assesses the linear dependency among variables. The assumption is that there is no multiplication interaction between the cases and the items. If the test is significant at $p<.05$ then multiplicative interaction exists within the model. Table 4.7 displays the results of the Tukey test for the dependent variable scale items.

Table 4.7 ANOVA with Tukey's Test for Nonadditivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between People</td>
<td>297.223</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Items</td>
<td>110.714</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.816</td>
<td>87.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>4.252(a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.252</td>
<td>23.650</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonadditivity</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>363.516</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>367.768</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>478.482</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>775.705</td>
<td>2319</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Mean = 3.0636

Since a multiplicative relationship exists the model must include the case main effect, the item main effect, and the case-by-item interaction effect when computing scores based on the sub-dimensions (Garson 1998, updated in 2006). There is, however, a simple solution. In the footnote to the above SPSS ANOVA table there is a transformation estimate. All sub-dimension scores are to be raised to the third power (2.67 rounded to

168
the nearest whole number) in order to be additive. Table 4.8 displays the repeated Tukey test with the transformed data.

Table 4.8 ANOVA with Tukey's Test for Nonadditivity: Transformed Dependent Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between People</td>
<td>221975.386</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>768.081</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within People</td>
<td>77955.306</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11136.472</td>
<td>82.553</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Items</td>
<td>3.708(a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.708</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>272899.593</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>134.965</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonadditivity Balance</td>
<td>272903.302</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>134.900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350858.607</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>172.837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>572833.993</td>
<td>2319</td>
<td>247.018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Mean = 31.7260

a Tukey's estimate of power to which observations must be raised to achieve additivity = .978.

The multiplicative relationship within the dependent scale is no longer statistically significant following the transformation. Therefore the sum score be used in the analyses.

4.3.4 Assessing Normality of the sRSA

To ensure that all data was relatively free of coding errors, descriptive statistics were run on the data. Outliers were checked and, when necessary, corrected. The score for each school on the Short-Form RSA (sRSA) was plotted using a boxplot and a histogram. Figure 4.3 illustrate the distribution of the scores.
From the boxplot we see that the mean line lies almost in the center of the rectangle indicating that the dependent variable is not substantially skewed. There is one outlier that exceeds -3 standard deviations from the mean. The response was checked for coding errors and none existed. However, this case did have more missing values than did other cases. The outlier was removed from analysis to prevent skewing of the distribution. The histogram illustrates that the variables are normally distributed. To test the visual representation descriptive statistics were run (once the outlier was removed). The results can be viewed in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics of sRSA Total Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSA total score</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>24.5088</td>
<td>2.86838</td>
<td>8.228</td>
<td>-.269</td>
<td>-.404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th></th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSA total score</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>-.404</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skew measures the tilt in a distribution. Dividing the skewness statistic by the standard error equals -1.88. This falls within the +2 to -2 range of accepted normality. Kurtosis measures the peak of a distribution. Dividing the kurtosis statistic by the standard error equals -1.42. This falls within the +2 to -2 range of accepted normality. There are a sufficient number of cases in the tails of the distribution as well as in the central curve. No normalizing transformations were necessary to correct abnormality in the dependent variable.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each sRSA Sub-Dimension. For a rough comparison, the results for participating Ohio schools will be compared to High/Scope RSA (original form) users who complete the assessment before January 15, 2007 received from High/Scope’s online Ready School Profile. It needs to be emphasized that schools that completed the RSA were self-selected and are from all over the United States—the convenience sample may even include Ohio schools that took part in this study. Additionally the comparison will be between school teams who completed the original RSA and principals who completed the sRSA. No statistical conclusions are to be generated from this comparison. The High/Scope sample is listed only as a reference for Ohio elementary school performance.

The minimum possible score on each Dimension is 0 and the maximum score is 4 on both the sRSA and the RSA. The mean score for Leaders and Leadership is 3.11 and the mode was 3.14. The Leaders and Leadership mean of the original RSA was 3.27.
Ohio Transition mean is 2.95 and the median is 3.00. The original RSA mean is 2.90 for the Transition Dimension. For Teacher Supports, Ohio scored 3.10 and 3.00 for the mean and median, respectively, while RSA users’ mean is 2.99. Ohio schools scored a mean of 3.42 and a median of 3.50 on Engaging Environments compared to the mean of 3.25 for RSA users. On the Effective Curricula Dimension Ohio schools’ mean score is 3.03 and median score is 3.00. The Effective Curricula mean score for original RSA users is 2.67. Ohio schools yielded a mean of 2.87 and a median of 2.83 on the Family, School, and Community Partnerships Dimension. Original RSA schools yielded a mean of 2.92. Ohio schools yielded a mean of 2.68 for Respecting Diversity and a median of 2.67. Original RSA schools yielded a mean of 2.73. Finally, on the Assessing Progress Dimension, Ohio schools’ mean score is 3.29 and the median score is 3.33. The mean score for the Assessing Progress Dimension of original RSA users is 3.28. The standard deviations for each sRSA Dimension ranged from .38 to .66.

As a whole, Ohio elementary schools offering kindergarten have some readiness strengths as well as opportunities for improvement. Strengths, indicated by mean scores from 3.25 to 3.50, are in the areas of Engaging Environments and Assessing Progress. Ohio is not as strong, as indicated by mean scores less than 3.0 on the Dimensions of Transitions, Respecting Diversity, and Family, School, and Community Partnerships. The independent measures are intended to provide additional information regarding the effect social context of schools has on schools’ readiness for children.
4.5 Independent Measures

Chapter III described nine independent variables hypothesized to impact a schools’ readiness for children measured by the sRSA. These include local school funding, the percent of students flagged for economic disadvantage, the percentage of minority students, the percent of children with limited English proficiency, the percent of migrant students, the population size of the school service area, the percent of community members with a B.A. or higher, the percent of community residents in the labor force, and median household income of the school service area.

4.5.1 Testing for Nonlinearity

Regression, the proposed test for this analysis, assumes linearity. All independent variables were plotted to determine if nonlinearity exists in the relationship. The plots for each independent variable by sRSA score are represented in Figure 4.4.
Figure 4.4 Independent Variable Plots by sRSA Score
Figure 4.4 Independent Variable Plots by sRSA Score Continued
Figure 4.4 Independent Variable Plots by sRSA Score Continued
Figure 4.4 Independent Variable Plots by sRSA Score Continued
Figure 4.4 Independent Variable Plots by sRSA Score Continued

The model summary for each independent variable by sRSA score are represented in Table 4.10.
Table 4.10 Model Summary of Each Independent Variable Regressed by sRSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Equation</th>
<th>R-Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local funding</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>2.031</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>1.228</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>1.747</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Economic Disadvantage</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority Students</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>1.392</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>1.150</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students without Limited</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Proficiency</td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>1.295</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>1.388</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Mobile Students</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>2.504</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>1.989</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>1.432</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of school area</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>3.880</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>2.596</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>1.741</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Community with B.A. or Higher</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>3.203</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>1.610</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Residents in Labor Force</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>.909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>.992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubic</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>.980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changing the shape of the line had little effect on the R-Square therefore the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables are linear.

From the graph of the curve estimation of percent of students attending the school without limited English proficiency it can be seen that the responses do not vary substantially. Very few students attending Ohio schools appear to have limited English proficiency. In fact, most schools sampled have and English proficiency rating of 100%. Since lack of English proficiency does not seem to exist, for the most part, across the
state it is unlikely to have an effect of schools’ readiness for children. The variable was
omitted from the model.

4.5.2 Testing for Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity in regression models is an unacceptably high level of correlation
among the independent variables so the effects of related variables cannot be separated.
When multicollinearity is present the strength of the explanatory variables and their joint
effect on the dependent variable are not reliable. According to Garson (1998 updated in
2006) intercorrelation among independent variables is a problem when the relationship
exceeds .80. Pearson correlations were conducted on all independent variables remaining
hypothesized to be related to the sRSA score. The results of the correlation tests can be
viewed in Table 4.11.
Table 4.11 Pearson Correlations among Independent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local funding</th>
<th>% Economic Disadvantage</th>
<th>% Minority Students</th>
<th>% Mobile Students</th>
<th>Population of school area</th>
<th>% Community with B.A. or Higher</th>
<th>% Residents in Labor Force</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local funding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Economic Disadvantage</td>
<td>-.189**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority Students</td>
<td>.128*</td>
<td>.660**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Mobile Students</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>.685**</td>
<td>.564**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of school area</td>
<td>.207**</td>
<td>.178**</td>
<td>.297**</td>
<td>.152**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Community with B.A. or Higher</td>
<td>.589**</td>
<td>-.357**</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>-.151*</td>
<td>.231**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Residents in Labor Force</td>
<td>.253**</td>
<td>-.473**</td>
<td>-.163**</td>
<td>-.211**</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.431**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>.397**</td>
<td>-.661**</td>
<td>-.287**</td>
<td>-.369**</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>.716**</td>
<td>.695**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Multicollinearity can also be evaluated when running the regression model by monitoring the Tolerance and the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) of the explanatory variables. Tolerance is 1 – R-square where R-square is a multiple of R of a given independent variable regressed on all other independent variables. Garson (1998 revised in 2006) stated that if a tolerance value is less than .20 then the independent variable should be dropped from the analysis due to multicollinearity. Garson (1998 revised in 2006) also stated that when multicollinearity is a problem VIF will exceed 5.0. VIF is the reciprocal of the Tolerance. Table 4.12 illustrates the collinearity diagnostics for the regression model which is described in section 4.4.
Table 4.12 Regression Collinearity Statistics of Each Independent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local funding</td>
<td>.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Economic Disadvantage</td>
<td>.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority Students</td>
<td>.413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Mobile Students</td>
<td>.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of school area</td>
<td>.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Community with B.A. or Higher</td>
<td>.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Residents in Labor Force</td>
<td>.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>.630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although none of the variables meets the cutoff criteria for multicollinearity, the percent of residents in the labor force is extremely close on the Tolerance and VIF. Conceptually it makes sense to remove the variable. Individuals with more education are more likely to be working so the percent of residents in the labor force was essentially measuring the same phenomenon as the percent of individuals with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher level of education. Therefore it was removed from the analysis.

4.5.3 Challenges with Independent Variables

The independent measures for this analysis came from secondary sources, the Ohio Department of Education and the U.S. Census. Data extracted from these sources was in aggregate and at times the information was incomplete. For example, the U.S. Census Fact Finder did not have information for one of the school zip codes or for the
corresponding city. In this case the zip code for the educational administration building was used. The last census took place in 2000 so the information is seven years old. But it is the best available.

Some schools have been closed and new buildings have opened. OEDS information was not current. It did not reflect the names of new schools. As a result district and principal information had to be used to match the information of the new school that may have differed from the school name in the OEDS sample. All but one of the new schools was successfully paired with the sampled school that is now closed. OEDS also had flaws in the information about individual buildings. Two schools sampled that were listed as having kindergarten in the building were not elementary schools at all. One was a high school and one was a middle school. It is impossible to know how many reporting errors exist in OEDS and how many schools were rightfully included in the population.

There were some additional problems with data extracted from the Ohio Department of Education. The Ohio Department of Education’s Power User Reports were incomplete. Some schools listed for mobility, economic disadvantage, and race data were omitted from limited English proficiency reports. Others were listed for race of students and nothing else. It was truly a game of hit-or-miss in obtaining school-level data from ODE after multiple attempts to do so by the research team. Finally, to protect individual children within a school that meet a demographic criteria that most of the fellow students do not meet, ODE does not report data for any variable if less than 10 students at the school fall into a category. This was a particular problem for race data. No Ohio school served enough American Indian/Alaskan Native children for them to be
included in the demographic descriptions. This phenomenon occurred many times for all minority groups in the sample. The percent of minority students in the school was calculated by subtracting the percent of Caucasian students from 100. In schools with no Caucasian children, or too few to be reported, then the available percentage for each minority group was summed.

4.6 Regression Model

The regression model has undergone a few changes. First, the percent of students without limited English Proficiency variable was removed from the model because the graph of the curve estimation illustrated that there are very few children attending school in the state that do not speak English. Because of a multicollinearity concern the percent of residents in the labor force of the school service area has also been removed. The regression model now has seven contextual independent measures that are to predict schools’ performances on the sRSA.

4.6.1 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The regression model includes seven (once nine) independent variables comprising the social context in which the school resides. It has been hypothesized that these variables, in tandem, have a statistically significant effect on schools’ readiness for children—the dependent variable determined by a composite score on the Short Form of the High/Scope Ready School Assessment. The null hypothesis will be rejected if p<.05.
Table 4.13 Summary of Regression Model with Transformed sRSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>78.52659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14 ANOVA of Transformed sRSA Regression Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>49928.231</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7132.604</td>
<td>1.157</td>
<td>.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1708099.618</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>6166.425</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1758027.849</td>
<td>284</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.15 Coefficient Matrix of Transformed sRSA Regression Model with Collinearity Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>259.936</td>
<td>36.122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local funding</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Economic Disadvantage</td>
<td>-.303</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>-.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority Students</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>-.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Mobile Students</td>
<td>1.845</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of school area</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Community with B.A. or Higher</td>
<td>1.013</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-.136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

185
Table 4.16 Coefficient Matrix of Transformed sRSA Regression Model with Confidence Intervals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>259.936</td>
<td>36.122</td>
<td>7.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local funding</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Economic Disadvantage</td>
<td>-.303</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>-.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Minority Students</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>-.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Mobile Students</td>
<td>1.845</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of school area</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Community with B.A. or Higher</td>
<td>1.013</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-.136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The small confidence interval illustrate that there is adequate power in the analysis (see Table 4.16). However, despite the power the covariates account for little change in the dependent variable. The minimum score on the sRSA scale following the transformation was 74.75 and the maximum score was 442.90 (range = 368.15). The independent variables with the greatest impact had an effect in the single digits.
4.6.2 Testing of Assumptions

To ensure normality, a histogram of the residuals was generated. The graph is not skewed therefore the assumption of normality has been met. The residuals of the sRSA are plotted in Figure 4.5.

![Figure 4.5 Residual Plot of Transformed sRSA](image)

Equal variance of the residuals, or homoscedasticity, is important. A plot of the Studentized Deleted Residuals versus the estimated explanatory variable illustrates whether homoscedasticity or heteroscedasticity is present. From Figure 4.6 it is apparent
that the variance among the residuals does not form a megaphone or any other shape. The variance is fairly constant, as represented by the cloud of dots. Homoscedasticity is present.

To check for outliers in the transformed model and to measure their influence the Studentized Deleted Residuals (to look for cases with unusual Y-hat variables) were plotted by the Mahalanobis Distance (to look for unusual X variables). Cases in the plot were labeled by Cook’s Distance. Cook’s D identifies influential cases that would change the results of the analysis if it were excluded. The plot, Figure 4.7, has cases

Figure 4.6 Homoscedasticity
marked if the case had a Cook’s D > (4/n). The graph shows five cases with large Mahalanobis Distance values. They exceed three standard deviations from the mean. However, these cases have little influence on the model as determined by Cook’s D. To confirm Cook’s D, the regression was run once more without the five cases with large Mahalanobis Distance values. The results were essentially unchanged.

Finally, each predictor variable was plotted against the Studentized Deleted Residual (not shown). For the most part the points appeared to be random. There was no

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49 4/n = 4/299 = .01338

50 mean = 6.975, sd = 5.799
curvilinear scatter in any of the graphs. There was some clustering toward the left side of
the graph of the plots for percent of minority students in school and percent of students
who had been enrolled in the school less than one year, but overall there was no clear
pattern.

4.6.3 Summary of the Regression Model

Neither local funding per pupil nor population of the school service area had an
effect (positive or negative) on schools’ readiness for children. The percent of
economically disadvantaged children attending the school and the percent of minority
students attending the school had a slightly negative impact on schools’ readiness, but it
was not statistically significant. The percent of mobile children attending the school had
a positive effect on schools’ readiness, which is counterintuitive based on the literature.
The relationship of median household income of the school service area to readiness was
also counterintuitive based on school effectiveness literature. Higher income areas had
schools that did not score as high on the sRSA than schools of lower income (although
the relationship was not significant. The higher the percent of residents who earned an
advanced degree, the higher the school readiness score. But, again, the relationship was
not statistically significant.

Despite removal of an outlier, a reliability transformation, and a correction for
multicollinearity neither the model nor the regression coefficients are statistically
significant. The confidence interval of the predictor variables were small, indicating high
power. No pattern exists among the residuals that indicate a nonlinear relationship and
there were no outliers that had a substantial effect on the model. We fail to reject the null hypotheses that local school funding, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the school, the percentage of minority students in the school, the percent of mobile children in the school, the total population of the school service area, the percentage of individuals over the age of 25 with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher, and median household income have and affect on schools’ readiness for children. In sum, the results suggest that social context variables that have historically been predictive of effective schools are not predictive of ready schools.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study has provided an analysis of Ohio schools’ readiness for children in elementary schools offering kindergarten. Principals responded on behalf of the school to a short form of the High/Scope Ready School Assessment via an online survey or a hard copy of the instrument that was mailed to the school. The analysis was intended to inform one broad research question “What elements present in the social context of Ohio public elementary schools can be linked to schools’ readiness?” along with nine sub-questions relating individual social context variables to school readiness. This section offers a discussion of suggestions implied in the findings, the limitations of the analysis, and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Ohio scored relatively high on each Dimension of the sRSA. No Dimension mean or median for the group fell below the Dimension mean score of two. However, among participating schools the range between the lowest and highest overall sRSA score
was more than 20 (including the outlier) on a scale that ranged from zero to 32. There is variation among Ohio schools’ readiness for children, but it was not explained by social context variables—or at least the variables predicted to have a relationship selected for use in this study. This calls into question how well implementation of standardized practices can meet the needs of the community. In the sections that follow alignment of school operations with community needs will be addressed. Then the relationship among effective schools, ready schools, and the social context will be discussed.

5.3 Quality Control of Service Delivery

“We will argue that organizations do some of the things they do because they must—or else!” says Thompson (1967, p. 1). They work within established limits with the expectation that they will achieve results. All organizations must perform to a standard of acceptability. Assessment is required to evaluate what effect a school had on the environment or what they would be, should the conditions change. However, what is desirable to one group may be undesirable to another. And a level of acceptability within an established positive effect may vary with the social context. When the organization cannot hope to show improvement on all relevant dimensions, then it must show improvement elements of interest to the stakeholders on which the organization is most dependent (Thompson, 1967, p. 90). Schools are more dependent on taxpayers than taxpayers are on schools. As we know, those whom the schools serve, for the most part, are not old enough to vote. Taxpayers can put their money wherever they see fit. Therefore schools must score well on elements of interest to their stakeholders.
Nowadays accountability is used synonymously with results. The justification is that schools with a clear goal and well-defined consequences for failure will perform better (Lashway, 1999). The theory behind this movement is that administrators, teachers, and students will take learning more seriously and work harder to earn incentives and avoid punishments (Raymond and Hanusek, 2003). Reforms that took place in the 1980s were admirable, but largely ineffective. States did their best to raise teacher quality and to implement a more rigorous academic curriculum. They sought to hold schools accountable by implementing new tests of student performance. However, these reforms did not work for a number of reasons. Laws mandating curriculum were limited in scope. They can require that certain standards be taught in specified courses for a required time period each day, but they cannot mandate a high-quality learning experience. Administrator learning must be incessant, insightful, and intent on improving student outcomes and teaching and learning practices. They must also have some knowledge of the subjects under their authority and how they are taught and learned (Prestine and Nelson, 2005). Schools can go through the motions of reform with students not learning anything in the process.

Discrepancy between ability to achieve and feasibility of achievement varies across and between societies (Thompson, p. 122). When there is an overload of work it needs to be prioritized. To illustrate that a school is making positive changes it makes sense that the focus would be on areas in which improvement is more likely to come into fruition. For example, in schools it makes sense that teachers and administrators would focus on children who have the greatest potential for scoring high on achievement tests. They may choose to attend to those learning deficits or disabilities that are more likely to
be resolved quickly and successfully. While the idea may or may not be morally sound or in compliance with recent state and federal school policy, it is an assured means to “improve” by the standard of proficiency tests and a means of securing funds for performance.

When stakes are high it is natural for public managers, such as principals, to seek bureaucratic (closed-system) knowledge where certainty exists. It is impossible to anticipate environmental flux so it is not considered. In some ways not acknowledging the environment is a coping mechanism for dealing with uncertainty. However, in order for a school to remain constant, it must adapt. An oxymoron, yes, but nature teaches social scientists that relationships among contributing factors to the viability of a system must work in tandem for a system to sustain itself—remain in homeostasis. If one element fails the system fails unless the system adapts to compensate for the change (Thompson, 1967, p. 4-7). The organization is dependent upon the inputs from the environment, the composition of its context, and its capacities. Unfortunately the task environment to which the organization must adapt varies from one school to the next and do not align with the distinctions among organizations (p. 67). Some services will overlap while provisional gaps will exist in other instances. Environmental constraints may be a problem of the geographic area or the social context of the task environment. Task environments can be hostile or benign, heterogeneous or homogeneous, stable or shifting, and unified or divided (March and Simon, 1958 and Dill, 1958). More diverse environments lead to organizational constraints. Dynamic environments present greater contingencies to the organization. “Under either condition, the organization seeking to be rational must put boundaries around the amount and scope of adaptation necessary, and it
does this by establishing structural units specialized to face a limited range of contingencies within a limited set of constraints” (Thompson, 1967, p. 73). Specialization will be sacrificed in environments with changing conditions to ensure separate organizational elements will be secure, meaning they will have someone to serve.

Dynamic organizations face changes in the political environment as well as in organizational goals (Thompson, 1967, p. 129). Technological developments (meaning equipment improvements, changes in best practices, and new knowledge) occur oftentimes outside of the organization. Adaptation to such technology is usually based on the context in which the organization resides. Members of the task environment are responsible for the changes (inputs). So long as they are readily available, the organization does not depend on the inputs. However, if the inputs become scarce, the individual will become more valuable to the organization and will also become more powerful.

Not all children, communities, cultures, and contexts are consistent and not all top-down policies will affect local schools in a similar manner. An organization’s power is relative to its task environment so long as the organization has the capacity to meet the needs of stakeholders better than any other organization. Thompson views power as a sum of the inputs and outputs of the task environment (p. 31). For example, a school’s power is relative to the authority it has over students and families subtracted by the control the institution does not have over the students’ test scores or the money it receives from taxpayers.
5.4 Readiness Versus Effectiveness

The Ohio readiness movement is evolving concurrently with accountability standards. An assumption exists that readiness of schools is concurrent with effectiveness. This makes sense because supports for low-achieving students, effective curricula, qualified teachers, and leadership are present within both models. This study was intended to provide baseline information regarding where public schools stand in the readiness process and how schools’ readiness is affected by the surrounding community. What was realized is that social variables that have been predictive of effective schools for two decades are not predictive of ready schools.

There are many ways these results can be interpreted. This study did not measure participating schools’ effectiveness. However, it employed variables that have historically been linked to effectiveness. If ready schools are effective schools, as the assumption suggests, then can it be assumed that the contextual predictors of effectiveness will also predict readiness? From this data, the answer is no. However, future studies will have to examine whether or not ready schools are synonymous with effective schools. A high degree of readiness may be used as a predictor of effectiveness, but that has not yet been tested empirically. It is also important to note that the wrong variables may have been chosen to be predictive of readiness. Research examining effective schools has been criticized for including narrow and small samples, failing to identify outliers, aggregating data at a level that is too high, and making inappropriate comparisons (Purkey and Smith, 1983). If the reviewed effectiveness research was not of high quality, then variables selected for this study because they have been predictive of
readiness may not have been true predictors of effectives or logical predictors of readiness.

Thompson (1967) criticizes public administrative agencies of bias towards certainty. This is evident in the use of short-term over long-term consideration, the use of quantitative data over qualitative data, and precedent rather than innovation. Assumptions of both school readiness and school effectiveness are based on precedent—that the future will be similar to the past. Neither the sRSA nor standardized proficiency tests are social assessments. While they measure the extent to which schools are employing readiness “technology” and the quality of the “output” based on an accepted professional norms, there is no measure of the processes impact on the external environment or the suitability of the practices in terms of the school’s context. As mentioned in Chapter II, The National Education Goals Panel (1995) and a plethora of civil rights advocates believe that child outcomes should not be the only measure of America’s progress toward school improvement. Perhaps effectiveness cannot be assessed by test scores alone and that more information about schools needs to be taken into consideration. While specifying child outcomes is a necessary step, future research should indicate whether or not it must be coupled with a commitment to examining social and institutional readiness.

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51 Three means of organizational assessment currently exist—efficiency tests, instrumental tests, and social tests (Thompson, 1967, p. 87). Efficiency tests measure the extent to which organizations are creating outputs for a reasonable cost in a reasonable amount of time. Instrumental tests measure the extent to which an agency is using the best means possible to deliver service. This makes stakeholders uneasy as it is always possible that a better means exists. Social tests introduce instability as differences of opinion come into play, but they are necessary. The first test shows what the school has accomplished, the last shows the school’s suitability for upcoming achievement, and the middle links the two by making sure the necessary tools are in place.
Also, claiming that an initiative has been implemented is very different than claiming an initiative has been effective. This idea can be interpreted in three ways. First, it may be unreasonable to assume that policies that work in one school setting will have an identical effect in another setting. In the future it will be interesting to see whether or not all ready schools will also be effective schools. Even though the majority of Ohio schools indicated that they are at least “somewhat” ready for children, perhaps being ready may not guarantee effectiveness. Again, a relationship between readiness and effectiveness must be assessed before conclusions about this idea can be reached. Second, perhaps the Indicators intended to measure readiness included on the original Ready School Assessment (2005) measure the extent to which school have implemented best practices, but do not measure the extent to which staff have “bought in” or followed through with the effort. Perhaps the capacity for readiness is present, but the will to make the school truly ready for children is not there. Third, perhaps developing a scale on the short form of the RSA was not correct. Readiness could be Gestalt—meaning the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Just as children may not reach all individual standards of readiness at the same moment in time and in the same order because their exposure to elements of readiness varies with their environments, schools should not be expected to either. Readiness of schools may not be constant, but a continuum with the schools’ context. If a school is to be considered as an element of a community system, its readiness could be in flux as the school responds to contextual modifications. It may be more reasonable to view readiness as advancement schools make on an individual readiness Dimension in response to their environment. Complex organizations while
instituting best practices established by scientific research must simultaneously recognize interdependencies and address a scope of action beyond the confines of the organization.

5.5 Co-Alignment

Gallagher (1999) said that the failure of a child to adapt to kindergarten may be a result of the school failing to meet the needs of the community. Lutz and Merz (1992) had a similar realization that schools must align with the community, not teach despite the community. Dramatic environmental transformations can disrupt schools routines and require school to adapt. Challenges that restrain school progress are not consistent and it is up to school leaders to develop an action plan to meet the needs of the school in the manner that works for them. Thompson (1967) found that the dynamics of an organization, as well as its structure, depend upon its environment, coordination challenges, technology, and goals. The organization is viewed as an open system that must operate rationally while managing uncertainty. This contrasts the “one best way” approach characteristic of public education. Like Kenneth Boulding (1956, as cited in Scott, 2003), Thompson views organizations as open systems in which scholars spent too much time focused on internal features and processes. The connection between the organization and the environment must be considered in evaluating effectiveness.

*Implementers at all levels of the system effectively negotiate their response, fitting their action to the multiple demands, priorities, and values operating in their environment and the effective authority of policy itself. Further this bargaining or negotiation is a continuous process, proceeding over time as policy resources, problems, and objectives evolve and are played against a dynamic*
Thompson (1967) developed an organizational theory called co-alignment that requires internal and external dynamics of the organization to “co-align” in their courses of action to achieve organizational goals. “Perpetuation of the complex organization rests on an appropriate co-alignment in time and space not simply of human individuals but of streams of institutionalized action. Survival rests on the co-alignment of technology and task environment within a viable domain, and of organization design and structure appropriate to that domain” says Thompson (1967, p. 147). Because there are so many stakeholders with interest in public education, co-alignment is a difficult state for public schools to achieve. Every element involved in an organizational system is constantly evolving and operates under its own assumptions and traditions that modify with exposure to innovation. Each works at its own pace and is governed by the external environment. Furthermore, many parts of the organization cannot operate in the absence of another element. In Chapter I we established schools as miniature public spaces. Administrators of schools must co-align a complex set of forces in the community, many with potential to be mutually antagonistic.

Co-alignment will vary from one district to the next as well as from one school to the next and community cultures and school organizations vary. Some organizations must be flexible and informal while others can operate in a rational fashion performing standardized activities with little interference. Schools vary in the complexity of their design as required by their environments. Oftentimes some pieces of the organization are
structured in a manner that directly interacts with the outside world, while others are kept secure from unexpected developments (Scott, 2003 referring to Thompson, 1967). Organizations cope with uncertainty by implementing mechanisms designed to deal with uncertainty so the rest of the rationally-functioning organization can continue to operate under stable conditions (Thompson, 1967, p. 13). Eventually the “secure” operations of an organization become constraints to which the rest of the viable organization must adapt. These operations, on one hand, keep the organization in tact. On the other hand these fixed conditions may inhibit the organization’s ability to respond to environmental influences (p. 24). “Organizational rationality therefore is some result of (1) constraints which the organization must face, (2) contingencies which the organization must meet, and (3) variables which the organization can control” (p. 24). For schools, readiness and effectiveness measures are a balance of standardized assessments and reporting on the variables of interest to stakeholders and molding the standards to meet the needs of the children and families to which services are provided. Without co-alignment it is unlikely that a school will be “effective” even if data indicates it is “ready.”

5.6 Consequences of Ready Schools

Less than 25% of the variance in kindergarten outcomes is accounted for by a child’s academic readiness (LaParo and Pianta, 1998 as cited in Pianta and Cox, 1999). The only way to know whether or not the achievement gap is closing is to measure the distance among groups over time. Unfortunately measuring instruments have limitations. Most assessments for cognitive abilities favor cultural learning more than intelligence
(Hadderman, 2000 and Murray, 1995 among others). With that being said, it can be argued that individual differences in student achievement as indicated on standardized tests are indicative of their environment outside the school. Most citizens in the United States do not feel that the achievement gap that exists between socially and economically disadvantaged children and children of advantage is the fault of schools, but they do believe it is the responsibility of schools to eliminate the achievement disparity (Rose and Gallup, 2006).

Leaders exercise their discretion when they believe that it is their advantage to do so, when they have the authority to do so, when they have adequate information to do so, and when it cannot be passed on to another leader within the interdependent organization. Whenever possible they rely on formulas, precedent, or objective evidence to aid in decision making (Thompson, 1967, pp.118-120). The risk is that in an attempt to minimize the need for discretion inappropriate criteria for evaluation may be employed. Firestone and Shipps (2005) hypothesized that principals can enhance student learning by translating external and internal accountabilities to help educators promote a shared sense of ethical obligation to achieve goals outside of and within the organization. Riehl (2000) theorizes that “when wedded to a relentless commitment to equity, voice, and social justice, administrators’ efforts in the tasks of sensemaking, promoting inclusive cultures and practices in schools, and building positive relationships outside of the school may indeed foster a new form of practice” (p.71).

The ready schools movement seeks to empower communities to team up with the school in making positive changes for children. Thompson (1967) illustrated that the elements necessary to the co-alignment are influenced by forces in the school’s external
environment. For schools to be successful they must be adaptive and direct future action to the changes occurring within the community. At the same time, school administrators can innovate. They can make changes on any or all dimensions of the school, but only to the extent that they are accepted by stakeholders. In order to achieve equal academic performance schools serving a historically underserved population must first be able to address the myriad of problems that inhibit their ability to learn. They must also have supports in place to address academic needs of all children, regardless of achievement. For at-risk children equal schooling can result in unequal achievement (Strike, 1989 and Zill, 1999). Schools serving large numbers of at-risk students must offer more services and supports to bring students up to the level of their peers. This idea is well established. In response to No Child Left Behind, schools that serve a high population of children at risk for failure may have “stepped up” or made improvements to help children succeed. They have reconfigured themselves in a fashion that meets the needs of the community and the demands of the top-down bureaucracy. But if the scores on standardized proficiency tests do not improve, their efforts will not be acknowledge as effective. This calls into question the ever-argued point of whether or not proficiency tests measure what they are intended to measure.

Readiness has been defined as a construction that fits a child with a school (Scott–Little et al., 2002). The basic function of administration is the co-alignment of institutionalized action. When it works well it keeps the organization on the verge of the several necessary streams of action (Thompson, 1967). The administrative process must simultaneously search for flexibility while reducing uncertainty. While it is expected that all schools are expected to attain a state of readiness, it cannot be expected that all of
them will attain it in the same way, with identical design, structures, or behavior. While it may be important to use best practices as a guide it may be equally essential to find patterns in variations stemming from the social context. Readiness may not be determined by the school alone, but as a continuum with the community it is to serve.

5.7 Questions for Future Research

The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (2005) has begun groundbreaking work in the area of ready schools. Until recently child school readiness has been the focus of education literature and the responsibility of getting children ready for school has been the responsibility of parents and early childhood educators. However, not all children come to school ready to learn (despite advances in knowledge) and researchers are just beginning to understand what schools need to do to be ready for all children, especially those children who are not ready for school. High/Scope developed the first definition of a ready school as a building with strong leadership, family school and community partnerships, engaging environments, effective curricula, and teacher supports that also transitions children and families to school, respects diversity, and assesses progress of students. High/Scope went even further to develop indicators of the elements of readiness. It is evident in Chapter II (see 2.6.4) that state governments and other highly regarded educational interests partially agree on what schools need to be ready, but a universal definition of readiness has not yet been
established. This will not be a simple task as schools continue to serve diverse stakeholders with competing interests. Additionally practices associated with implementing ready schools are not always related to education. Social service delivery is traditionally the duty of public administration scholars.

Ohio public schools, although they try to follow established policies and procedures, are disrupted by their environments. In controlled studies it is simple to develop best practices for teaching and operating a school. Unfortunately hundreds of years of social science studies have taught us that it is impossible to “control” the real world. Assuming that having all elements of readiness in place is enough for schools to be effective may be a fallacy. If education administrators and researchers understand co-alignment, then they will understand that they could be implementing all bureaucratic standards of practice to be “ready” and still not be “effective” if they fail to co-align with the community. Not all children, communities, cultures and contexts are consistent and not all top-down policies and practices will affect local schools in a similar manner.

In future studies I hope to challenge the bias toward certainty in examining ready schools and explore community empowerment and co-alignment as means to make Ohio public schools ready and effective. Outcomes need not be thrown out the window but should be paired with social and institutional information to get a better picture of the condition of the school. A direct relationship between ready schools and effective
schools also needs to be measured. We know from the public administration literature that successful implementation is different than a successful program. With this in mind it would be useful to look at the types of evidence that schools collect to meet the indicators on the original High/Scope Ready School Assessment and see how school readiness practices vary across multiple contexts. Perhaps this information can be used to develop guidelines for readiness implementation in various contextual situations that include support for co-alignment while remaining flexible and changeable to be consistent with the world outside of the school. In short, future studies should re-evaluate readiness as a best practice and begin to view readiness as an “open system” in which schools take the community context into consideration when implementing new policies and procedures.

52 Challenges in this effort may be further compounded as arguments are taking place in the education and policy literature over whether or not proficiency tests and teacher indices are appropriate measures of school effectiveness.
REFERENCES


Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP, 2004). President’s budget cuts child care for more than 300,000 children. *CLASP Update, 17*(2).


Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (EPERC, 2006). *Quality Counts At 10, A Decade of Standards-Based Education: Ohio*. Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education.


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**APPENDIX A**

**SHORT FORM OF THE HIGH/SCOPE RSA**

*This instrument was modified, put in to web format, and reprinted with permission from the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.*

Please answer the following questions about your school’s readiness to the best of your ability.

School Name

District Name

How long have you been a principal? (years)

How long have you been a principal in this school? (years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District is . . . .</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-K in same/attached building/campus?

| Yes | No |
| O   | O  |

Kindergarten (select all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Half-day</th>
<th>Full-day</th>
<th>Extended care options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leadership**

I communicate a clear vision for the school that is committed to the success of every child.

| Yes | No | DK |
| O   | O  | O  |

I have prepared a written improvement plan designed to help every child succeed.

| Yes | No | DK |
| O   | O  | O  |

I use my authority to make decisions that support a ready school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I encourage staff to take responsibility for and implement ready school strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have made a public commitment to and achievable set of instructional improvements.

| Yes | No | DK |
| O   | O  | O  |

I include teaching staff in collaborative problem solving to address improvement goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am effective in creating a climate conducive to the success of children and staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I act to ensure that students and families are connected to health and social services as needed (e.g., parent education courses, afterschool latchkey services).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have academic training in early childhood education (pre-K through grade 3).</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have classroom experience in early childhood education.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I mentor people who show the potential for becoming school leaders.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I acknowledge families as children’s first teachers and offer strategies, ideas, and training opportunities that support them.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am accessible to students, families, teachers, and members of the community. (For example, the principal warmly greets the children and parents as they arrive, visits, classrooms, and is flexible about making time to meet with parents.)</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff, parents, and community members are encouraged to make recommendations to the principal as part of a goal-setting and decision-making process.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents of incoming children are informed about registration, by multiple means if necessary, 3-6 months before school starts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For parents of incoming children, the school holds orientation session(s) at school prior to the first day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Teachers Communicate with preschool/child care staff about <em>children</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Teachers Communicate with preschool/child care staff about <em>curriculum</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement of age-eligible, entering children in extra-year programs (e.g. Developmental Kindergarten, Young 5s, Begindergarten) occurs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School identifies underperforming children and promptly intervenes (e.g., provides one-on-one tutoring, computer resources and the services of specialists, such as nurses and librarians).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Supports</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional development activities offer teachers a variety of teaching strategies.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating staff evaluate the utility of professional development activities.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-2 classes use multiple organizational strategies to maximize instructional effectiveness (e.g. class-size reduction, paraprofessional aides, mixed-age groupings, looping, peer tutoring).</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal and teachers (in accordance with district policy, if applicable) maintain active membership in relevant professional organizations and/or affiliates (e.g., NAEYC, NCTM, NAESP).</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging Environments</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hallways, passageways, walkways, and common areas are clean and in good repair.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallways, passageways, walkways, and common areas are free of safety and health hazards.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms have on hand 10 or more books per child intended for children’s guides and/or independent use.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms have a variety of manipulative materials and supplies for art, building, and hands-on learning (e.g., puppets, scarves, playdough, envelopes, blank books, bean bags, shakers, blocks, large and small magnets, Cuisenaire rods).</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the day children have opportunities to talk with one another while working.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children spend the majority of their time involved in transforming materials or ideas (e.g., role play; projects and experiments; writing and illustrating stories; outside exploration as opposed to merely listening; doing individual seatwork; answering direct questions).</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom activities provide opportunities for all children to make open-ended process choices (e.g., choosing roles, materials or media, or how to present results).</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms use a balance of group sizes: individual, small-group, and whole-group activities.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effective Curricula**

Staff are well informed and well trained on all *language arts* methods/materials they are to employ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedures are in place for monitoring fidelity of implementation of all <em>language arts</em> materials/methods.</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Staff are well informed and well trained on all *prosocial* methods/materials they are to employ.

| Procedures are in place for monitoring fidelity of implementation of all *prosocial* materials/methods. | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always | DK |

**Family, School, and Community Partnerships**

Families participate in and have significant influence on school decision making.

<p>| Families have varied and flexible opportunities for involvement in schoolwide events and activities (e.g., PTO/PTA committees, fundraising committees, schoolwide community building committees, advocacy committees, booster clubs). | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always | DK |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Parent-teacher conferences focus on children’s strengths, setting goals, and building a team with parents rather than dealing with problems.</strong></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers consistently and effectively utilize multiple methods of school-to-home communication to provide families with ongoing information about school programs and children’s progress and problems (e.g., newsletters, bulletin boards, notes, journals, telephone calls, e-mail, Web sites, family resource rooms, home visits, face-to-face interactions).</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School promotes community linkages by encouraging and helping families to arrange for children’s regular doctor visits and immunizations.</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School promotes community linkages by providing services to meet the needs of children and families—if community agencies or religious institutions are not available to provide them.</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Respecting Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>There are many materials in the classroom that introduce a variety of cultural backgrounds.</strong></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities that refer to students’ cultural backgrounds and experiences are integrated throughout the year into lesson plans.</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There are activities that introduce unfamiliar cultural backgrounds and experiences.</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is an effort to foster strong relationships between special education and classroom teachers, including collaborative curriculum development.</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children are taught by a diverse teaching staff.</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There are many groups, cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences represented among the school’s parent and community volunteers.</strong></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Assessing Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clearly defined curricular goals have been developed and clearly stated for each group/subgroup of children.</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School has in place standardized and systematic method(s) for assessing children's progress toward curricular goals within and across K-2 grades.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments address and are aligned with all areas of school curriculum.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments cover a wide spectrum of behaviors and intellectual capacities (e.g. knowledge, skills, thinking and reasoning, problem solving).</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and subgroup reports of children’s progress on curricular goals are prepared to identify and inform instruction.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports on children’s curricular progress are available to staff on a timely basis for use in informing instructional decision making.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment results for individual children are shared with the child's parents on a regular basis.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School goals in areas other than child outcomes (e.g., parent involvement, attendance, teacher professional development) are assessed using standardized, systematic methods.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of classroom experiences is assessed using standardized, systematic, method(s) (e.g., classroom environments ratings, classroom interaction analysis, and classroom climate measures), rather than being based on a “walk through.”</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School improvement goals are based on results of standardized, systematic assessments, such as those mentioned above.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress towards school improvement goals is evaluated annually.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School makes data on overall student performance and progress toward other school goals available to the community on a regular basis.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please describe how state and federal policy has affected leadership; transition; teacher supports; engaging environments; effective curricula; family, school, and community partnerships; respect for diversity, and assessment of progress. You can comment on as few or as many topics as you choose.

Do you have any additional comments about your school’s readiness for children?
APPENDIX B

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY ZIP CODE

Total Number of Respondents, by Zip Code

Schools by Zip Code
- No schools in study
- No respondents
- 1 respondents
- 2 respondents
- 3 respondents
- 4 respondents
- Ohio Counties
APPENDIX C

TOTAL NUMBER OF SAMPLED SCHOOLS BY COUNTY

[Map showing the total number of sampled schools by county in Ohio, with different colors representing different ranges of school counts.]
APPENDIX D

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY COUNTY