University of Cincinnati

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I, Felicia Steagall, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Urban Educational Leadership.

It is entitled:
From Children of poverty to Children of Hope: Exploring the Characteristics of High-Poverty High-Performing Schools, Teachers, Leadership and the Factors That Help Them Succeed in Increasing Student Achievement

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From Children of Poverty to Children of Hope: Exploring the Characteristics of High-Poverty High-Performing Schools, Teachers, Leadership and the Factors That Help Them Succeed in Increasing Student Achievement

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (Ed.D)

in the Urban Educational Leadership Program of the Division of Educational Studies and Leadership of the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

By

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Committee Chair: Dr. Lionel Brown
ABSTRACT
This research study was developed to gather an understanding of what characteristics as well as the perceived experiences of leaders and teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools. Further, to focus on and learn what characteristics along with practices leaders and teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools are doing that transforms kids at risk to children of promise. What practices and characteristics enable them to be successful despite the odds being stack against them? The purpose of the study is to examine high poverty; high performing schools and investigates the environmental and personnel characteristics that supported their success. Investigating the role and characteristics of the school’s principal and teachers it is hoped that the information from this study would lead to other leaders and teachers understanding how others are successful in high-poverty, high performing schools and influence other schools with similar demographics, where children who live in poverty are not succeeding to succeed.

After this study of high poverty, high performing schools my research should add to the knowledge about rigorous curriculum and relevant instruction in high poverty schools since the fact that there is a growing population of low socioeconomic status students who are beginning to affect a large numbers of school districts. Additionally, the significance of this study will allow schools to have a blueprint on how to close the achievement gap between races and incomes. Schools need to start using strategies that address the achievement problems of students in high poverty schools students in high poverty schools.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Cleo Steagall, who departed this world October 19, 2003. She was a phenomenal woman and my best friend. This work is also dedicated to my heart and the love of my life, my son Colby Dexter Penn. Colby is my blessing from above. His smile is grand and his heart is big. He is the only person who knows what my heart feels like from the inside and from the outside. To my sisters Angie, Tamara, and Brandi who support me no matter what. To my father, who I love very much, thank you for my life. To Aunts Joann, Arlene and Delores who have stepped in as second moms since my mother is now in heaven. To my friends who have never doubted my abilities even when I did. Thank you all! I love you all and thank you for blessing me with your presence.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, and foremost, all praise, honor, and glory goes to the greatest teacher and leader in my life the Lord Jesus Christ who makes all things possible through his unfailing grace and mercy. The Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has brought me out the darkness into the light; sparing His mercy and His grace. To my committee members who have my deepest gratitude and appreciation. Thank you for hanging in there with me from day one and for realizing the potential for excellence in me, even as I struggled to finish this doctoral program. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, guidance, and your brilliant minds with me. Thank you for being patient and understanding with me. Each of you has taught me the art of scholarly thinking while always requiring excellence. A sincere thank you is extended to all my committee members and the faculty at University of Cincinnati for maintaining high academic standards and genuinely caring about all students.

To my son, Colby Dexter Penn you have been my inspiration since the moment you were born. I love you! Thank you mommy, my angel, and daddy for exemplifying an enduring love for learning that has been passed to all of your children and grandchildren. To my sisters, I am thankful for growing and learning with you. Thank you to Dr. Mark Gooden, a great mentor. Thank you to my friends and family who have continually shared their wisdom and encouragement so I would be successful. Thanks! You ALL did it!
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Education is about creating successful learners and learning experiences for all students, regardless of race, class, or gender (Fullan, 1993 as cited in Palmatier, 1999). Often educators, parents, community leaders, and business groups must take a look at schools and the changing needs of students. These students have the right to a good education. There are far too many cases of schools being labeled failures. Countless numbers of people believe that children from low income, impoverished schools are disadvantaged and not capable of performing well academically. This is a concern that Kati Haycock (1999), director of The Education Trust in Washington, DC, expressed when she wrote, “Teachers and principals in high poverty schools… tell us that, these standards you’re talking about may be fine for some kids, but certainly not for the kind of kids that we have in our school” (p. i). Haycock (1999) cautions: “Leaders at all levels— administrators, school boards, legislators—often make policies about things like assessments, graduation requirements, accountability systems and the like, that at their core, expect less of poor children and poor schools” (p. i).

As public schools struggle to meet the challenges of improving student achievement in schools, they are confronted with a multitude of conditions that impact and determine whether or not schools are successful in educating all. It is difficult work to turn around low performing schools in an impoverished community (Jerald, 2001). Usually, schools with high poverty rates struggle to educate children successfully. These high poverty schools have a history of low academic expectations for students. These schools have been previously thought of as having unreachable children. More than 20 years ago, educators began exploring how schools with high numbers of children from low-income families could be as successful in raising performance and
achievement to the levels present in more advantaged communities and schools (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

Research that demonstrates the academic success of children in high-poverty schools must be shared with the major stakeholders in these communities for the purpose of showing that these students should be afforded the opportunity to prove they can experience academic success regardless of race, class and gender. Research is the key to understanding successful school reform (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Becoming a high-performing school takes years of continued commitment. Researchers have found that high poverty-high-performing schools have a number of shared characteristics. The literature has identified various characteristics of improving and becoming an effective school. Educational reformers and theorists have created programs and processes for assisting schools in creating and maintaining those conditions to help increase student learning (Jerald, 2001).

**Background of Study**

Education is supposed to be an inalienable right promised to all Americans. The United States, being one of the leading countries in technology and one of the greatest countries in the world, has created two education systems. These systems are separate and unequal. Because of these two unequal systems, many issues have surfaced. One such issue is what we call the achievement gap (Christie, 2002). The achievement gap recognizes the difference in academic performance between groups of students (Christie, 2002). Some research has documented the existence of an achievement gap between students of color, specifically African Americans and their White counterparts (Haycock, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Marzano, 2003). The achievement gap is used to explain the troubling performance gaps between many African-American and Hispanic
students at the lower end of the performance scale and their non-Hispanic white peers and the similar academic differences between students from poverty stricken and well-off families (Christie, 2002). The achievement gap is illustrated in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates (Christie, 2002). The achievement gap has become a crucial point of educational reform efforts (Christie, 2002). For a long time, the growing achievement gap between white students and minority students remained unaddressed leading to more and more failing schools (Christie, 2002). Some of the research states that the lack of success for students in public schools socially and academically is not mainly indicative of a problem with public school students, their families, or their community, but is more indicative of a problem with the school’s treatment of the students (Christie, 2002).

Many states are experiencing demographic changes toward a mainly minority school population (Murdock, 2005; Murdock, White, Hoque, Pecotte, You, & Balkan, 2002). The demographic change and the obvious failure of the public schools to ensure a high level of academic performance for all students has caused a lot of concern as well as lead to large amount of students dropping out of school. It has also stimulated a variety of responses about how to improve low-performing schools where the student population is mainly comprised of minorities (Center for Public Policy Priorities, 2004). Patterns of inequality in education are drawn from the longstanding American traditions of discrimination based on various factors such as race, ethnicity, social class, income, and gender (Allen & Chung 2000). As a result of these factors, educators maintain the notion of patterns of discrimination with their declaration that America’s present racial and ethnic truth is based on a “history that included the enslavement of Africans, the conquest of Indians and Mexicans, the exploitation of Asian and other nonwhite labor, and past-and continuing-racial/ethnic discrimination” (Allen & Chung, 2000, p.100). According to
Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006), the United States of America is riddled with a legacy of educational injustice based on race, class, and gender. These educational failures or inequities have been shown in various ways based on different classifications of minorities.

Educational school reform during the past thirty years has acknowledged the quality and structure of leadership and teaching as significant factors contributing to improving overall student achievement (Beaudin, Thompson, & Jacobson, 2002). With the start and execution of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), educators have been held responsible for encouraging higher standards for all students especially in the areas of student achievement on standardized tests. The NCLB Act was intended to change the culture of America’s public schools by closing the huge achievement gap in order to present more flexibility, give parents more alternatives, and educate students based on what works (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

From 2007–2008, there were 16,122 schools that were high-poverty schools. This means that a large amount of the students in public schools were eligible for free or reduced lunch. As a result of shifts in the economy, the percentage of high-poverty schools has increased over the years. This increase was from 12 percent in 1999–2000 to 17 percent in 2007–2008. From 2007–2008, approximately 20 percent of elementary school students and 6 percent of secondary school students attended high-poverty public schools. In many public schools, three quarters of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch which is a key indicator of a school being a high poverty school. As a result of this, children at these schools are less likely to attend college or be taught by teachers with advanced degrees. Public schools are responsible for educating all students well regardless of their race class, or gender. However, public schools have historically had greater success educating middle-to-upper income, white students than children who live in
poverty and minority students. Nearly all the worst-performing schools in the nation are high-poverty schools (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

**Problem Statement**

Many times a child’s school experience may either intensify or counteract the adverse effects of poverty (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Often times high-poverty schools tend to score lower on assessments of student achievement, have higher dropout rates, and lower rates of school attendance than low-poverty schools (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Concerns for the success of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have been a focus of the federal government, state officials, and local educators as well as local programs for decades. However, the achievement gap continues to widen between students from high income families and those students from low income families in America’s public schools (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

In the United States, there are thousands of public schools concentrated predominantly in high-poverty communities who are failing to attain the most basic educational goals (US Department of Government). In an article by Thomas Friedman (2009) in the *New York Times*, he writes, “Today, educationally, we are not a nation at risk. We are a nation in decline” (Friedman, T., 2009). It has been reported that about 5,000 schools are now in need of restructuring for failure to meet the terms of the No Child left Behind Act, and this number continues to grow rapidly (Friedman). While some high-poverty schools with substantial amounts of minority students do promote high academic achievement, this trend has not made its way across most schools with similar demographics (Friedman, T., 2009).

In the field of education, there are many stories of great inner city schools that have achieved impressive results against the odds. These schools, which are located in communities
confronted by poverty, violence, and other social problems, have attained academic results that far exceed the media’s and public's stereotypical views or common expectations of high poverty schools. These high poverty schools have defied the usual perceptions about what is possible in schools with high percentages of minorities who are affected by poverty. These high poverty schools have inspired both the awe and envy of other educators who serve the same population, as they accomplish what some have not dared to dream possible. Children, regardless of their color, their income level or home environment, can learn. In spite of the barriers facing schools located high poverty areas, there are some schools that seem to transcend above the issues previously described. There are many schools that have been recognized as the highest performing schools despite the odds. Why do these schools continue to excel while other high-poverty schools struggle?

**Propose Study**

Bearing in mind all the social impacts on children who live in poverty, school officials, educators, and other staff members are being held solely accountable for the academic success of students. Unfortunately, children who live in poverty and attend high poverty schools arrive at school with worries about their basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter and have a harder time focusing on learning. Too many children who live in poverty are enrolled in schools that are destined for failure (Ciofi, 2003; Towns, Henderson, & Serpel, 2002). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of what characteristics as well as the perceived experiences of leaders and teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools help them succeed. Further, the goal is to focus on and learn what practices leaders and teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools are implementing that transforms kids at risk to the children of promise.
What practices and characteristics enable them to be successful despite the odds stacked against them? The intent is to examine high poverty, high-performing schools and investigate the environment and personal characteristics that supported their success. Furthermore, by investigating the role and characteristics of the school’s principal and teachers it is hoped that the information from this study will lead to other leaders and teachers understanding how to successfully educate students in high-poverty, low performing schools. Central themes within my research come from themes within feminist pedagogy which includes personal experience, giving teachers and principal a voice, an ethic of caring in school as well as the classroom environments, authority or power of the teacher as well as the principal on the student, the identity as shifting positionality, how to deal with differences based on race, ethnicity, ability, and how knowledge is constructed in high poverty schools (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009; Tisdell, 2005).

Basically, this study looks at what common characteristics are shared among high performing, high poverty schools that obviously impact the achievement of all students. This study will provide a body of knowledge for low-performing, high poverty schools that will help them improve the performance of their students. This study investigates how high-poverty, high performing schools managed to show high academic achievement despite the odds. Hopefully, this study will provide a blueprint of information for concerned teachers and leaders in high poverty schools. This study will work to get the procedural knowledge that will be helpful to other schools with the same student populations, school sizes, and community types. To summarize, this study concentrates on what characteristics, practices, policies, and belief systems led to improved student performance in a high poverty school setting. The more that people become aware of the success stories of the leaders, teachers, and communities in successful high-
poverty schools, the better the odds are of increasing the belief that students and schools everywhere should have the chance to experience success in academics in a high poverty school.

**Research Questions**

- Do high poverty, high performing schools have common characteristics or inputs, processes and outcomes that help these schools succeed and improve student achievement?
- What are the characteristics or inputs high poverty, high performing school leaders, and teachers have and what are the leaders perceived roles in their schools?
- How do high poverty, high performing school leaders and teachers perceive their roles in high performing schools and how do they understand their processes, behaviors or practices as it relates to increasing student achievement in their schools?
- How do high poverty, high performing school teachers perceive and perform their roles in high performing schools and how do they understand their processes, behaviors or practices as it relates to increasing student achievement in their schools?
### Table 1 Review of High-Poverty, High-Performing School Research

#### Research Base

<table>
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<tr>
<th>National Reports</th>
<th>Clear &amp; Shared</th>
<th><strong>High Standards &amp;</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective School</strong></th>
<th><strong>Characteristics of High Performing Schools</strong></th>
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**Key:**
- X: Explicitly identified as key finding or element in discussion of findings
- *: Inferred or identified indirectly in descriptions
- O: Identified as important by noting the absence or lack thereof
Explanation of Framework

The purpose of a good education is to guarantee that every child has a chance to be successful in life as well as in school. However, some children from the start have the odds stacked against children. Many of our children today live in high-poverty environments. Some of these children by the age of 3 have heard 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers. As a result of this, by the start of kindergarten, children from high poverty neighborhoods are three times more likely to score in the bottom quartile on assessments of reading, math and general knowledge than other children their age in more affluent schools (http://archive.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/high-poverty4pgr.pdf). This gap only increases throughout these students’ lives and in school. A good example of this gap occurs in the fourth-grade. Students in the fourth grade who live in high poverty and low-income homes score three years below their more advantaged peers. This gap continues to escalate through middle school and high school years for both academics and social aspects. To close this achievement gap, children need a quality education that is comparable to their more affluent peers. Children from poverty need more than the average child ((http://archive.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/high-poverty4pgr.pdf)).

In order for a high poverty school to succeed, these schools must understand that successful school system has many elements that work together to achieve high academics for all children regardless of race, class and gender. High poverty schools are faced with many issues, challenges and obstacles in working with their students. One such issue is poverty. Poverty is cycle and sometimes student who live in these high poverty areas are not able to break the cycle due to the lack of a good education. Since education is the key to success, educators have to help
break the cycle of poverty through education ((http://archive.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/high-poverty4pgr.pdf)).

Therefore, high poverty schools must recognize that major parts of a successful high poverty school start with the school, the teachers and the leaders. After, understanding this, then we must understand the elements of the educational system that ensure these systems are successful. These elements are the inputs, which are the characteristics of the schools, the teachers and the leaders; the processes, which are the practices of the schools, the teachers and the leaders; and outcomes of the schools, the teachers and the leaders. Often times, these entities in schools work completely independently and without reference to one another. Consequently, the joining of these elements contributes to successful schools in high poverty areas (source?). Figure 1 is the framework upon which this study was based. High performing schools, teachers and leaders have specific inputs or characteristics that help them succeed. High performing schools, teachers and leaders have certain processes or practices they implement that ensure success. Finally, high performing schools, teachers and leaders have a shared desired outcome which is a successful school and being effective at their jobs.
Figure 1 Framework

- **Inputs**
  - (Teachers, Leaders and Schools)

- **Processes**
  - (Teachers, Leaders and Schools)

- **Outcomes**
  - (Teachers, Leaders and Schools)

- **High Performing Schools**
Figure 2- High Poverty, High Performing Leaders

Inputs
- Instructional Leadership
- Change agent
- Collaboration and Shared Leadership

Processes
- Implements A clear mission and vision
- Shapes School Culture

Outcomes
- High Performing Schools
- Effective Leaders
Figure 3-High Poverty, High Performing Schools

Inputs

- Clear sense of Purpose
- High Expectations

Processes

- Curriculum instruction aligned with state standards
- Focus in achievement
- High levels of collaboration and communication

Outcomes

- High Performing Schools

Figure 4-High-Poverty, High-Performing Teachers

Inputs

- High Expectations
- Teacher Efficacy

Processes

- Differentiate instruction
- Culturally relevant instruction
- Supportive Learning Environment

Outcomes

- High Performing Schools Effective Teachers
Delimitations

A high-poverty, high-performing school that is successful is sometimes hard to find. Therefore, high-poverty, high-performing schools that have sustained and/or created success will be the focus of analysis in this study. Furthermore, this study will explore only one small piece of the possible field of study investigating the ability to create as well as the ability to have sustainability of being a high-poverty, high-performing school in an era motivated by state and national accountability mandates. This study of high-poverty, high-performing schools will not provide a prescriptive approach to the process of creating and sustaining high-poverty, high-performing school. In order to further examine the phenomenon of high-poverty, high-performing schools as well as the coordinated acts that educators used to create, promote, and sustain successful students in high-performing, high-poverty schools, additional study will be needed in similar contexts.

Limitations

“Generalization is not a goal in case studies, for the most part, because discovering the uniqueness of each case is the main purpose” (Hays, 2004, p. 218). Qualitative research tries to find a way to understand the specific depth of a case and does not seek to find out what is generally true of the many. As Stake (1995) notes: “The real business of a case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does… the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself” (p. 8). The schools profiled in this study consecutively attained effective or excellent status for at least 4 years in the Ohio accountability system, which rates school performance based on reading, writing, mathematics, and attendance scores. These
aspects closely defined the criteria for sustainability factors and success for this study. This study is limited in that it concentrates on the descriptions or characteristics and the historical reflections of individuals involved in the process of creating as well as sustaining the success in a high-poverty high-performing school. Consequently, the findings from this study are explicit to only the context described.

Furthermore, the results of the survey portion of this study were predicated on self-perceptions of the teachers and principals regarding their styles. It is possible that the teachers and principals might define themselves differently than their followers. Also, many prevailing variables might affect student performance on standardized tests, factors over which the school has no control. Finding a direct link between the teachers or principals and student performance is difficult at best.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms were operationally defined for the purpose of this study, based mostly on the EdSource online glossary (2007).

**Achievement Gap**: Consistent disparity in student achievement between impoverished students of color and their white counterparts.

**Effective School**: A school where the proportion of low-income children demonstrating academic mastery is virtually identical to the proportion of middle-class children who do so.

**Equity**: Educational impartiality that ensures all students receive fair treatment and have access to the services they need in order to receive high-quality education.

**High performing**: School-wide trajectory of API and AYP growth over three years which includes all subgroups; minimal movement of 2 deciles within 3-5 years.

**High-poverty**: Minimum of 75% of students on free/reduced lunch.
Strong The strong teacher and leader definition is holding all the entities together despite the odds being stacked against you. Never letting anyone define your ability to succeed and overcome obstacles.

Implications of Study

After this study of high poverty, high performing schools, my research should add to the knowledge about rigorous curriculum and relevant instruction in high poverty schools. Additionally, the significance of this study will allow schools to have a blueprint on how to close the achievement gap between races and incomes. Schools need to start using strategies that address the achievement problems of students in high poverty school students in high poverty schools. Public schools will be held responsible for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and public schools must be proactive in seeking ways that help all students succeed. This study seeks to determine what characteristics were found most often among high performing schools teachers and leaders. One of the fundamental purposes of public education is to provide opportunities for all children to learn and excel in school. Regrettably, while gaps in educational outcomes have certainly improved considerably over the past half-century, children who live in poverty and minority students are still well behind their more advantaged counterparts. Furthermore, the classification of high-performing or “beating the odds” schools can have a powerful effect on educators by compelling them to obtain greater success with the students in their care. This may help to change the attitude of educators from one of obtaining the minimum accountability standards in order to stay out of dilemmas to that of pushing them to reach higher grounds in their education. This study might be the inspiration to affect change in schools where the
teachers and leaders have left the media and the negative critics influence their views and their drive to be successful.

**Chapter Summary**

There are a total of five chapters in this dissertation. Chapter One provides an introduction and general overview of the dissertation by describing the significance of the study and the research question being explored. In Chapter Two, a review of the related literature on the characteristics that would be found most often among high performing schools, the viability of educational change, and theoretical frameworks on institutionalization are presented. Chapter Three describes the research design and the data analysis of the study. The research design will be a case study using structured interviewing techniques, observations, and document analysis. Chapter Four provides the findings from the research. Finally, Chapter Five will present a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Characteristics of High Poverty, High Performing Schools

The Francis Marion University School of Education for teachers of children of poverty has defined the expression “Children of Poverty” as:

Young persons who currently live (or whom have lived a significant period of their childhood) in an environment in which one or more of the resources identified as important for one to develop potential and function effectively in society is unavailable (http://images.acswebnetworks.com/2017/78/GraduateHandbook9_1_10.pdf)

Some researchers say that children living in poverty are more likely to fall behind. It has also been said that:

Their classmates in school, to be assigned to lower ‘tracks’ in education, to be retained in grade, to be labeled as ‘problem’ students, to be absent, truant, and to drop out of school altogether, and—over time—to earn lower scores in standardized tests of knowledge and achievement Education in America is falling short when it comes to preparing all children for the future. America’s public schools are supposed to educate all students but historically America’s public schools have had better success educating middle-to-upper income and white students than children who live in poverty and minority students. As a way to improve our current educational system, educators have begun focusing on increased accountability and a need for higher academic standards. This is because students in high-poverty schools throughout the nation tend to struggle academically. However, some schools do succeed in assisting their students in achieving high academics, regardless of their background or socioeconomic conditions.
In order for a school to succeed, the school must understand that successful school system has many elements that work together to achieve a defined outcome. These systems are the inputs, which are the characteristic of the school; the processes, which are the practices in the schools; and desired outcome, which is a high performing school. Often times, these entities in schools work completely independently and without reference to one another. Consequently, the joining of these elements contributes to successful schools in high poverty areas.

**High Poverty, High Performing School Inputs**

Results from research completed by Swanson (2001) for the Urban Institute demonstrate that 38% of all public high school students fail to complete high school. In this report, race, gender, and socioeconomic gaps are shown:

Students from historically disadvantaged minority groups (American Indian, Hispanic, and Black) have little more than a fifty-fifty chance of finishing high school with a diploma. By comparison, graduation rates for Whites and Asians are 75 and 77 percent nationally. Males graduate from high school at a rate 8 percent lower than female students. Graduation rates for students who attend school in poverty, racially segregated, and urban school districts lag from 15 to 18 percent behind their peers. (Swanson, 2001, p. 1)

Understanding high poverty, high performing schools requires one to understand how the school inputs ensure high academic achievement. These inputs are characteristics of the school. Research has proven that certain characteristics were found most often among high performing schools with high poverty rates (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). The research suggests that effective high-poverty, high-performing schools have high expectations for all students and staff
members, which lead to high academic achievement for their students. Effective high-poverty, high-performing schools focus on academic achievement and have a clear mission and shared focus (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

**High Expectations.** Expectations can be often refer to as a double edged sword. Many educational researchers have found that high-performing schools normally have a culture of high expectations. These high expectations usually motivate students to perform at elevated levels and support increased student achievement (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004; Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2002). Furthermore, faculty and staff are expected to embrace the culture of high expectations (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). There are also high expectations for students with special needs (University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, 2004).

High expectations for all students can change a school drastically. The belief that all students can learn is a dominant factor in successful high-poverty schools. Many reviews of literature reveal that high-performing, high-poverty schools have high expectations for all students and uphold the notion that schools can and do make a difference in student outcomes (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997;; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2000; Ragland, Clubine, Constable, & Smith, 2002; Symonds, 2003). In high-performing, high-poverty schools rather than blame students’ academic failure on family background or other extenuating conditions, the team at successful schools commit themselves to ensuring that all students succeed regardless of the socioeconomic status of their family.

A research study of 26 flourishing high-poverty schools in Texas described the school culture as one of “no excuses” (Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997). In these high-performing,
in high-poverty schools, no one would accept any reason for lowering student expectations and believed the schools could “succeed with any student.” This opinion was repeated in many other studies (Ragland, 2002). Researchers of high-achieving, high-poverty schools in North Carolina saw a pervasive “culture of achievement” and detailed that “principals set high goals for the school and the teachers [which] appeared to filter through to students and parents” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2000). This trickle-down effect was also noted in a study of high-performing, high-poverty schools in Kentucky where researchers showed that principals held high expectations for faculty and staff which then converted into teachers’ high expectations for students (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Kannapel & Clements (2005) held the conviction “that all students could succeed academically and that faculty and staff were capable of making this happen” (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). In another study with similar findings, Symonds compared the results of surveys of teachers from schools lowering the achievement gap versus schools maintaining or widening the achievement gap and established that teachers in successful high-performing, high-poverty schools were more likely to cite “inside-school factors (such as reading programs or instructional strategies) instead of outside-school factors (such as parental involvement or home support of student learning)” (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005) as examples of what it takes to close the achievement gap (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005).

In a successful high-poverty, high-performing school, there the expectation that all students can learn and master essential skills. Thus, all students receive attention. The twenty-first century society is becoming more diverse and more complex. In the twenty-first century, maintaining high learning standards and the vision of educational success for all students are the goals of public schools across America. In this fast changing, technological world, all students
will need to acquire a varied set of skills that will help them achieve success in school and in life. It has been said that:

"Perhaps more than any other variable, low expectations on the part of school staff have been correlated with poor student academic outcomes and vice versa: high expectations—with the support necessary to meet them—directly relate to positive academic outcomes … Schools which establish high expectations for all youth—and give them the support necessary to achieve them—have high rates of academic success. These schools also have lower rates of problem behaviors such as dropping out, alcohol and other drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and delinquency than other schools. Conveying positive and high expectations in a classroom and school environment occurs at several levels. The most obvious and powerful is at the belief level, where the teacher and other school staff communicate the message that the student has everything he or she needs to be successful . . . Schools also communicate expectations in the way they are structured and organized. The curriculum that supports resilience respects the way humans learn. Such a curriculum is thematic, experiential, challenging, comprehensive, and inclusive of multiple intelligences and multiple perspectives—especially those of silent groups. Instruction that supports resilience focuses on a broad range of learning styles; builds from perceptions of student strengths, interests, and experience; and, is participatory and facilitative, creating ongoing opportunities for self-reflection, critical inquiry problem solving, and dialogue (http://www.wested.org/chks/pdf/rydm_aggregate.pdf)."

High poverty schools that have high expectations for all students and give students the support necessary to achieve these expectations have higher rates of academic success. When schools set high expectations for all students, students work harder and aim higher because they
learn to believe in themselves and in their futures. From the principals to the cafeteria workers, all school stakeholders have important roles in helping students feel supported and respected. When high poverty, high performing schools clearly communicate expectations to all students, goals are identified, benchmarks are set, and students understand exactly how they can succeed (http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/50251_NEA.pdf).

A Clear and Shared Focus. Schools are intricate places, and teaching is a difficult as well as a challenging job. Some schools do not have a clear and shared sense of purpose that focuses on student learning and high achievement. Schools without a clear and shared sense of purpose become fragmented (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005) because they do not have a clear and shared sense of purpose, which causes teachers to lose motivation and improvement efforts often fail. Without a clear idea or concept of what is important, work can become dissipated and be undirected. Without a clear sense of direction, the processes of planning and decision-making can be hard and uncoordinated (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005).

Having a clear and shared focus in a high poverty school is identifying the core purpose of the school. This is not only a critical element of effective school systems but also successful businesses and other entities in the world (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005). Any flourishing organization needs a sense of what goals its members are working toward (Peters & Waterman, 1982). In the 21st century, the action of strategic planning from the business sector has heightened the attention to mission and vision. The question then becomes for schools: Is everyone using the same roadmap? Walsh and Sattes insist:
A shared vision connects people in the school community around a common idea. A strong, shared vision actually helps us focus our attention on the possibilities and potentials—not the problems and pitfalls. The vision lays the foundation block for the culture of the school; it has great power to energize and mobilize (Walsh, J. A., & Sattes, B. D., 2000).

A lot of isolation occurs among teachers, between teachers and administrators and between parents and teachers. Yet, research shows that in successful schools and organizations, people feel connected to each other and to the work of the school or organization. An important characteristic of a high performing successful school is that everyone in the school understands and concurs with what the school is trying to do. These schools or organizations have a clear vision, expressed through particular goals and actions that contribute to improved student achievement (Cotton, 2000; Levine & Lezotte, 1990).

In low performing, high poverty schools, the goals of the schools often get lost in the rituals of schools that have been created and then largely forgotten. Goals are and can become a vital piece of the fabric of the school when all activities are aimed at achieving them (Marks, Doane, & Secada, 1996). Effective schools begin by naming and communicating a set of goals and then executing those goals while actively seeking the support of key stakeholders in the school. These key stakeholders consist of the faculty and staff of the school, parents, students and surrounding members of the community. Having shared goals can help a school focus needs on assessment activities which then produce data that provides a solid base for informed decision making about instructional issues (Corallo & McDonald, 2002). For the most part, goals prompt and sustain continuous improvement in schools.
A lot of times schools can get bogged down in their improvement efforts by having too many goals. Schools can adopt several programs at the same time, which can result in teachers trying to do too many new things at once. These improvement strategies often result in failure to build capacity and lack of a clear focus. Furthermore, not having a clear sense of the definitions of the words vision, mission, and goals, as well as not having a connection to the others can slow schools down. As Peterson (1995) notes:

A vision means an image of what the school can and should become. It is deeply embedded in values, hopes, and dreams. A mission statement is more specific and often defines what the school is trying to accomplish. . . . Goals and objectives are still more specific . . . and can be used to focus change and improvement efforts. (p.2)

Effective and high performing schools explain a clear and shared understanding of their goals. These objectives are normally focused on student learning, sustained improvement and problem solving (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005). High performing, high poverty schools create harmony among staff about the aims and values of the school and how they can be constantly put into practice. Steps are taken to ensure that the curriculum, teaching and learning and professional learning arrangements are consistent with the school's vision and goals. Relationships between staff, students, parents and the wider community need also to reflect the school's goals (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005).

Schools that have good educational missions give educators stronger motivation and provide parents with a vivid picture of the school value system. Low-performing, high-poverty schools can get sidetracked toward programs that do not work (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005). They can have no focus on control and have uncoordinated decisions especially when these schools provide education to a large proportion of at-risk
students. A clear vision and a shared focus or common mission will identify the type of learning to be achieved and what will help keep the school and the efforts of its staff and students on target to increase student learning (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005).

When a school has a mission or vision that is designed and implemented well, it brings forth clarity to decision-making that makes everyone's job easier. DuFour and Eaker, argue that every decision in a building should be held up against a school's mission and vision before being implemented. They state:

When educators have a clear sense of purpose, direction and the ideal future state of their school, they are better able to understand their ongoing roles within the school. This clarity simplifies the decision making process and empowers all members of the staff to act with greater confidence. Rather than constantly checking with their bosses for approval, employees can simply ask, "Is this decision or action in line with the vision? and then act on their own. (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p.84)

DuFour and Eaker (1998) go on to assert that a school's mission and vision statement should provide "an agenda for action" and this agenda for action is A shared vision creates an agenda for action. A vision statement enables a faculty to assess current policies, practices, programs, and performance indicators and then to identify discrepancies between the existing conditions in the school and those described in the vision statement” (p. 84). More importantly, DuFour and Eaker (1998) also believe that keeping a mission and vision at the center of a learning community brings attention that may just take a bit of work and a bit of confrontation:

If the vision and values of the school are to be communicated in a clear and unequivocal manner, those who violate the vision and values must be confronted. In an ideal world, every member of the staff would be willing to challenge a colleague who was acting in a
way that was contrary to collective commitments. In the real world of schools, this task will most likely fall to the principals. It is critical that principals fulfill this leadership responsibility if vision and values are to be reinforced. (p. 112)

High performing, high poverty schools usually have a keen sense of their mission and a deep understanding of the population of students they serve (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005). High performing high poverty schools have to become “specialists” in order to, understand their students’ common traits but also be able to appreciate and develop their individual differences using a well thought out vision and mission (Kannapel & Clements, 2003; Kannapel & Clements 2005).

**High Poverty-High Performing School Processes**

It is a challenge to ensure that all students learn and every stakeholder involved in the learning process is held to high expectations. Furthermore, empowering students and providing all students with the knowledge as well as the skills they need to take responsibility for themselves and their futures, to deal with life's challenges, to function successfully in society, and to be creators of knowledge is difficult in high poverty schools. Therefore, educators must be able to create equitable opportunities for all students while advocating for them. They need to ensure that every student has the right to learn while providing them with the appropriate challenge and relevant learning opportunities. The effective school processes can be thought of as the school practices. These practices range from practices in aligning curriculum and instruction with state standards to high levels of collaboration and communication as well as focusing on achievement.
Curriculum, Instruction and Assessments Aligned with State Standards. In America, the educational needs have grown over the past decades. Presently, only a small amount of students receive an education that prepares them appropriately for the everyday challenges of the world like college, skilled careers, and being an informed citizen (ACT, 2008). Yet the ideals of fairness, democracy, and economic growth require us to offer such an education to all students. These requests might be considered as a perplexing attempt to require educators to do the impossible (ACT, 2008).

In a high poverty, high performing school, curriculum, instruction and assessment need to be aligned with state standards. Standards are declarations that define what all students have to know, comprehend and be able to do. Standards shape the framework of the curriculum by shaping the most important ideas, concepts, and skills (Shifting Gears, p.23.) The state standards are not the curriculum, but they are the groundwork for the curriculum. The curriculum is a plan of action developed for and by educators to use in classrooms where by the standards, content, and range and sequence of the content area are defined. The instruction demonstrates how to effectively as well as efficiently teach what students ought to know and be able to do. The alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in a high poverty, high performing school will add consistency and effectiveness to the learning. The meaning of alignment is to create a link between what is to be learned, the planned curriculum based on learning standards, what is really taught or what instruction is given, and assessment. Genuinely aligning the content, context, cognitive requirements of the curriculum, the instruction, and the assessment will impact student learning in a high poverty, high performing school. Furthermore, the match between what is taught and tested with the actual state standards is important. In the past twenty years, studies have indicated that the alignment of testing content and curriculum content is
extremely significant in explaining enhanced test scores (Cohen, 1987; Fenwick & Steffy, 2001). Additionally, one should align the curriculum and state tests as a means for leveling the “playing field” for children of poverty in failing schools (Fenwick & Steffy, 2001).

**Focus on Achievement.** High poverty schools focus on achievement in the classroom. One of the ways to do this is through effective instruction. Effective instruction is a factor that has an influence on student achievement. The instruction in the classroom is “where the rubber meets the road.” Changes in classroom practice are important in order to increase student learning. Many researchers have stated that educational reform often has stopped at the classroom door. As an example, Schmoker (2006) notes:

> [W]e know two things that constitute a truly historic opportunity for better schools: 1. Instruction itself has the largest influence on achievement (a fact still dimly acknowledged). 2. Most (though not all) instruction, despite our best intentions, is not effective but could improve significantly and swiftly through ordinary and accessible arrangements among teachers and administrators.

When focusing on student achievement, effective instruction is important. Also, to improve student learning, teachers and leaders must know their content, so that they can understand the scope and ideology of learning as well as have the ability to put into practice effective strategies and proper structures for improving student learning. Instruction is the “interactions” with teachers and students around content within a particular area of context or environment. Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003), emphasize that “instruction is a stream, not an event, and it flows and draws on environments—including other teachers and students, school leaders, parents, professionals, local districts, state agencies, and test and text publishers” (p.122.
They also state: “Instruction evolves as tasks develop and lead to others, as students’ engagement and understanding waxes and wanes and organization changes” (p.122).

Instructional strategies and structures are also important when schools focus on achievement. Researchers imply that instructional strategies, practices, and structures can be applied in all content areas and grade levels. More importantly, adaptive pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching includes some of the above strategies and structures and also aid in giving educators additional ways of supporting students. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) name strategies that have the potential to enhance student learning based on extensive research. These strategies include identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, reinforcing effort and providing recognition, homework and practice, nonlinguistic representations, cooperative learning, setting objectives and providing feedback, generating and testing hypotheses, and using cues, questions, and organizers (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001).

Hill and Flynn (2006) used this set of instructional strategies with English language learners and gave suggestions for the completion of each in their book Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners. More importantly, effective instructional structures are also important. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005) named structures that hold up and encourage active student learning. It is also important to have adaptive pedagogy. Darling-Hammond (2002) puts forward strategies for aiding individual student learning. Psychologist Robert Glaser developed adaptive pedagogy. It is a theory that “shifts teaching from a narrow approach, characterized by minimal variation in methods, to an approach that calls for a greater range of opportunities for success” (Darling-Hammond, 2002). The concept of adaptive
pedagogy is “adjusted to individuals—their backgrounds, talents, interests, and the nature of past performance” (Darling-Hammond, 2002).

The goal for many high-poverty, high-performing schools seems to be improving student achievement. A study of 26 successful high-poverty schools in Texas discovered that these schools shared a “strong focus on the academic success of every student” (Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997). Also, a study of 90/90/90 schools which are schools where 90 percent of students qualify for the free/reduced lunch program, 90 percent are from ethnic minorities and 90 percent achieved high academic standards indicated that schools that are 90/90/90 have “a laser-like focus on student achievement” with a “particular emphasis on improvement” (Reeves, 2003). In Kentucky, a study done on eight high-performing, high-poverty schools establish that all schools “had a strong focus on academics, instruction and student learning” (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). High poverty, high performing schools revealed the following characteristics: a strong focus on ensuring academic success for each student; a refusal to accept excuses for poor performance; a willingness to try a variety of strategies; rigorous and sustained endeavors to involve parents and the community; an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration; and a desire for continuous improvement and professional growth. There is no single plan or practice that can change low-performing schools into high poverty, high performing schools. Stakeholders must help schools select and maintain a logical improvement strategy appropriate to each school by focusing all schools on the need to improve curriculum and instruction with that focus on achievement.

**High Levels of Collaboration and Communication.** Webster’s dictionary defines the word collaboration as “working jointly with others or together, especially in an intellectual endeavor”. Collaboration is a word commonly used to express a variety of combined endeavors in effective
schools. Johnson acknowledges working cooperatively in schools is one dimension and collective participation in school governance as well as partnerships among schools and corporations for financial support and collaboration among schools and other public agencies to provide social services are other important dimensions (as cited in Pounder, 1998, p. 9).

In the context of collaboration among schools, it is important to focus primarily on collaboration among school students, staff, teachers, and principals. Little (1981) offers the following conceptualization of collaboration:

Adults in schools talk about practice. These conversations about teaching and learning are frequent, continuing, concrete, and precise. Adults in schools observe each other engaged in the practice of teaching and administration. These observations become the practice to reflect on and talk about. Adults engage together in work on curriculum by planning, designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum. Finally, adults in schools teach each other what they know about teaching, learning, and leading. Craft knowledge is revealed, articulated, and shared (as cited in Barth, 1990, p. 31).

According to Little:

Decisions tend to be better; implementation of decisions is better; there is a higher level of morale and trust among adults; adult learning is energized and more likely to be sustained. There is even some evidence that the motivation of students and their achievement rises, and evidence that when adults share and cooperate, students tend to do the same. (Barth, 1990, p. 31)

Since the 1980’s, the importance of collaboration for teacher efficacy and student achievement in the teacher work environment has been emphasized. For instance, in 1987 Rosenholtz identified “moving” and “stuck” schools. Moving schools were described by
consensus on goals, teacher sharing and equally helping one another, actively participating in
decision making connected to the teachers work, and chances to increase the teachers' own
learning. He stated that the majority of teachers in moving schools expressed a hopeful and
positive view of themselves and their capacity; they believed that “everything was possible”
(Rosenholtz, 1987).

Schmoker (2005) call the schools that constantly work together to search for and contribute to learning “communities of continuous inquiry and improvement, communities of practice, or professional learning communities” (p109). Schmoker (2005) goes on to suggest: “If there is anything that the research community agrees on, it is this: The right kind of continuous, structured collaboration improves the quality of schools and pays big, often immediate, dividends in student learning and professional morale in virtually any setting” (p.109). Nevertheless, only making surface changes in structure will not assure collaboration unless the relationships between the structures and the influence of instructional practice are made clear (Elmore, 2002). Schools must have “sustained opportunity and engagement” to get further than their differences to the position where they understand as well as learn from one another (Schmoker, 2005). Schools have multiple ways of fostering these relationships, encouraging the sharing of values that support learning, and structuring joint work of community members to tackle,” argues Knapp et al(Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 23).

There are many ways to implement collaboration and communication that helps to ensure a school's success. Usually, schools, “use common planning time for teachers, assign teams of teachers to groups of students, set aside regularly scheduled blocks of time for in-depth professional development, develop teacher work groups for given projects, and implementing professional development that promotes collaboration, such as faculty study groups and looking
at student work” (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p.23). The acts of collaborating and communicating are vital in the whole picture of school and community. A mutual give and take, a sense of a norm, and clear communication is essential in high-performing schools. Research shows that in high-performing schools students’ learning is improved when schools, families, and communities share goals (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 23). Also, when schools display mutual respect and trust, and come together in partnerships to promote the interests of students (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, ). All stakeholders are involved in the schools especially, students and their families, should be asked to participate in school relationships at all levels. The involvement should also be in the control, planning, program development, and implementation of day to day activities in the school. High-performing schools and districts connect families and communities in sustaining student learning, making significant decisions about students and schools, and sharing in the hard work of school improvement (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).

One of the beginning steps towards successful communication and collaboration is being acquainted with the importance of “listening to the public and creating dialogue,” says Wagner (2005), who describes the learning community as the “new village commons”. In Making the Grade, Wagner encourages schools and communities to come together in an effort to raise “social capital” required for helping students and families meet the challenges they often face in low performing or poor schools. In 2005, Constantino emphasized the significance of communication in school community partnerships. Constantino (2005), suggests that family members and schools “communicate regularly and clearly about information important to student success. Schools should inform families about standards and how they relate to the curriculum, learning objectives, methods of assessment, school programs, discipline codes, and student progress” (Constantino, 2005). He further recommends an assortment of ways for executing
communication. Great examples would be newsletters, handbooks, conferences, open houses, home visits, hotlines, internet, e-mail, and voice mail. He suggests that in-person contact and telephone calls are the most successful for two-way communication to occur. He emphasizes the need for language translations to be available whenever needed (Constantino, 2005). It is important to build relationships with individuals and groups. It is vital to keep the lines of communications open in efforts to develop alliances and coalitions for enhancing student learning, among other strategies to ensure the success of all students in a high-performing school (Knapp et al., 2003).

**High Poverty High Performing School Outcomes**

In the United States, failing schools, teachers, and principals are treated as local subjects and responsibility for improving them is given to those who the community serves (Noguera, 2003). This issue continues even if the resources to address the needs of children in poverty are not there. The state government has established academic standards and systems for holding schools accountable for student success (Blasi, 2001; Elmore, 1996). This accountability is in place despite the fact that it is widely recognized that there are many schools where the “opportunity to learn standards” have not been met (Oakes, 2002). However, the state government does find ways to commit resources to the growing penal system that stands ready to take in those who have encountered failure in failing schools (Noguera, 2003).

The uniformity of models of success and failure, both academic and economic, and the inevitability of these patterns causes a correlation with the race and poverty status of high poverty students. This might explain why the problems of America's high poverty public schools are written off as predictable (Noguera, 2003). Academic failure in high poverty schools may be
lamented by politicians and criticized by the media, but such posturing should not be confused with a real response to the problem (Noguera, 2003). Eventually, the lack of a concentrated and sustained effort to take action in failing high poverty public schools can only be made clear by understanding that America merely does not care that large numbers of children from high poverty, schools and neighborhoods are not properly educated, which brings forth the need for effective schools (Noguera, P., 2003).

For many years, successful schools in high poverty areas have been a focus of educational research. Successful schools in high poverty areas have increased understanding of effective school practice. Successful schools in high poverty areas have perceptive appeal because they look at what others are doing well and learn from them. Identifying “successful” schools is not an easy task. Schools in high poverty areas can be successfully turned around from failing and low-performing schools. These successful schools in high poverty areas focus on dramatic changes in the school curriculum. A great amount of concentration on the school curriculum and policies that relate to students in poverty are key findings in almost every study of high-performing, high-poverty schools (Noguera, P., 2003).

In high poverty, high performing schools, students benefit the most from school leaders and teachers that work jointly to make their education the top priority. High poverty, high performing schools encourage a positive learning climate in which everyone participates and is considered a major stakeholder who will aid in helping kids succeed. A positive atmosphere happens when school leaders and teachers support each other in the school.

When schools effectively work hard at having high levels of collaboration as well as communication, focus on high academic achievement for all students, the leaders in these schools and the teacher effectiveness are inevitably linked. Student in the school are the purpose,
the school is the setting, but the teachers and school leaders drive the process. The teachers and school leaders set the tone in schools with their attitudes and beliefs about the goals of the students’ education. Whatever the desired outcomes or the curriculum of a school, the effectiveness of the student as well as the school will not be achieved without the influence of leaders and teachers who challenge themselves and their students to work to their full potential.

**Teachers in High poverty, High Performing Schools**

In today’s society, teachers are facing increased accountability regarding achievement and must focus on developing educators and leaders with a style most likely to positively influence student achievement. Teacher and educational leadership programs must consider the style of leadership and teaching that is most effective in increasing students’ achievement and academic success in high poverty urban communities. The most important purpose of a good education is to make sure that every child has a chance to be successful in school as well as in life (Collins, 2001; Fullan 2001). However, from the beginning, the odds are stacked against children from high-poverty backgrounds from achieving their highest goals as well as their highest potential. As schools confront public demands for increased student achievement and performance, the daunting mission or task is particularly problematic for schools with higher poverty rates (Collins, 2001; Fullan 2001).

High-poverty, high-performing schools have a number of shared characteristics. The research literature has identified various teacher characteristics that help schools improve and become more effective teachers in effective schools. Educational reformers and theorists have created programs and processes for assisting schools in creating and maintaining those conditions to help increase student learning (Jerald, 2001). As we look at the characteristics that
teachers have in high poverty, high performing schools, we must look at exactly how much impact do teacher characteristics, processes or practices and the desired outcomes have on a student’s academic success.

**Teacher Inputs in High Poverty, High Performing Schools.**

Many experts looking for a way to help high poverty schools ask the question, what makes a teacher good in a high poverty school? In a high poverty school, a teacher has to be able to motivate a student to reach beyond his or her grasp. A good teacher in a high poverty school helps all children realize their strengths and encourages and challenges all students to learn through those strengths. This is difficult, but it is a day to day process.

The best teachers are those teachers who teach to the whole child, never allowing circumstances to affect their job. Good teachers in high poverty schools understand that education is not limited to just academic achievement, but it entails day to day doses of caring, embracing the idea that one size does not fit all, and possessing great communication skills, a sense of humor, and an active imagination. There are many measures one can use to describe a good teacher in a high-poverty school but these are just a few.

Students in high poverty schools are twice as likely as white students to be taught by out-of-field teachers (Education Trust, 2008; Boyd et al, 2007). Boyd et al (2007) suggest a combination of teacher characteristics makes a substantial difference. Schools seeking to raise achievement should consider seeking teachers with the observable characteristics. One such characteristic is that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs should communicate that all students can and will learn given set expectations (Carter, 2000; Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Another characteristic is a teacher efficacy that examines the factors that contribute to the confidence
teachers have to successfully ensure that all students will learn. High poverty, high performing schools revealed the following characteristics: a strong focus on ensuring academic success for each student; a refusal to accept excuses for poor performance; a willingness to try a variety of strategies; rigorous and sustained endeavors to involve parents and the community; an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration; and a desire for continuous improvement and professional growth. There is no single plan or new practice that can transform a low-performing school into a high poverty, high performing school. Stakeholders must help schools select and maintain a logical improvement strategy appropriate to each school by focusing all schools on the need to improve curriculum and instruction with that focus on achievement. It is necessary for success in these high-poverty, high-performing schools that teachers have high expectations that do not allow failure as an option and belief in themselves and their abilities to educate the students. This belief in their ability is called teacher efficacy.

High Expectations for All Students. Teachers in high poverty, high performing schools believe that all students can learn as well as meet high standards. This happens all while knowing that some students must overcome considerable barriers and these barriers are not seen as impossible. The idea that all students can learn is vital in high-poverty schools that are successful. The notion of expectations addresses several concepts. High expectation address content standards as the learning targets, performance standards which look at the question “how good is good enough?” and expectations as the confidence that students will meet both the content and performance standards that have been set (http://www.effectiveschools.org/standards.html).

Increasing student learning entails the actions and beliefs that students as well as teachers believe in the student’s ability to learn to at a high level using academic standards. In high
poverty schools changing people’s beliefs is often hard, thus one must begin with changing actions. Michael Fullan points out that, “We can act our way to new beliefs” (as cited in Saphier, 2005, p.105). According to Saphier (2005), “Belief that all students can do the rigorous academic work at high standards, even if they are far behind academically and need a significant amount of time to catch up” is important.

The idea of high expectation for all students began with studies in the 1960’s that described the impact of teachers’ expectations on a student’s performance. The teacher expectations may be portrayed according to “teacher’s perceptions of a student’s current level, teacher’s prediction about the amount of academic progress a student will make over a given time, and the degree to which a teacher “over- or under-estimates a student’s present level of performance” (Bamburg, 1994). The idea of teacher expectations influencing student performance has been called the “Pygmalion” effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968/1992) or “self-fulfilling prophecy” (Good & Brophy, 2000). Researchers have stated that student behaviors are affected by the opinions and perceptions that others have for them which in turn become self-fulfilling prophecies. Good and Brophy (2000) describe the process as follows:

The teacher expects different, specific behavior and achievement from particular students. Because of these different expectations, the teacher behaves differently toward various students. This treatment tells students what behavior and achievement the teacher expects from them and how they are expected to behave and perform. If this treatment is consistent over time, and if students do not resist or change it in any way, it will likely affect their self-concepts, achievement, motivation, and levels of aspiration, classroom conduct and interactions with the teacher. These effects generally will complement and reinforce the teacher’s expectations, so that students will come to conform to these
expectations more than they might have otherwise. With time, students’ achievement and behavior will conform more and more closely to that originally expected of them. High-expectations students will be led to achieve at high levels, while low-expectations students will not gain as much as they could have. (p. 79)

Research has shown that student’s behaviors are affected by attitudes and perceptions that their teachers have for them which then can become the self-fulfilling prophecies of either high or low academic achievement. The research implies that teachers have a propensity to have lower expectations for minority students and high poverty students than for more prosperous students. It has been said that “teachers’ attitudes and expectations, as well as their knowledge of how to incorporate the cultures, experiences, and needs of their students into their teaching, significantly influence what students learn and the quality of their learning opportunities” (Banks et al, 2005, p. 243). Minority Students and high poverty students are usually put into remedial classes and these students rarely have access to courses crucial for college admission (Good & Brophy, 2000).

Teachers in high performing, high poverty schools, however, hold high expectations for all students and subscribe to the view that schools make a difference in student outcomes (Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2000; Ragland, Clubine, Constable, & Smith, 2002; Symonds, 2003). In high-performing, high-poverty schools, rather than put the blame for a student’s academic failure on socioeconomic status, environment or perceived destiny, the teachers at commit to ensuring that all students succeed. School research on high-poverty, high-performing schools affirmed that high expectations create learning environments where student succeed no matter what society
and the educational system has predicted for them in the past (Carter, 2000; Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

**Teacher Efficacy.** Good teachers can have a great impact on a student success. The impact that a teacher has on a student is critical and it does determine a student success. This notion of teachers having a strong impact on a student’s success brings about the idea of teacher efficacy. A teachers’ efficacy means that a teacher’s belief about their knowledge and skills in their subject areas is strong. Hoy (2000) asserts that a teacher efficacy is a teacher’s confidence in their ability to encourage students’ learning. Teacher efficacy is important to the academic success of students in high poverty schools. It is essential for teachers to have the proper knowledge and tools to teach and motivate students in high poverty schools as well as students who come from all different types of backgrounds. Calabrese, Goodvin, and Niles (2005) suggest teachers with a student population of high poverty students should have not only high self-efficacy, but a nurturing and caring spirit.

A teachers’ level of confidence about his/her ability to promote learning can depend on a teacher's past experience or on the school culture. School leaders can help promote a sense of efficacy for teachers and for the entire school. Henson (2001) suggests that the “powerful effects from the simple idea that a teacher’s belief in his or her ability to positively impact student learning is critical to actual success or failure in a teacher’s behavior” (Henson, 2001). A great amount of research on teacher efficacy has been done and the research implies that the more specific term like “teacher sense of efficacy” should be used. More specifically, a teacher’s sense of competence not some other objective measures of actual competence. Furthermore, the research brings about two important questions connected with this theoretical
construct: “How does a teacher’s sense of efficacy affect his or her teaching? and Can it, through its impact on teaching, affect student achievement?” During an examination of research, Jerald (2007) shows some teacher behaviors are found to be connected to a teacher’s sense of efficacy. Teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy:

1. Tend to exhibit greater levels of planning and organization;
2. Are more open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students;
3. Are more persistent and resilient when things do not go smoothly;
4. Are less critical of students when they make errors; and
5. Are less inclined to refer a difficult student to special education. (Jerald, 2007, p.43)

Anita Woolfolk, a researcher on the topic of teacher efficacy, summarizes useful implications: “Teachers who set high goals, who persist, who try another strategy when one approach is found wanting—in other words, teachers who have a high sense of efficacy and act on it—are more likely to have students who learn” (as cited in Shaughnessy, 2004, p. 153). The research has shown that the most important factor in student achievement is the teacher. Also, research shows that verbal ability and content knowledge is also very important attributes of high poverty, high performing teachers. However, in the United States we are blessed with many great teachers, but there are not enough of them to staff the high poverty, high performing schools.

Teacher efficacy is essential in order to promote a student’s academic success in a high poverty school. Despite the popular belief, high academic achievement is not the major ingredient to a student’s achievement in a high poverty school. Consequently, teachers play important roles in shaping students educational experience. Teachers’ who believe they are
effective teachers use culturally responsive methods, promote students to work to their potential and they are adaptable and are caring teachers. Good teachers form meaningful relationships with their students and view themselves as change agents. Research shows that high poverty schools, which are high performing schools, have a unique set of challenges concerning teacher efficacy. Students in high poverty have fears connected with safety; they spend less time on homework, have high absentee rates, and may be more likely to have to carry weapons to school (Calabrese, 2005). In high poverty schools, often times they face low academic achievement issues with their students where race and ethnicity are linked to academic achievement (Tanori et al, 2002). Trend data indicate a clear gap between African-American and Hispanic students and Caucasians and Asian students (Kober, 2001; Miller, 1999). Some research shows that the academic differences African-American and Hispanic students and Caucasians and Asian groups may be more a product of the academic content and classroom instructional experience rather than the student’s background or ability (North Central Regional Education Laboratory, year).

Many people have a propensity to attribute the lack of achievement by children who live in poverty to family background and home environments; however, this is not always the case. Sometimes this achievement gap is a consequence of the teachers’ interactions with their students. Research shows that there is an obvious disparity between the ethnicity and race of the students in high poverty schools and the educators who teach them (Zeichner, 1993). The blame game and racism are connected to the multi-cultural high poverty urban school environment. It was a prevalent attitude expressed by many teachers who did not acknowledge personal responsibility and found it convenient to blame students, their parents, the community and the bureaucracy of the school district (Calabrese, 2005). Putsan (year) emphasizes the critical nature of teaching, instruction, and the relationship that the teacher has with the student as an important
factor in reducing the student achievement gap. Successful teachers of students in high poverty schools have a sound knowledge of their subject, are vigorously engaged with the make-up of their academic discipline, have solid knowledge of how students learn as well as the skills necessary for students to meet high expectations and standards.

Sometimes it is difficult for teachers to promote or have high levels of teacher efficacy and this in turn negatively affects students. A positive student teacher relationship will contribute to their academic success. We need to simply note that the attitudes and traits of teachers are reflected in the academic achievement of their students. Teacher efficacy has been an important factor in reducing the student dropout risk. If teachers have a definite understanding of how students learn and the skills necessary for students to meet as well the skills needed to exceed though high expectation and standards, more students are likely succeeding. Research demonstrates the importance of teacher efficacy and its effects on high poverty student achievement.

Teachers in the 21st century are facing extraordinary challenges in and out of the classroom. With a diverse student population, there are increased expectations on teacher’s to produce students who are academically sound. The roots of teachers’ self-efficacy can be dated back far and is linked to the social learning theory. The social learning theory is based on the idea or philosophy that connects positive feelings and behaviors in teachers to positive student outcomes (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002). Teacher efficacy is positively correlated with effective instruction. Teachers who are proactive and have positive classroom management will have a higher academic performance (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).
Teachers Processes in High Poverty, High performing Schools

On an everyday basis, teachers face various challenges in the classroom. One such challenge is teaching students who have different abilities. Therefore, the question of effective teaching has been studied for decades. Furthermore, the subject remains the same, in reference to understanding student learning. It has been said that “…nothing, absolutely nothing has happened in education until it has happened to a student.” (Carroll, 1994). As stated in this reference above, restructuring American education is about enhancing learning opportunities and results for all students especially the at-risk student. The educational challenge that the United States face is not that its schools are not as good as they used to be, but schools must help more than just a few students reach levels of skill and competence that the states want them to meet. There are many educational reform initiatives as well as educational policy initiatives that promise to improve education, however, nothing is more essentially important to improving America’s schools than improving the teaching practices that occur every day in the classroom. The practices or processes that we are looking at that high-poverty, high-performing schools practice are differentiate instruction to meet the multi-level student present in these schools, the use of culturally relevant instruction and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Differentiate Instruction. Differentiated instruction is one of the most talked about effective practice in helping failing schools succeed. Furthermore, it has been known as the research based best practice in high poverty classes. Carol Ann Tomlinson (2003), who is one of the main authorities on this topic, labels this as a way to “match instruction to student need with the goal of maximizing the potential of each learner in a given area” (p. 6-11). Due to its popularity of this movement, many effective teachers are now including differentiation into their
instructional strategies deliberately, and these practices become much more powerful when it is deliberate (Tomlinson, 2003). With this instructional strategy teacher are able to reflect on how diverse students are and provide the curriculum in a way best suits the individual learner.

No two students enter a classroom with equal abilities, skills, and needs. Learning patterns, language ability, background knowledge, readiness to learn, and other factors can vary within a single classroom group. In spite of their individual differences students are expected to master the same concepts, philosophies, and skills. Assisting all students to succeed in their learning is an enormous challenge that requires innovative thinking. Differentiated instruction is an instructional concept that allows teachers to face this challenge by taking diverse student elements into account when planning and delivering instruction. Based on this theory, teachers can shape learning environments that address the diverse learning styles, interests, and abilities found within a classroom (Corley, 2005). Differentiated instruction is centered on the belief that students learn best when they make connections between the curriculum and their diverse interests as well as experiences, and that the greatest learning occurs when students are driven slightly beyond the point where they can work without help (Corley, 2005). This point differs for students who are working below grade level and for those who are gifted in a given area (Corley, 2005). Differentiated instruction rather than simply "teaching to the middle" by providing a solitary avenue for learning for all students in a class, teachers using differentiated instruction match tasks, activities, and assessments with their students' interests, abilities, and learning preferences (Corley, 2005).

**Culturally Relevant Instruction.** A school's success is dependent on classroom success (Pollard-Durodola, 2003) and attention must be given to improving the schooling experience for
students in high poverty areas. The pedagogy use in high poverty, high performing understands cultural references, and takes into account the social needs and the environment as well as the adversities that many children of poverty face. Learning becomes more significant when a teacher uses a student’s cultural and social experiences as a way to implement best practices and to develop knowledge for their students (Pardon, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). In addition, when teachers recognize resiliency, maintain behaviors that demonstrate high expectations, think about social dynamics, and use diverse teaching methods student success is unavoidable (Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994; Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2002).

Cultural responsiveness and cultural competence in high poverty, high performing is important. Information correlated to a variety of cultures and the requirement for responsive teaching is vital to the successful learning of all students. Gay (2000) argues “(c)ulturally responsive teaching makes academic success a non-negotiable mandate for all students and an accessible goal…It does not pit academic success and cultural affiliation against each other. Rather, academic success and cultural consciousness are developed simultaneously. Students are taught to be proud of their ethnic identities and cultural backgrounds instead of being apologetic or ashamed of them” (Gay, 2000). Gay offers the following characteristics of culturally responsive teaching:

- It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students’ dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.
- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived socio-cultural realities.
• It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.
• It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other’s cultural heritages.
• It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools. (Gay, 2000, p. 29).

Culture is central to learning. It plays a part not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in molding the thinking process of groups and individuals. A pedagogy that recognizes, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of involving students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Many teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools asserted the concepts that one should think about their students’ past knowledge and experiences as they created lesson plans. Teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools should be responsive to individual students, their cultures, and their communities. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) notes that a key standard for using culturally relevant teaching is nurturing and supporting experiences in both a students’ personal cultures and school cultures. Teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools should use the students' home cultural experiences as a starting place to develop knowledge and skills from them. Content matter that is learned in this manner is more important to the students in order to facilitate what is learned in school to authentic real-life circumstances (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002).

Supportive Learning Environment.

Teacher in high poverty, high performing schools create a supportive learning environment. Teachers in these schools have a safe, universal, healthy and intellectually
stimulating learning environment. Teachers make students feel respected as well as connected to the school and has an engaging learning environment. Teachers in high poverty, high performing schools make sure instruction is personalized. The teacher creates a supportive learning environment when instruction is personalized. This supportive learning environment can also be defined as the school climate and culture. This environment has practical expectations for behavior, coherent and fair application of rules and regulation, and caring responsive relationships for students. The teacher’s classrooms are warm and engaging and the student learning activities are purposeful, appealing, and significant. Students are encouraged by teachers to take on some risks in their learning process and are supported in doing this as they learn rigorous content and apply their knowledge in a context related to their lives. Teachers in high poverty, high performing schools personalized learning environments. These personalize learning environments are created to enhance positive relationships among students and their teachers. Teachers in high poverty, high performing schools make students feel that they fit into the school community perfectly. In a supportive learning environment teachers in high poverty, high performing schools, teachers make children feel valued and honored in the aspect of their heritage and background which is viewed as “assets,” not deficiencies. Teachers create mutual respect and trust in their classrooms is at the heart of a supportive learning environment.

High poverty, high performing teachers creates a safe and personalized environment. Therefore, the teachers’ practices should create a safe and orderly environment. Teachers’ practices personalized supportive classrooms and they have effective classroom management. A safe and orderly environment has; “An efficient classroom organization and structure which is crucial to maintaining an orderly and effective learning environment” (LePage et al,
These actions in classroom that are safe and orderly reduce delays, disruptions, and distractions and increases learning time.

In an effort for teachers to create a supportive learning environment, teachers must increase resiliency in their students. Research reflects the importance of teachers creating “protective factors” that help students learn to cope with difficult conditions they are faced with. Teachers in high poverty, high performing schools help foster resiliency in their students by exhibiting caring and supportive with strong personal relationships, positive and high expectations with the necessary support for students to achieve high expectations and give them opportunities for meaningful participation in school (Benard, 1991, p. 100). A research report done in the past suggested the qualities of instruction that maintains resilience is a: “richer explanations, encouragement of extended student responses, encouragement of students’ success, focus on the task’s learning processes” (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2002). Also, research suggests that “turnaround” teachers which are those teaches that succeed with at-risk students, “focus on the strengths of all students; they especially empower overwhelmed youth to see themselves as survivors rather than as victims”. Teachers in high poverty, high performing schools help students deal with adversity in their lives. Teachers in high poverty, high performing help students to see hardship as impermanent and to see setbacks not as pervasive but as something that they can overcome and that it is just temporary. Turnaround teachers in high poverty, high performing schools are “student-centered” and they use students’ strengths, interests, goals and dreams as the focal point for learning and thereby tapping into their students’ intrinsic motivation for learning” (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2002).
Teacher Outcomes in High Poverty, High Performing Schools

The importance of having good teachers is clear to those who work in education. High poverty schools and communities have needed to seek out the best teachers they can get so that students’ succeed. But what we know automatically there are still the big questions about the connection between student outcomes and teacher quality and effectiveness. To begin with, what is the definition of a good teacher? What characteristics do you look for in good teachers in high poverty schools have? Given all the factors associated with student performance, how much impact can we expect from teachers and what type of outcomes should we expect? Research has identified substantial variation across teachers in the ability to raise student achievement, both within and across schools (Jacob, B and Ludwig, J., 2008).

Effective Teachers. There is some agreement among educators on the right ways to improve school performance in schools where there is high poverty or in urban schools. These schools are high poverty schools with a history of low academic expectations for all that are involved. These schools have in large part, been previously thought of as having unreachable children. However, these children are in fact reachable. Like any matter or matter of faith, this belief can seem daunting to put into practice. Furthermore, in many matters of faith, everyone must believe that a change can occur and requires educators to turn the standard assumptions on their head. Ronald Edmonds (1979) said:

How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that pupil performance derives from a family background instead of school response to family background. We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us.

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We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (Edmonds, R. 1979, p. 15-24)

The statement above gets to the very essence of how high-performing, high-poverty schools are the key to our understanding of successful school reform. From what we know most low-performing and high-poverty schools, the quality of curriculum and instruction are rarely put forth as vital determinants of these students’ academic performance. Rather, characteristics inherent in these students home life are almost always suggested as the reasons for their academic weaknesses.

In 2001, the “No Child Left Behind Act” was passed and since then, I have asked myself the question, how can schools with populations of poverty, minorities, violence and other problems ever meet the demands placed on schools by this legislation? These schools that mirror these characteristics have struggled for a long time with very little hope of improvement.

Society as we know it is disproportionately influenced by privileged groups. The economic institutions, judicial system, politics, and cultural ideas have all been built historically to be operated by those who are not of color. Our educational systems in the past have instilled just these forms of prejudice in our systems. Historically, the ways educators have taught has worked best for students who are associated with these forms and can excel in using them. Asking ourselves what we do not understand nor knowing about the aspects of high poverty communities, social communications and culture are relevant to academic success for all of our children in this melting pot society (http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2524/Urban-Education.html).
Marzano (2003) wrote “…if we follow the guidance offered from 35 years of research, we can enter an era of unprecedented effectiveness for the public practice of education – one in which the vast majority of schools can be highly effective in promoting student learning.” Also, Marzano’s research on factors affecting student achievement translates research and theory into classroom practice. Reeves (2004) who studied the 90/90/90 schools stated that, “Marzano has assembled the most impressive evidence, using meta-analytic techniques that indicate the importance of teaching, curriculum, and leadership relative to poverty and ethnic identity. Demographic characteristics are relevant, but the preponderance of evidence indicates that these characteristics are not destiny when it comes to academic achievement” (Reeves, 2004).

Many questions come about when think about what it takes for a high poverty, high performing school to succeed. Having an effective teacher is a factor that makes the greatest impact on student achievement (Ferguson and Ladd, 1996; Hanushek et al., 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Effective teachers make a difference in the lives of all students, but specifically in those who in schools with high concentrations of poverty and minority students. Therefore, what are the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high poverty, high performing school? Do teachers in a high poverty, high performing school has a certain quality of effective instructions? Most of the research shows that effective teachers matter because there is a substantial body of evidence indicating that among all school resources needed to make a school succeed, teachers are the ones who have the greatest impact on student achievement. Furthermore, the difference between the most effective and least effective teachers can be at least a year difference in learning growth for students (Goldhaber, 2006). In high poverty, high performing schools it is important that the teachers in these schools be effective and nurturing.
Leaders in High Poverty, High Performing Schools

School leaders exert a strong effect on teacher’s outcomes and student learning. In an examination of literature in the American Educational Research Association, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) deduce that school leadership has a major effect on student learning. This impact is second only to the effects of the value of curriculum and the instruction the student receives from the teacher. Some of the case studies that represent outstanding schools indicate that school leaders partly control learning primarily by stimulating the schools' efforts around goals that are outstanding and by establishing circumstances that support teachers as well as help them to succeed that help students succeed (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) conducted a large-scale quantitative study of schooling and came to the conclusion that the effects of leadership on student learning are small but educationally important. Although some research shows that leadership explains only about 3 to 5 percent of a variation in student learning in schools, the effect of school leadership is nearly one-quarter of the total effect of all school factors (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In order for a school to succeed, the leaders must understand that successful school system are composed of separate elements that work together to achieve a defined outcome. These systems are the inputs which are the characteristic of the leader, processes which are the practices and desired outcomes. Often times, these entities in schools work completely independently and without reference to one another.

High Poverty High Performing School Leaders Inputs

Creating leaders that are able to address the achievement gap in high poverty schools poses a great challenge for educators in today’s society. School leaders must have a solid
awareness of how schools succeed despite the odds while intricate issues surround poverty and diversity occurs. This is also true with the educational challenges and we need leaders that can guide us in how to better understand and meet the desires of children in high poverty schools. Consequently, this must begin with capable and caring leadership.

A new type of leaders must come about who has relevant knowledge, a commitment to success, and action plan to help eliminate the achievement gap between our highest and lowest performing schools. Educational leaders must first understand the deeply embedded roots of poverty connected with low performing schools and then look at their own values and obligation to change the circumstances that keep children in a cycle of poverty. Furthermore, school leaders need to be committed to providing a learning environment that can triumph over family circumstances like poverty and eliminates the achievement gap found in high poverty schools. Leaders must recognize that what matters most in making change, mainly in conquering the social and historical obstacles in high poverty schools (Fullan, 1993). Leaders must stop the years of deficit thinking, such as blaming high poverty school failures on the economically disadvantaged child (Lyman & Villani, 2004).

The literature on school leadership suggests that there are common characteristics that define successful leaders in high poverty schools. The research on successful leadership, effective schools, and studies on high-poverty, high-performing schools demonstrate that leadership development is multifaceted and multi-dimensional. Leadership in high-poverty, high-performing schools must possess many characteristics or inputs according to the research on school leadership. Successful principals have the ability to be an instructional leader, great collaborators who uses shared Leadership concepts and they are change agents (Fullan, 2001; Hall, 1979; Heck, 1990; Leithwood, 1999; Marzano, 2005).
**Instructional Leader.** The major role of effective leadership in improving schools in the urban contexts has been identified in several publications (Ofsted, 2000). A great example of effective leadership was established as a common characteristic of the improving schools by Ofsted (2000). It was suggested that: “The story of the [more effective] schools visited begins and ends with the quality of their leadership and management. The personalities, the management structures and the school contexts are different, but some common features emerge strongly” (Ofsted, 2000, p. 8). I “What Do We Already Know about Successful School Leadership,” a report released by the Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership in 2001, reports many strong declarations regarding the impact of school leadership on student learning. These assertions went a long way toward defining a set of important leadership characteristics that convert into positive student outcomes. Instructional leaders usually have exhibited successful results as a teacher or they have relevant experience as an educator. Instructional leaders are passionate about raising student achievement as well as providing student who lives in poverty with transformational life opportunities.

The idea of instructional leadership has many different meanings depending on the exact context or environments that you are in and which context it is being discussed in. It has been said that the distinction in how the word is defined has to some extent been made difficult to interpret by the existing body of research (Foster, 1986). Many researchers have tried to frame their research studies by relating a large degree of specifics to instructional leadership. Geltner and Shelton (1991) did a study of instructional leadership benefits that resulted in the effective use of different professional support personnel such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers. This form of leadership was referring to this as a strategic instructional leadership. Stallhammar (1994), uses the phrase pedagogical leadership rather than merely instructional
leadership in his study. His study assumed that instructional leadership focal points are around the behavior of educational professionals as they partake in tasks and activities that affect the development, growth and performance of students (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Instructional leadership, in spite of a specific definition, is surely considered by most scholars to be at the very core of educational administration success. Instructional leadership for urban schools is critical to student success (Anfara et al, 2008).

Leadership is a critical component in high performing high poverty schools (Barth, 1999; Carter, 2000; Cawelti, 1999; Johnson & Asera, 1999). Fermanich et al. (2006), emphasizes instructional leadership, which is described as focusing on instruction, with less attention placed on management aspects. An instructional leader will concentrate on teacher practice as a means for improving student learning. An authentic instructional leader affords the staff with a vision, helps put things in motion and build teacher efficacy. Some investigational studies imply that an instructional leader must have a vision (Blasé and Blasé, 1997; Fermanich et al, 2006). The instructional leader of a school should be responsible for the school vision. It is the principal’s main concern “to define a personally held vision for the school and refer to the number of data sources to develop a clear picture of the current reality” (McKeever, 2003). The school vision should center on the content, the presentation of content and the learning that takes place. These attributes should be the foundation of a school vision. Having these elements in a vision is critical because the vision provides the teachers with a continuous reminder of what can be achieved, methods on how it could be achieved and why it is necessary to achieve it. These methods keep the teachers focused on student achievement.

Limited research exists regarding an instructional leader’s belief about students of color. Instructional leaders have strong values as well as a strong vision and mission for their school.
Instructional leaders adapt all school activities around student learning and academic growth. Instructional leaders create a sense of urgency and enthusiasm about teaching and learning.

**Change Agents.** “No Child Left Behind” has set forth an emerging trend that school leaders are change agents. Promoting innovation has always been a part of the job description of a school leader, but until recently the goal was a humble incremental change that could be a part the existing system. In today’s society, the educational system itself is the target of reform and this task is formidable. Somehow, systemic change is not well understood, even by those who call themselves experts, and school leaders have had little preparation to prepare themselves for the challenge. Furthermore, the reform movement does not offer leaders with a rational, fully aligned vision for change. The No Child Left Behind Act (NBLC) blends standards based accountability, educational choice, and practical mandates. Unfortunately, this blend does not always work. The No Child Left Behind Act (NBLC) has not provided the road map that high poverty schools need to succeed.

Effective school leaders see themselves as change agents, where their personal and professional image makes a major contribution in transforming the school (Fullan, 2001). Furthermore, successful leaders have organized schools where school reform ideas produce meaningful change. Current research studies done by experts like Michael Fullan on the change process exposes the fact that in order to make significant progress towards successful change, school leaders must challenge the process. In an examination of the role of the school leaders in high-poverty, high-performing schools Nerad (2002) affirm that “school leaders must take action and aid in creating the conditions for others to take action”. A school leader instantly manages problems, sustains high expectations for school improvement, and gives emphasis to innovation
and experimentation. Research on school leadership during the past twenty-five years by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning revealed that effective leadership contains twenty-one areas of responsibility and the change agent is one of the roles. Furthermore, one of major responsibilities mentioned is the change agent’s willingness and preparation to actively challenge the status quo (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). A change agent is someone who purposefully or subtly causes social, cultural, or behavioral change. A change agent knows and understands the dynamics that expedite or hamper change. Change agents define, research, plot, construct support, and work with others to help create change.

**Collaboration and Shared Leadership.** The characteristic of collaboration is also a key in successful high poverty, high performing schools. Successful leaders in high poverty, high performing schools empower all stakeholders in the school through collaboration and shared leadership. Successful leaders in high poverty, high performing schools promote risk taking and problem solving skills (Davenport & Anderson, 2002). Joyce Epstein from Johns Hopkins University and Patricia Davenport from the American Productivity and Quality Center, noted the value of strong leadership and said, “Effective site leadership also meant shared leadership” (Davenport & Anderson, 2002, p. 5).

Marzano (2003) encourages leadership teams for successful high poverty schools. He says, “Leadership for change is most effective when carried out by a small group of educators with the principal serving as a strong cohesive force” (p. 174). This type of shared leadership is also suggested for improving school achievement (Pounder & Ogawa, 1995). In 2000, Kimbal and Sirotnik stated that collaborative leadership is a solution to the problems of urban schools. They admit to looking for “creative combinations of leadership teams that work in collaborative
and empowering ways with teachers and the community to continually improve educational practices” (Kimbal and Sirotnik, 2000, p. 542).

Lambert (2005) celebrates collaboration and defines leadership capacity as “…reciprocal, purposeful learning together in community” (p. 62). In a recent study of high leadership capacity schools, most of the schools were urban and high-poverty, the principal was in charge of building shared leadership as well as gradually circulating the decision making to the teachers (Lambert, 2005). Collaboration and shared leadership can help to shape future capacity for change, as collaboration is based on communication between all those involved. Another element emphasizes support for teachers. Providing a teacher with the essential support or assistance can increase a teacher’s likelihood of self-efficacy, therefore, enhancing academic performance.

High Poverty High Performing School Leaders Processes

Excellence in a school leader is important. Successful leader in a high poverty school, the leader must understand teaching and be respected by the teachers. Furthermore, these leaders must be willing to hold themselves and others responsible for student learning. Elmore (year) says:

The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective results. (p. 15).

School leadership responsibilities should be defined through an understanding of the practices most likely to improve teaching and learning. Thus, leaders in high poverty schools must serve
as leaders for student learning. They need to know as well as understand academic content and pedagogical methods. They must also be able to work with their teachers to strengthen their instructional skills. Leaders in high poverty schools must gather, examine and use data to improve academics as well as test scores in order for high poverty school leaders to succeed.

Leaders in high poverty, high performing schools implement a clear mission and vision in their school. They also shape school culture. Hargreaves et al. state (2008) school leaders will “need to lead ‘out there’ beyond the school, as well as within it, in order to influence the environment that influences their own work with students”


**Implements a Clear Mission and Vision.** An effective leader must support their staff in creating and communicating a vision while providing opportunities for their staff to work together for the shared vision of the school. A review of research on successful schools supports the notion that school leaders must have the ability to work with the staff in developing the school’s mission and vision. A study outlining outstanding elementary schools identified seven characteristics that support the school’s success. A major characteristic of these schools was the concept that effective visionary leadership is central to success. Although schools studied performed many tasks, the central mission of these schools clearly was that of providing effective academic instruction that was communicated through the school’s vision and mission statement (Wilson & Corcoran, 1987).

Research on the characteristics of effective schools done by Lezotte (1997) reveals the principal is an instructional leader who conveys the school's mission to students, teachers, and
the community. Furthermore, because the leader communicates to the staff, he/she must understand and be committed to the school’s mission, instructional goals, and priorities.

Reynolds and Teddie (2000) carried out a review of the research on effective schools. They looked at the original correlates of effective schools and concluded that effective leaders articulate a strong mission and vision. Also, they stated that these leaders cultivate a shared vision with all stakeholders in the school. These schools have a shared vision that articulates a clear focus on the importance of continuous improvement as well as having academic goals and processes.

In 2001, Casey and Donaldson described the connection between goals and vision as equal. They believed that the goals are guided by the vision, and the goals should guide the organization to the vision (Casey & Donaldson, 2001). Goal setting is an important part of an effective school or organization (Casey & Donaldson, 2001). Research demonstrates that the role of the leader is to handle the goal setting procedures, achieve consensus, and gain commitment from all stakeholders (Duttweiler & Hord, 1987). Other research also shows that goal setting is an important aspect of instructional leadership. Although the vision is the essential driving force, the small goals lead to the small wins that compel the school down the path of success (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Research on effective leadership in high-poverty, high-performing schools supports the theory that schools need a visionary leader who will collaborate with all the stakeholders to develop the school’s goals. Haberman (2003) puts the responsibility on the school leader to create a clear school mission. The school leader should be a leader and, to be effective in this role, the school leader should: “create a common vision, build effective terms to implement that
vision, and engender commitment to task—the persistent hard work needed to engender learning” (Haberman, 2003).

Schools need effective leaders in order to communicate the school’s mission as well as the school's vision. An effective leader steadily reinforces the school’s mission while creating a shared sense of purpose as well as establishing a set of common core values among the instructional stakeholders. The act of having common core values and a shared sense of purpose helps guide all members of the instructional team. Furthermore, helps instructional stakeholders avoid individuals straying from the intended goals. In an effective school that has an effective leader, the leader acts as an instructional leader and successfully and constantly communicates the vision and mission of the school to staff, parents, and students. Additionally, the instructional leader identifies with and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the executing of the instructional program. Clearly, the role of the school leader is that of the articulator of the mission of the school is which is crucial to the overall effectiveness of the school (Lezotte, 2001, p. 5). Implementing a clear vision and mission in a high-poverty, high-performing schools are very important to the success of the school. Without a clear vision or mission in a high-poverty, high-performing school, your school will lacks direction. The ancient Roman philosopher Seneca noted that, "If a man knows not what harbor he seeks, any wind is the right wind." If you do not have a common and accepted destination in your school, then everyone in the school is left to their own perception of the school's direction. One of the most central responsibilities of any great leader is instituting a vision and inviting others to share in the development of this vision.
**Shaping School Culture.** In high-performing, high-poverty schools, the research confirms that leaders play a part in increasing student achievement in a number of ways. The research shows that when leaders start establishing a school culture and climate of learning as a primary goal, it builds a foundation of increased student achievement. Therefore, as a consequence, expectations for academic excellence are promoted for all students and they are uniform with the shared mission and vision of the school (Bell, 2001; Duke, 2006; Laitsch, 2005, Ragland et al., 2002).

Research evidence indicates that successful school leaders promote a school culture of collegiality, collaboration, support and trust, and that the school culture is powerfully rooted in the leader’s values and beliefs. Successful leaders in high poverty, high performing schools also promote a school culture in which innovative change and risk taking is encouraged as well as supported (http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/mul04848.pdf). School culture is not a fixed entity. It is constantly being created and shaped due to interactions with others and through reflections on the school leader’s life and the world in general (Finnan, 2000). School culture is developed when staff members interact with each other, the students, as well as the community. School culture becomes the manual for behavior that is shared among stakeholders in the school (http://www.usca.edu/essays/vol122004/hinde.pdf).

A positive school culture is manifested when leaders and teachers work collaboratively and have a strong belief in the need for success. When directed by this belief, leaders and teachers work together to develop more useful environments for learning. The role of the principal is vital in this development. The principal must convey to all the stakeholders the school’s vision and expectations for teachers and students. They must create a safe learning environment for students, and, perhaps most importantly, create optimal learning time and incentives for learning and achievement (Shann, 1999). Shaping a positive school culture in a
A high poverty school is vital the success of the school. Positive school culture sets the tone and direction the school will take. Shaping a positive school culture is essential and must be a part of the process implemented by effective leaders.

**High Poverty High Performing School Leaders Outcomes**

As a part of America’s public school reform, the quality and structure of leadership has been identified as one of the most significant factors contributing to improving student achievement overall (Beaudin, Thompson, & Jacobson, 2002). Because of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), educational leaders are being held responsible for encouraging higher standards of student achievement in school, in the curriculum, and on state standardized tests. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was designed to be a way for leaders and teachers to become change agent in the culture of America’s public schools by closing the achievement gap, offering more flexibility, opening up more options for parents, and educating students based on what works (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Society is now demanding more effective schools and increased student learning. This has enlarged the attention on the vital role of school leaders. Since leadership has an impact on student achievement it has become evident, that school leaders will come under even greater political and public pressure. Leadership impacts are even greater in a high poverty school because they have more difficult circumstances and the learning needs of students are more intense (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). High poverty schools tend to have higher leadership turnover rates, as well as the most challenges in recruiting applicants to fill leadership positions in urban schools (Durden 2008).
The level of accountability built into the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) supports a major shift in the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. Thompson (2003) affirmed that the implications for school leaders in regard to school success are very important. According to Thompson (2003), significant success factors cannot be:

plugged into an organization like a set of floppy disks. Without strategic leadership, the development of shared vision and ownership, and the thoughtful adaptation of the success factors to local contexts, they will either remain rhetorical declarations that do not translate into results or be forced into the system in ways that create new cultural dysfunctions. (p. 493)

Jackson (2005) also mentions that there are more demands given to school leaders as a result of new mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Jackson (2005) believes:

Along with accountability for student learning, school leaders are being called upon to redesign schools and districts to serve the learning needs of all children in their care. The creation of reform agendas that will lead to success by all children requires leaders who can learn from past lessons, heed the findings of current research, and rely on the wisdom of their own experiences. (p. 193)

Anthes (2002) affirms that school leaders will need to obtain a deeper understanding of assessment instruments and what state tests can and cannot tell them about the student. Furthermore, there will be greater stress on succeeding. Anthes also states:

The greater demands and expectations placed on school leaders to raise student achievement will undoubtedly make both recruitment and retention of principals and superintendents an even tougher job than it is today. Superintendents and principals also will have the added responsibility of maintaining staff morale and
assisting staff in dealing with the stress and public scrutiny that tougher accountability measures are sure to bring. (p. 1)

Yukl (2002) depicts leadership as “an influence process concerned with facilitating the performance of a collective task” (Yukl, 2002 p. 19). The power of the leader establishes a leader's effectiveness and the “power… not only for influencing subordinates but also for influencing peers, superiors, and people outside the organization” (Yukl, 2002, p. 12). Many research studies praise school leaders in successful high-poverty schools with setting high expectations for students, identifying a vision and mission for the school, gathering the staff around stated goals and providing and aligning the necessary support, resources, professional development and resources needed to meet those goals (Jesse, Davis, & Pokorny, 2005; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2000; Ragland et al, 2002; Symonds, 2003). Some studies suggest that a principal who is an effective instructional leader can establish a successful school with lots of hard work. Elmore (2000), Spillane (2006), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), and Fullan (2005, 2006) have helped us add more knowledge of this subject as it relates to high-poverty, high-performing school success and school improvement. Researchers like Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) pinpointed leadership traits that are positively affecting student achievement the learning process. The knowledge from these experts have shown us that effective leaders are change agents who use high levels of collaboration to implement a clear and strong mission and vision in a high poverty school.

Conclusion
In an effort to improve schools the federal government came up with legislation to help educators improve schools. This was “The 2002 No Child Left Behind “(NCLB) federal
legislation act. This legislation was specifically supposed to address the needs of children in schools that were constantly performing below expectations. The 2002 *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) act holds every school accountable for the success of every child. But, Rebell and Wolfe (2008) points out that:

> The cruel irony of the American education system is that low-income and minority children who come to school with the greatest educational deficits generally have the fewest resources and least expertise devoted to their needs - and therefore the least opportunity to improve their futures. (p. 26)

Schools with high poverty have struggled to educate students successfully. Many years ago, researchers began exploring how schools with high poverty could be as successful. Being successful meant having high academic achievement. All the research done indicated that certain characteristics were associated with increasing student achievement and performance in high poverty schools. However, in order for to these schools have these characteristics the school, the teachers and the school leaders must improve (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).

To understand high poverty, high performing schools, we need to understand the impact the school as a whole has on the schools' effectiveness and the impact of the teachers and leaders have also. Teachers and leaders control the schools' success (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Teachers and leaders should ensure they are encouraging high academic achievement to all the students at their schools to fulfill the effective school notion. Effective schools require understanding the inputs from the school and teachers and leaders that will ensure high academic achievement (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). These inputs are characteristics of the school, teachers and leaders. The school characteristics are the schools have high expectation for all students as well as have a clear vision for the school (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). The leader’s
characteristics are the leaders are instructional leaders, collaborators and sharing leaders, and identify themselves as change agents. The teachers’ characteristics are they have high expectations for all students and they have a sense of teacher efficacy (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).

The key to improved academic achievement is the practices of the school, the teachers and the leaders. The school processes or practices are the practices that make sure the curriculum, instruction and assessments are aligned with state standards, the practices that focus on achievement and practice of having high levels of collaboration and communication with all major stakeholders (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). The teacher’s processes or practices are they differentiating instruction, the practice of using culturally relevant instruction, and practice of implementing a supportive learning environment. The leader’s processes or practices are they implementing a clear mission and vision and they shape school culture (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).

In order for a high poverty school to succeed, the schools must understand that successful school system has many elements that work together to achieve a defined outcome. These systems are the inputs, which are the characteristic, the processes, which are the practices, and desired outcomes, which come from adding the inputs to processes. Often times, these entities in schools work completely independently and without reference to one another. Consequently, the joining of these elements contributes to successful schools in high poverty areas.

The above entities are important and along with some other factors they help high poverty schools become high performing schools. These factors include frequent monitoring of learning and teaching (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). When high poverty, high performing schools frequently monitor learning and teaching the school have a steady cycle of different assessments.
to identify students who require help. High poverty, high performing schools gives more support and instructional time either during the school day or outside normal school hours. When high poverty, high performing schools frequently monitor learning and teaching the school the teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. The assessment in this high poverty, high performing schools results are used to focus and improve instructional programs (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Another thing that high poverty, high performing schools do is focus on professional development. In high poverty, high performing schools there is a strong emphasis placed on training staff in areas of most need. In high-poverty, high-performing schools, feedback from learning and teaching focuses on extensive and ongoing professional development for everyone in the school (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). In high poverty, high performing schools, the professional support are also aligned with the school or district vision and objectives. Finally, in high poverty, high performing schools, there needs to be a high level of family and community involvement. In these schools, there is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate all students regardless of race class or socioeconomic status (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In today’s society, a good education for an impoverished child is taboo. High-poverty schools are failing and there are needs to identify factors that can help these schools succeed. There exists a need to explore how schools, administrators and teachers in these high-poverty schools can increase student achievement (Collins, 2001; Fullan, 2001). The purpose of this study is to concentrate on what characteristics, practices, policies, and belief systems lead to improvement in student performance in a high poverty school setting. The more that people become aware of the success stories of the principals and teachers in successful high-poverty schools, the better the odds are of increasing the belief that students and schools everywhere should have the chance to experience success in academics in a high poverty school.

In this study, there are many elements that will be examined in reference to high poverty, high performing schools. The first element is the inputs or the characteristics of the schools, the teachers and the principals. The next element is the processes or the practices implemented by the schools, the teachers and the principals. The final element is outcomes or success of the schools, the teachers and the principals. As a result of these elements working together, this study will investigate how high-poverty, high performing schools managed to show academic progress despite the odds. This study will provide a blueprint of information for concerned teachers and principals in high poverty schools (See Figure 1).

Research in education is becoming more relevant to policy makers as reforming education in the 21st century is a major issue (Bialeschki, 2007). This chapter will describe research procedures for a case study of three high poverty, high performing schools in Ohio. Furthermore, this chapter describes the design, methods, and procedures used for conducting the research; the assumptions made in the study and rationale for the research design for the study;
the conceptual framework that guides this study; the role of the researcher; data collection and data analysis procedures; and the methods that were used to establish trustworthiness and to verify the accuracy of the data collected. An explanation of the process for identifying high-performing, high-poverty schools in Ohio is also included to provide a rich contextual background. A description of each of the qualifying schools is also included.

Role of the Researcher
To work toward a just world or a world where all children have equal access to an opportunity to receive a good education means, as a start, opening up educators’ hearts and minds to the perspectives of others who think outside the box. In order to effect change we must be able to hear each other and to respect and learn from what we hear. We must understand how we are positioned in relation to others as it relates to the dominant versus the subordinate, the marginal versus the center, as well as the empowered versus powerless (Takacs, D., 2002). Over the past year, I have been working with successful high poverty schools teachers and principals in an effort to gain a better understanding of what it means to create a meaningful and relevant education for marginalized students. In particular, I have been working with teachers and administrators to address how relationships inside the schools, how the characteristics of the teacher as well as of the leaders affect the schools success and what processes lead to successful high poverty schools (Takacs, D., 2002). I was an outsider to the schools, having never been an employee of any of the schools. However, I did have knowledge of the school and I have worked in a school with similar success. I do know several of the staff members at some of the schools and was able to speak personally with the principals at each of the schools to obtain a greater inside knowledge (Takacs, D., 2002).
As a qualitative researcher, I have and others have a responsibility to seek out those who are silenced and make their voices heard (Lincoln, 1995). Despite the plethora of research regarding successful high poverty schools, I argue that the voices of those who experienced success in a successful high poverty school setting be heard and those who believe they are successful in developing and maintaining a successful high poverty school. The world needs to hear these voices because the mainstream media projects a different voice. Therefore, this study sought to give voice to these teachers and leaders in these successful high poverty schools. Whether or not I am perceived as an insider, I dealt with issues of subjectivity and the voices of teachers and principals as a teacher in a successful high poverty school and as a researcher studying schools with similar circumstances. While I do acknowledge my subjectivity, the use of consistent methodological approaches backed by sound data and maintaining a balance between the different voices being heard, the educational reform as well as the political agendas being promoted, and societal hierarchies, will allow others to embrace my research for high poverty, low performing to become success despite the odds being stacked against us (Alridge, 2003; Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In doing my research, I wanted to be an insider. Banks (1998), stated that insiders are "individuals [who] are socialized within ethnic, racial, and cultural communities in which they internalize localized values, perspectives, ways of knowing, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge that can differ in significant ways from those of individuals socialized within other micro-cultures" (Banks 1998, p.7). However, I also wanted the work I was doing to be validated within the educational community. Doing research on successful high poverty schools is something that I enjoy doing. I enjoyed collaborating with colleagues, the principals in the three successful high
poverty schools and discussing various research projects I felt was important to this study. I want to be a better teachers and leader in my high poverty school.

I realize that few researchers are ever lucky enough to answer all of their research questions. I am lucky that I have the issue of positionality as well as an insider role, and responsibility to students I serve. A person perspective refers to the context which influences what a person can see and how they understand it (Griffiths, M., 2009). It may specify someone’s ideology or value systems for example with feminist, socialist, anti-racist, post-colonial and queer research (Griffiths, M., 2009). It may also indicate positionality which refers, more narrowly, to the social and political landscape inhabited by a researcher gender, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, disabilities, social class and social status (Griffiths, M., 2009). This notion of positionality and my insider role was one of the major factors that defined my role as a researcher in this project.

Within the world of the Feminist Classroom, Maher and Tetreault (2001: 164) explained "the idea of positionality, in which people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed”. For those who teach for social justice for marginalize poor students, the changed part is essential to the understanding of the issue of positionality (Takacs, D., 2002). This means understanding where you stand with respect to power which is an essential skill for becoming a change agent. From this understanding, I have a perception to challenge power, the stereotypes placed on marginalized students and the changes we need to make within ourselves. It took a long time before I realized how oblivious I was to my own positionality in my study.
Research Design and Hypothesis

Qualitative research seeks to understand people’s interpretations of a particular setting. It shows how reality changes people’s perceptions change. Qualitative research is interested in how things occur in their natural setting and the research is particularly interested in the perspectives of the subjects of the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Therefore, a qualitative research method will be used so that we are able to investigate the characteristics, processes, and outcomes taking place in the selected high poverty, high performing schools. For a qualitative case study of this nature, no formal hypothesis was developed before this study began. Instead, data was collected from multiple sources, coded, then classified to identify themes and form theories to explain the phenomenon (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

A qualitative researcher does research with a certain set of people in order to represent them. Participants in the research may have to collaborate at any stage of the research, through design, data collection, analysis, and representation of the results and conclusions. Sometimes this may be termed giving a voice to the participants who may not want to speak out to make their perspectives known. During this process, I tried literally to give a voice to teachers and leaders in successful high poverty schools. I had personal interaction with the principals and the extra feedback they provided me from the surveys.

Research Questions

The primary research question for the study is this: How do the school, the leaders, and the teachers in high poverty, high performing schools perceive how they promote student achievement? Since the question focuses on how teachers, school principals and the school arrive at the multiple meanings of high academic achievement in these unique settings, this
research does not predict all behaviors that can be traced operationally (Yin, 2003, p.6). It focuses on the uniqueness of the setting to describe and preserve them. A case study helps us understand a phenomenon represented in a certain context. This case study research is being done in Ohio and the questions are divided into three supplemental categories. These categories are the school, the teachers and the principal’s inputs or characteristics, processes or practices, and outcomes taking place in the selected high poverty, high performing schools. The research questions as whole are:

- Do high poverty, high performing schools have common characteristics or inputs, processes and outcomes that help these schools succeed and improve student achievement (see Figures 1 2, 3, and 4)?
- What are the characteristics or inputs high poverty, high performing school leaders, and teachers have and what are the leaders perceived roles in their schools?
- How do high poverty, high performing school leaders and teachers perceive their roles in high performing schools and how do they understand their processes, behaviors or practices as they relate to increasing student achievement in their schools?
- How do high poverty, high performing school teachers perceive and perform their roles in high performing schools and how do they understand their processes, behaviors or practices as they relate to increasing student achievement in their schools?

Participants

Purposeful selection was used to provide the best opportunity to learn more about principals and teachers in successful high poverty, high performing schools. Purposeful sampling was used for this study to employ specific criterion for the selection of a school site and participants in this study. Three schools were selected to participate in this case study. The
minimum number of participants will be the twelve. The maximum number of participants will be twelve and no more than fifteen. The criteria for the selection of the three schools for this study are:

1. The school served 50 percent or more economically disadvantaged students, as reported for the past 3 school years.
2. The school met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2010-2011.
3. The school met the AYP graduation rate criterion of 80 percent for the 2008-2010 school years.
4. At least 60 percent of all students in each of the tested grade levels passed the 2010-2011 Ohio Achievement Tests and/or Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT) in reading or mathematics.

Setting
This project takes place at three schools all located in the Ohio area. The principals of the three participating schools were asked for permission to use their schools as sites for the research.

Procedures
The systems and criteria for sampling in qualitative research are distinct. The flexibility that is accepted in sampling in a qualitative research design “reflects the emergent nature of qualitative research design, which allows researchers to modify their research approach as data are collected” (Gall et al., 2007). Sample population from qualitative research studies is normally small and in this case I utilized case study design with purposeful sampling. This case study identifies three particular schools of interest. When using purposeful sampling a researcher wants
to identify and gain insight and thus selects a sample from which much can be learned as well as taught (Patton, 2002). As a result of the success of these schools have demonstrated over time, it is assumed that it will provide ample information relative to the research questions of this study. Each source of data will be analyzed to determine if the information verifies or refutes the study’s premise.

In implementing a case study design, I sought to develop a deeper understanding of the case. As it has been explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative methods are used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. Qualitative methods can also be used to increase one's perspective on things about which much is already known, or to learn things that may be tough to measure in a quantitative study. I conducted a survey with all of the participants and analyzed the survey to see what different perspectives would be displayed in order to provide a deeper understanding of high poverty, high performing schools.

I was granted permission by the school principals to conduct the research. I was also granted approval to conduct the research by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cincinnati. All participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study. I provided assurances to all participants of confidentiality during my introduction and through the use of informed consent forms for participants. I explained that pseudonyms would be used for participants, and the school. I assured participants of the anonymity of the surveys and described security procedures for data collection and storage. I also distributed the surveys and requested volunteers to complete them. Participation was voluntary in this study. The participants will be invited until the spots are filled. The principal of each of the three schools will be invited to participate through a recruitment letter sent to the identified school site using purposive or convenience sampling methods. Once the principal agreed to participate, the principal was asked
to provide the researcher with a list of teachers on their staff for recruitment purposes only. Upon, receiving this list, teachers were invited to participate through a recruitment letter which was sent to the identified school site using purposive or convenience sampling for selecting participants. This method will help select those participants who the researcher believes to be able to provide the best information concerning successful high poverty, high performing schools. Once the teachers at each school and the principal at each school agreed to participate, they were given an informed consent document to sign and return by a specific date to a specified location. Once the informed consent from each participant was received, the participant received the survey and information on how to complete it as well as where to return it.

**Data Collection Method and Instrumentation**

Surveys are common ways of collecting qualitative data, and can also be used to generate qualitative data (Routledge, 2007). The survey will be developed as a perception survey. The survey will measure the perceptions of teachers and the school’s principal thoughts about being at a high poverty, high performing schools and the characteristics as well as practices present in these high-performing schools that help them succeed. This will provide one type of data for school improvement planning. The survey will look to see if these high poverty, high performing schools have the same common characteristics, practices and outcomes as other high poverty, high performing schools that are shown by researchers like Marzano (2003), Reeves (year) 90/90/90 study and other high poverty, high performing school experts. The survey will be validated by the common characteristics found in most of the research (See Table 1). The questions from the survey will cause discussion that might help the school to improve the student achievement in high poverty schools. The survey will be developed using information
from OSPI webpage and the research project Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools by G. Sue Shannon (Kannapel & Clements, year; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007; Taylor & Hibpshman, 2005). Using the information from these research projects ensures that the survey is validated and has been proven through literature.

During the survey, the principals were given opportunities to comment on things they felt enabled them to become successful high poverty schools. Also, when I first met with the principals to get permission as well as informed consent forms signed, each of my interactions was ways to get to know each one personally. I wanted them to provide information about any thoughts or ideas that they had that would help me better understand their school and why their high poverty school is beating the odds. The comments could be centered around what they believed were the important characteristics theirs teacher had in their high-poverty schools, what practices and policies at their schools they believed contribute to creating a successful high poverty school, what were the most important characteristics of leaders in high poverty schools as well as what type leadership style they used in creating a successful high-poverty schools.

**Data Analysis**

After the survey is given, the data from the survey will be labeled with the research subjects’ pseudonyms. The surveys will be transcribed into text. The data will be grouped according to the respective stakeholders involved in the surveys. The data will be used to improve the researchers' understanding of the characteristics, practices and outcomes in high poverty, high performing schools that help disadvantaged students learn. The data might also be used for school principals and teachers to identify their strengths. Obtaining the views of principals and teachers about their school is an important part of the process.
Case study data analysis usually involves an iterative, spiraling, or a cyclical process (Creswell, 1998; Palys, 1997; Silverman, 2000). The analysis of data will begin informally during implementation of the surveys when recurring themes, patterns, and categories become evident. Once written records are available, the analysis of the data will involve the coding of data and the identification of salient points or structures. The researcher will analyze the surveys in order to find themes and patterns. In addition, the researcher will examine the records and documents from the study to develop a narrative description of categorical issues that emerge from the analysis done in the study.

The key characteristics that are specific for this study that focuses on principals and teachers in successful high poverty schools are their voices being heard, my role as an insider and my positionality to this issue (Hill, 1995). Schools are diverse setting that combines students and teachers as well as principals of different cultures, backgrounds and identities which affect the content of learning, the process of learning, and the cognition of learning (Brookfield, 2005 p. 50). I will utilize both interpretational and reflective analysis of data in this case study. I used my personal experiences in my life as an educator in a very successful high poverty school. Interpretational analysis has been explained as “examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 466). Interpretational analysis will significantly assist me in answering the research questions. The reflective analytical aspect depends on “primarily on intuition and judgment in order to portray or evaluate the phenomenon being studied” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 472). Because of the nature of this study, reflective analysis was utilized. My experiences combined with the interpretation of the data collected will provide me a well-
rounded view of the factors that make these schools successes and led me to clear answers to the research questions.

This case study will use a survey as a data collection method. Triangulation will be used to find the true nature of the phenomenon of high poverty, high performing schools. The use of this technique will provide me with the opportunity to triangulate data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions. The one specific technique will be tabulating frequency of events or responses to questions on the survey. This case study will deliberately sort the data in many different ways to expose or create new insights and will deliberately look for conflicting data to disconfirm the analysis. I will categorize, tabulate, and recombine data to address the initial propositions or purpose of the study, and conduct crosschecks of facts and discrepancies in accounts. Patton (2002) stated that triangulation means, “using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches” (p. 247). Also, the use of triangulation can be described as “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods” (Denzin, 1970, as cited in Maxwell, 1996, p. 75). Triangulation reduces the risk that conclusions will echo only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method. Triangulation also allows the researcher to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations developed from the research (Maxwell 1996, p. 75).

Items will be coded according to primary categories. I will code the factors that teachers and leaders identified in surveys as being significant in one of these categories.

**Limitations**

Because the study focused on three schools teachers and principals in high-poverty, high-performing schools, the findings may not represent all high poverty, high performing schools
**Delimitations**

The study was delimited to only three schools that reflected minimal standardized test scores of 80% in both reading and math, and had more than 90% of its students receiving federally funded free or reduced lunches. The school stakeholders that participated in the interviews were delimited to the school leaders and 3 teachers from each school.
Chapter 4
Case Study: Report of the Findings

The purpose of this research study was to develop an understanding of what are the characteristics and processes or practices implemented by leaders and teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools as well as their perceived experiences. Further, the goal was to focus on and learn what characteristics along with what practices leaders and teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools are doing that transforms kids at risk to children of promise. What practices and characteristics enable them to be successful despite the odds stacked against them? The study examined high-poverty, high-performing schools and investigated the environmental and personal characteristics that supported their success. Furthermore, by investigating the role and characteristics of the school’s principal and teachers it is hoped that the information from this study would lead to other leaders and teachers understanding how others are successful in high-poverty, high performing schools and influence other schools with similar demographics, where children who live in poverty are not succeeding.

Case Study

This case study was conducted to examine how high-poverty, high performing schools managed to show strong academics despite the odds being stacked against them due to the cycle of poverty. For this study, data was collected using a survey. The data collected from the survey was then used to examine the teachers and leadership in these schools that contribute to its high level of success. The three schools were chosen because they have consistently demonstrated a high level of achievement compared with other schools with similar demographics. The three schools featured are located in areas characterized by high poverty as well as gangs, drugs,
violence, crime and high rates of unemployment. These schools academic achievement levels are particularly impressive.

The setting for the study was three high-poverty, high-performing schools that had high levels of students from low income poverty stricken home and at schools that construct a distinctive culture which promote and put emphasis on high academic achievement. One of the great things that happen during my study was I had opportunity to have personal interactions with the principals in each school. These schools placed a strong focus on building strong relationships between the school, parents, and community while fostering a sense of family and unity so that students could have a strong institution to rely upon. Relying on my personally experience and insider knowledge, these schools places where students felt safe and wanted to come. These schools made students aware of their potential and encouraged them to dream big by exposing them to a multitude of meaningful experiences and opportunities for their future.

In this case study, three schools were chosen to be studied. A principal and three teachers from each school were given surveys. Invitations and informed consent letters accompanied the teacher and principal surveys and were sent electronically to each participant at each participating school. Also, when I first met with the principals to get permission as well as informed consent forms signed, each of my interactions was ways to get know each one personally. I wanted them to provide information about any thoughts or ideas that they had that would help me better understand their school and why their high poverty school is beating the odds. During this process, I reviewed many studies that focused on schools in which students were achieving at greater levels than would be predicted based on their demographic characteristics (See Table 1). Some of these research studies reviewed, investigated high-performing schools in specific settings and locations with specific student demographics (See
Table 1). This body of research includes findings from studies on high-poverty, high-performing schools around the nation (See Table 1). Each study was investigated to determine which characteristics were found most often among high poverty, high-performing schools. This case study looked at the perceptions the teachers and principals had about their success in their school (See Table 1). Performance was measured in terms of high scores on standardized tests, often in spite of intricate circumstances such as high levels of poverty.

The first school used in this study has an excellent rating with an enrollment of 408 students. The population of economically disadvantage students is 77.2%. On the Ohio Achievement 3rd grade reading test, 95% of the student passed. On the Ohio Achievement 6th grade reading test, 95.3% passed. On the Ohio Achievement 3rd grade math test, 95.3% of the students passed. For the math scores for 6th grade, 83.7% of the students passed the test. This school had an attendance rate of 97.0%. The second school used in this study had an excellent rating with an enrollment of 411 students. The population of economically disadvantaged students in this school is 73%. On the Ohio Achievement 3rd grade reading test, 89% of the student passed the test. On the Ohio Achievement 6th grade reading test, 83.3% passed the assessment. On the Ohio Achievement 3rd grade math test, 96.4% of the students passed. For the math scores for 6th grade, 80.7% of the students passed the test. This school had an attendance rate of 97.0%. The final school used in this study had an effective rating with an enrollment of 1653 students. The population of economically disadvantaged students in this school is 63%. On the Ohio graduation 10th grade reading test, 85% of the student passed the test. On the Ohio graduation 10th math test, 83% passed the assessment. This school had an attendance rate of 97.0% and a graduation rate 94% (Ohio Department of Education, year).
The schools chosen in this study have many unique qualities. These schools are the schools we rarely hear about in the media. The time frame for this study was just a small snapshot in time. My personal interaction with the principals and the surveys, my insider role and positionality in my research helped me to develop a better understanding of each of these schools. My personal interaction as well as the above factors helped me draw many conclusions that help me create the findings in this study. The changes and themes that emerge from this study did not just happen overnight. The commitment from each of the principals and teachers took many years to develop as well as cultivate. The change in these schools did not happen without much sacrifice from the teachers and leaders at each of these schools. The success at these schools took lots of time as well as hard work also. For some schools the change was immediate and for others it took years.

Many themes emerged from an analysis of the survey. The teachers and principals in each of these schools balanced each other out in order to create a successful high-poverty, high-performing schools (See Figure 5). The inputs or characteristic and processes of the principals have to balance with the inputs or characteristic of the teachers to create a successful as well as an equal playing field. These themes can be lumped into four major categories and each category has sub themes. First is the theme of collectivity. The collectivity theme is the need for teachers and principals to create an environment where there is respect and a willingness to work together. Under the collectivity theme the sub themes that emerge are implementation of a clear mission and vision and the shaping of a positive school culture. The next theme was the notion that the teachers and principals were promoters of successful students. Teachers and principals as promoters of success created a student centered, no excuses environment where goals were set and students needed to be lifetime learners. The concept of teachers and principals having high
expectations for all, creating a supportive learning environment and the concept of instructional leadership were the sub themes that emerged. Another theme that emerged was the teachers and principals as resources for each other and where there are high levels of collaboration, motivation, innovation and collaborative and shared leadership established. From this theme, there were some sub themes that surfaced. These sub themes that emerge from this theme of teachers and principals as resources for each other theme was high levels of collaboration and communication and shared and collaborative leadership (See Table 2). The final theme that emerged was innovative successful agents of change. This theme encompassed strong leaders, high levels of support for teachers,” strong” teachers and strong instructional practices which applied to the researched questions and aligned with inputs, processes, and outcomes that were found throughout this study (See Figure 5).

**Table 2 SUMMARY OF COMMON THEMES IN STUDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Characteristic/Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collectivity</td>
<td>Respect for each other and work to together</td>
<td>• Implements a clear mission and vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shapes School Culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoters of Success</td>
<td>Student centered, no excuses environment where goals are set and students need to be lifetime learners</td>
<td>• High Expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Instructional/ Leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Supportive Learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and Principals as Resource for Each Others</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>• Collaboration and Shared Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative successful agents of change</td>
<td>Teachers and principal doing what it takes to make sure failure is not an option.</td>
<td>• Strong leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• High levels of support for teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong instructional practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5 High-Poverty, High-Performing School Balance

Successful High-Poverty, High-performing schools
SURVEY COMMENTS

1. “The overall attitude of staff and administration in this school is very professional, positive, caring and knowledgeable. I am enjoying my work here, and enjoy the diversity of our students, even though this diversity involves huge challenges.”

2. “I am a strong Principal with an open door policy. Three “c” is what we operate on. Communications, Caring and Collaboration”

3. “My school has a positive school culture that does not allow failure as an option”

4. “My teachers are supportive and caring to one another as well as the students.”

5. “I have dedicated and knowledgeable teachers who help take part in all the decision making processes and allow me to be a strong leaders.”

6. “The teachers at my school share a passion for teaching and take pride in student learning. The atmosphere is positive for teaching and learning.”

7. “I believe the children feel safe, cared for at my school.”

8. “I am a very supportive principal.”

9. “Leadership, leadership, leadership. Our school has a clear vision for our school.”

10. “There is an overall expectation that everyone in the building will give and receive respect.”

11. “Strong professionalism with cooperation, honesty, student-centeredness, and there has been effectively communicated clearly demonstrated in our schools success.”

12. “High expectations; that's the key factor, I think. The expectation that every student here can learn and every student will learn no matter what, that is what's made a tremendous difference”

13. “When you come into this school, every child will be respected.”

14. “Every child will be expected to learn and every person who is in the building will be expected to teach that child; not just the classroom teacher everybody has a part in that child's education.”

15. “Everything leads back to student achievement.”

16. “If the purpose of the school is to learn, then that’s what has to happen. You have to facilitate that for children. It’s all about success…we told them every single day that this is a school for success; it is not a school for failure. If you do not want to work, this is not where you need to be.”

17. “A positive school culture is what oxygen does for our body… It keeps us alive.

18. My most important roles is to be an instructional leader”

19. My leadership style is a coaching style or one who cheers on success and looks good only because of the talent that I hires

20. “I am a supportive principal who assists teachers in maintaining all aspects of the building operations.”
Collectivity Themes

The theme of collectivity is important for the principal and teachers to be successful in a high poverty school. This collectivity can be considered the exchange of influence which will help provide the foundation for the principal and teacher relationship needed for the success. The method used to develop the clear school vision and mission statement demonstrates a collective endeavor. Shaping a positive and supportive learning environment is a method also for building a sense of collectivity. Working together collectively can be the foundation for an exchange of influence to foster change in a high poverty school and build instructional competencies in ways that produce high academic outcomes for all students. The collectivity sub themes that emerged were the implementation of a clear mission and vision and the shaping of a positive school culture. Collectivity was part of the cultural fabric of all three schools.

School Culture. The principal’s role in changing or creating a positive school culture is meaningful as is the importance of the principal being successful in that role. A principal role in creating a positive school culture has been depicted as “imperative” and “deliberate”. These principals focused their time on creating a positive school culture that allows the designing of instruction for students to become successful and also achieve significant outcomes (Habegger, 2008, p. 43). Developing a positive school culture is another key component of instructional leadership demonstrated by effective principals (Edmonds, 1979). Many researchers have revealed some common themes in terms of the school culture present in high poverty, high performing schools.

The school’s culture is defined as a sense of mission and its core values. These things are hard things to measure. Schools often try to communicate culture and values through the schools
visions and mission statements. The school culture manifests itself in daily operations. In this study, values and culture stood out as one of the strongest and most consistent contrasts among school beating the odds despite their circumstances. The effect of setting a vision and mission in these high-poverty, high-performing school’s culture was emphasized in the research of Habegger (2008) and at all of these schools as well. Van der Westhuizen et al. (2005) found that successful schools placed emphasis on values, in particular academic achievement, order and discipline, respect, and pride, to a high degree and this was communicated through the surveys that these schools believe this notion (See Figure 6). All of these schools put emphasis on values that served to bind the stakeholders at the school together, while understanding that lack of shared values was detrimental to the schools. These school principals as well as teachers believed that effective leaders in high poverty, high performing schools create positive school cultures, which have a positive effect on student achievement (See Figure 6). In these schools, a school culture was developed and supported that centered on the importance of improvement in teaching and high expectations for all students as well as achievement (See Figure 6A, 6B, & 7B). These principals have tapped into the notion that when changing their school's culture they should first try to understand the existing culture. Almost 100% of the principals believe that their school had and environment conducive to learning. Over 90% of principals stated that their top priorities were to shape a positive school culture (See Figure 6). One of the principal’s stated, “A positive school culture is what oxygen does for our body… It keeps us alive.” (See Figure 5A). Another principal said, “My school has a positive school culture that does not allow failure as an option” (See Figure 5A). One principal also stated, “I am a strong Principal with an open door policy. Three “c” is what we operate on. Communications, Culture and Collaboration” (See Figure 5A).
Figure 6 Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme School Culture

- The school is a happy place for learning. 100%
- The culture of the school is conducive to learning. 100%
- One of my top priorities is to shape a positive school culture. 100%
- Successes in my schools are celebrated frequently. 100%
- There is a feeling of respect among and between staff members and students. 97%
- The needs of the children come first in our school. 100%
Clear Sense of Purpose, Vision and Mission. All of these schools identified their schools core beliefs clearly for all the major stakeholders to understand (See Figure 6A). These schools create a shared vision with a focus on every student succeeding as well as improving learning and teaching in their school (See Figure 6A). Everybody in the school seems to know where the school was going and why it was important to go there (See Figure 6A & 6B). For these schools, focusing on achieving was a shared and clear vision set by the principal. All of the teachers understood their role in achieving the vision (See Figure 6B). Educating these students who were trying to break the cycle of poverty was all of these schools primary focus no matter what the situation was. As I see it, money or no money these schools found ways to reach and teach all of their students. Everyone in each of these schools was on the same page and had the same goals as well as aspiration in mind for themselves and their students. Failure was not an option at any of these schools. Students would not be defined by educators who speak negatively about students who live in poverty. These students would not become another statistic or stereotype of an impoverished area. With the teachers and the principals of these schools and students on board with the same vision and mission in mind, students would surpass those in most schools. It was noted that these schools rose from the bottom to the very top in a matter of a few years.

Of the three principals, 100 % believed that their school had a clear sense of purpose and their school shared a common understanding of what it takes to become or maintain success (See Figure 6A & 6B). Over 90% of the principals believed that their staff was committed to achieving the school’s goals and kept the school’s goals in mind when making important decisions (See Figure 6A & 6B). A 100% of the principals believed that they communicate a clear vision for our school. For the teaches 100 % of them believe their school has a clear sense of purpose and their school share a common understanding of what it takes to become or
maintain success at our school (See Figure 6A & 6B). Over 90% of the teachers believed that they had a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve, the staff at their school was committed to achieving the school’s goals, and the school’s primary emphasis is improving student learning (See Figure 6A & 6B). Each of the principal’s determination to succeed was evident in the data from the survey and my personal interactions with them. One of the principal’s stated very proudly that: “Leadership, leadership, leadership. Our school has a clear vision for our school. There is an overall expectation that everyone in the building will give and receive respect. Strong professionalism with cooperation, honesty, student-centeredness has been effective communicated and is clearly demonstrated in our schools success” (See Figure 5A).

As I interacted with the principals, I was able to understand their school vision. I saw a clear sense of purpose in their schools. This was not only clear in the data from the survey but from my interaction with each of them. When a school has no focus, no clear goals, or no clear purpose, it is a place where failure is an option. But when you have a school whose principals set high expectations, create a clear sense of purpose where failure is not an option, principals are instructional leaders and change agents and you get the success you see in the data of these three schools. You allow the voices of those educators who believe that all children can learn regardless of their race, class or gender to be heard. This is so evident especially when you hear a principal say: “The teachers at my school share a passion for teaching and take pride in student learning. The atmosphere is positive for teaching and learning” and “My school has a positive school culture that does not allow failure as an option” (See Figure 5A).
Figure 6A Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Clear Purpose

- As the leader of the school, I communicate a clear vision for our school. 100
- My school has a clear sense of purpose. 100
- My school shares a common understanding of what it takes to become or maintain success at our school. 100
- The staff at my school is committed to achieving the school’s goals. 94
- My school’s primary emphasis is improving student learning. 100
- I keep the school’s goals in mind when making important decisions. 95
Figure 6B Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Clear Purpose

- My school has a clear sense of purpose: 100%
- The staff keeps the school's goals in mind when making important decisions: 98%
- The school's primary emphasis is improving student learning: 98%
- The staff at my school is committed to achieving the school's goals: 98%
- My school shares a common understanding of what it takes to become or maintain success at our school: 99%
- I have a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve: 98%
Promoters of Success Theme

The principal and teachers at these schools had the same ideology and had the same goal of success for all students. The principal and teachers shared in motivating each other, others in the school, and students to want to be successful. The principal and teachers in these schools are promoters of success and this was another major theme. This notion created unity between the principal and teachers where there was an environment conducive to the exchange of influence, which was essential in helping these schools succeed. These promoters of successful students create a student-centered, no excuses environment where goals were set and students become lifetime learners. This notion was present in all three schools. The principal and teachers demonstrated a student first focus. High expectations for all students, supportive learning environment and instructional leadership are the sub themes that emerged the promoters of success theme.

High Expectations for All. High expectations for all students were one of the key factors identified in the survey. The expectation that every student can learn and every student will learn no matter what was communicated as a common theme among all teachers and principals in the study (See Figure 7 & 7B). They felt having high expectations made a tremendous difference. It seemed that as leadership changed, the expectations changed and a belief that every child will be respected, every child will learn, and every person in the building will teach that child was present in all three schools (See Figure 7).

From the survey, what was fundamental to high, poverty, high-performing schools was the culture of high expectations shared by the teachers and the school’s principal (See Figure 7). Most importantly, the culture or the conviction that all children can learn, achieve and succeed
academically no matter what was present (See Figure 7 & 7A). From interpretation of the surveys, the teacher efficacy was very high and the teachers establish high expectations for themselves as well as set high expectations for their students and their students learning so that their schools would succeed (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). The teachers had high expectations for their performances and the performances of their students. The students also learned to have high expectations of their performances and that of their teachers. This exchange helped the schools succeed.

The culture of high expectations seems to be embedded in a caring and nurturing environment according to the teachers' responses to the questions (See Figure 7). Creating connections with the students seem to be the way to make students who live in poverty start to believe that they can achieve (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). The survey identified that these factors in the school environment produce resilience in students and pointed out that strong and supportive relationships with teachers is a crucial factor for success (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). Further, the survey showed that each school’s principal made sure to root the belief system of a culture of high expectations for all students in tangible, measurable goals (Carter 2000, Ragland et al., 2002). One of the principal stated that: “High expectations; that's the key factor, I think. The expectation that every student here can learn and every student will learn no matter what, that is what's made a tremendous difference” (See Figure 5A). Ultimately, the culture of high expectations in each of these schools became what Haberman (1999) calls a "common ideology" that contributed to the school's unity of purpose and a sense of identity (Jesse et al., 2004).

In all three high performing schools studied, the teachers and principals had a shared understanding and responsibility to set high expectation for academic achievement for all students (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). In each school, the learning objectives for students were clear
and specific, which helped to establish high expectations for all students as well as guide all the teachers' actions that supported high levels of student learning needed to produce great test scores. The common themes came through a clear and ambitious goal for each student (See Figure 7).

In many cases, teachers resiliently believed in the importance of high standards for students (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). However, in some high poverty schools standards and expectations sometimes tend to fall short in practice. Also, the aim high, achieve low doctrine seems to happen in many classrooms. Among the positive findings in my research, 100% of the respondents believe that most students in their school knew what was expected of them and 100% of them believed that their students were motivated to learn (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). The level of confidence for students at all of the schools was very high (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). 100% of the teachers believed that their students could learn and believe that they could effectively educate the students in their high poverty school (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B). In the beginning of the study, I was able to draw many conclusions from my interactions with the principals. I was also able to give a voice to these teachers and principals who are rarely recognized for their great accomplishments. One principal stated that: “When you come into this school, every child will be respected. Every child will be expected to learn and every person who is in the building will be expected to teach that child; not just the classroom teacher everybody has a part in that child's education. Everything leads back to student achievement” (See Figure 5A). According to the survey data, many of the respondents felt that most students are motivated to learn and the school set high standards for all those involved. This percentage was between 95% and 100% (See Figure 7, 7A & 7B).
Figure 7 Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme High Expectation

- My school has high expectations for academics for all students. 100%
- In my school all students are expected to achieve high standards. 100%
- Teachers do whatever it takes to help all students meet high academic expectations. 95%
- All students are consistently challenged by a rigorous curriculum at my school. 98%
- I believe all students can learn at my school. 100%
- As a teacher, I use effective strategies to help low-performing students meet high academic expectations and standards. 98%
Figure 7A Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme High Expectation

- **As a leader, I set high expectation in my school.** 100%
- **In my school, all students are expected to achieve high standards.** 100%
- **Teachers at my school use effective strategies to help low-performing students meet high academic expectations and standards.** 98%
- **My teachers do whatever it takes to help all students meet high academic expectations.** 98%
- **I believe all students can learn at my school.** 100%
- **All students are consistently challenged by a rigorous curriculum.** 99%
Figure 7B Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Teacher Efficacy

As a teacher, I feel that I am making a significant educational difference in the lives of my students. 100

As a teacher, I usually know how to get through to students. 100

As a teacher, if I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated students. 98

As a teacher, I am successful with the students in my class. 100
Instructional and Effective Shared Leadership

What constitutes a good leader or an instructional leader? Good leadership or instructional leadership has changed over time. Instructional leadership illustrates the manner in which principals influence teaching and student learning in their schools. Principals can influence student learning through instructional leadership in a number of ways. The principals who have backgrounds as strong classroom instructors can provide instructional leadership by using their own personal knowledge as well as experience to develop curriculum, provide professional development opportunities, and monitor the implementation of effective instructional practices by teachers in the classroom (Edmonds, 1979). Recent research promotes shared instructional leadership, which enables the principal of the school to build capacity for school wide change and improvement in student learning for all students (Ylimaki, 2007). Most of the high poverty, high performing school leaders have demonstrated the ability to ―share instructional leadership‖ (Ylimaki, 2007), establishing an environment where changes and enhancement in instructional strategies come from not only the principal but also the teachers as well as other instructional staff members. Effective principals use prior experiences to build and increase the capacity for instructional leadership in the school and this was present in all the schools.

All the principals were described as knowledgeable instructional leader (See Figure 7 and 8). The teachers characterized the principals as having a high level of knowledge about curriculum and effective teaching (See Figure 9A). The principals considered themselves as a hands-on leader in classroom instruction, with willingness to work with a teacher (See Figure 7 and 8). One of the principal’s stated that, “My most important roles is to be an instructional leader” The teachers respect the principal’s commitment to get personally involved and help them plan activities (See Figure 7 and 8). All the teachers seem to be confident in their principal’s
knowledge due to the success of the strategies that had been implemented. All of the principals displayed a strong combination of knowledge of the curriculum, effective instructional strategies, and a willingness and ability to help teachers plan and create lessons and activities that will help students learn. All these skills directly help improve the quality of instruction at all the schools (See Figure 7, 8 and 9).

At each of these schools, the principals provided a lot of support for professional development for their staff. Even more important than support with resources was the support provided in instructional leadership at the school (See Figure 7, 8 and 9). Each of the leaders believed in modeling, implementing effective instructional practices for their teachers, and working with the schools vision as reality (See Figure 7, 8 and 9). Teachers and principals ensured implementation of those effective instructional practices (See Figure 7, 7A, 7B, 8 and 9). Also, the principals worked to create structures that allowed and encouraged collaboration among teachers. In essence, the principals had a vision for distributed instructional leadership and worked with the teachers to make the schools successful (See Figure 7, 8 and 9). It seemed that many of the principals believed that failure was not an option at their school. One principal affirmed that, “If the purpose of the school is to learn, then that’s what has to happen. You have to facilitate that for children. It’s all about success…we told them every single day that this is a school for success; it is not a school for failure. If you do not want to work, this is not where you need to be.”

For all of the schools, high expectations for students and teachers were important and critical to the success of the school. I uncovered several clear themes about these schools and instructional leadership from the surveys at the school and current research. A crucial finding was that all of the schools’ principals had high expectations for student achievement, teacher
performance, and professional growth (See Figure 7, 8 & 9). One principal commented that, “The overall attitude of my staff in this school is very professional, positive, caring and knowledgeable. I am enjoying my work here, and enjoy the diversity of our students, even though this diversity involves huge challenges” (See Figure 5A). A 100% of the principals identified themselves as an instructional leader and used this characteristic to align their curriculum with the state standards (See Figure 5A, 7, 8, 9 & 9A). Also, 100% of the principals stated that they made clear to the staff their expectations for meeting instructional goals (See Figure 6, 7, 8 and 9). All principals believed they understood how children learned, and they had leadership roles and skills that influenced their school’s instructional practices (See Figure 8 & 9). Many of the teachers expressed the high standards set by the principal in terms of high student achievement and instructional leadership though their responses on the survey. Many of my conclusions also came from my insider role in the research, my interactions with the principals and my own positionality to successful high poverty schools. These expectations spotlighted the actions that a teacher should take to guarantee learning and improvement for all students (See Figure 6, 7, 8 and 9). In addition to being instructional leaders, over 90% of the teachers and principals agreed that shared leadership is encouraged and that they are asked to participate in decision-making (See Figure 8 & 9). All respondents agreed that teachers are leaders in the school and the staff at their schools collaboratively develop the plans for the school (See Figure 7, 8 and 9). This was not only present in the data from the survey but also my interactions with the principal. Each principal’s voice was allowed to be heard when we interacted and from the data on the survey. I also had the ability to empathize with the teacher and principals since I work at a successful high poverty school.
Figure 8 Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Instructional Leadership

- I consider myself an instructional leader: 100%
- As the leader of the school, I make clear to the staff my expectations for meeting instructional goals: 100%
- As the leader of the school, I understand how children learn: 100%
- As the leader of the school, my leadership skill in this role influences instructional practices: 100%
- As the leader of the school, I monitor progress in alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment: 93%
Figure 9 Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Shared Leadership

100
As the principal, I make some academic decisions without the input of teachers. ; 100

90
Teachers and staff members are encouraged to participate in decision-making. 90

90
Teachers are leaders in the school. 90

100
Leadership in the school is shared between the principal and staff. 100

90
The staff gives the principal input on the purchase of resources. 90

118
Figure 9A Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Curriculum Aligned Standards

- Classroom activities are intellectually stimulating. 98%
- The curriculum I use is aligned with state standards 98%
- The schools curriculum is aligned with state standards 100%
- Instructional materials used at my school are aligned with the state standards 98%
- Instruction at my school builds on what students already know. 99%
- Schoolwork is meaningful to students at my school 99%
- Teachers use a variety of approaches and activities to help students learning. 98%
- I know the research basis for the instructional strategies being used in my school 100%
Supportive Learning Environment. All three schools agreed that having a supportive learning environment was a key factor to the success of their school. The teachers wanted students to have a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Teachers wanted the students to feel respected and united with the staff. Teachers agreed that the students should be engaged in learning at all times and instruction should be personalized or differentiated while small learning environments increase student contact with teachers. The teachers agreed that supportive learning environments can be defined through the school’s climate and culture as well as illustrated by practical and high expectations for behavior and academics (See Figure 7, 7A, 7B, 8, 9 and 9A).

From the survey, it was clear that teachers believe that they helped create a supportive learning environment by communicating high expectations for learning (See Figure 7, 7A, 7B, 8, 9 and 9A). An overwhelming amount of the teachers strongly agreed that supportive classroom environments help students foster a sense of efficacy (See Figure 10). This would help students see themselves as successful learners. Creating such a learning environment was one factor that 100% of all the teachers agreed upon and help to encouraged students to give input on their instructional practices (See Figure 10). Also, all the teachers believed that their school had a supportive learning environment where all students could learn as well excel. All the schools rated having a supportive learning environment where all students can learn valuable and that without this factor they would not be where they are now (See Figure 10). Many of the principals believe that they fostered a positive and supportive learning environment. “I am a very supportive principal “one of the principal’s declared with great conviction (See Figure 5A).
Figure 10 Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Supportive Learning Environment

- The school environment is conducive to learning: 100%
- I encourage students to give input on my instruction: 95%
- I show genuine care for each student: 98%
- I am engaging students at all learning levels: 99%
- I encourage students to articulate and share their ideas with one another: 98%
- I utilize students as learning aids for each other: 99%
- I create a supportive learning environment where all students can learn: 100%
- I create an environment where students feel comfortable taking risks: 98%
- Students ask meaningful questions: 98%
- I encourage students to ask meaningful questions: 98%
Teacher and Principal as Resources Theme

The teachers and principals are two of most important factors in ensuring that high poverty schools succeed. Teachers should share vital information with the principal so that all decisions that are made put the student’s first. The principal should share information with the teachers so they can make informed decision about instructional strategies. The principal and teachers can be the best resources for each other. This interaction can happen when they have high levels of collaboration and communication and shared leadership. The theme of teachers and principals as resources for each other emerged and created sub themes of high levels of collaboration and collaborative and shared leadership.

High Levels of Collaboration and Communication. The other two characteristics that were present in all three of the schools studied were a well-developed sense of purpose among and good collaboration among teachers and principals. The sense of purpose came from the leadership provided at the school. School administration sets the tone and expectations for the school, encouraging and motivating staff members to share those beliefs as well as recruiting new staff members who shared them. Teachers shared a strong belief in the importance of learning and student academic achievement. In these schools, a school culture was developed as well as supported that focused on the significance of endless improvement in respect to teaching and high expectations for students (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8 & 11).

Collaboration as a key to success was a common theme among all the schools, especially collaboration between teachers and principals (See Figure 11). The collaboration seems to be planned and explicitly shared (See Figure 11). The beliefs about collaboration with the teacher
and principal inspired everyone to share ideas and strategies for children at risk (See Figure 11).
From the survey, the common theme of collaboration led to stronger feelings of mutual support among teachers and increased unity. The collaboration theme seems to have strengthened the common sense of purpose ideology. Further, it seems from the survey that teacher collaboration and sense of purpose seemed to go hand in hand with school successes. The teachers were able to work through problems, identifying achievement gaps in instruction and curriculum while working together to correct them to improve student learning (See Figure 9A & 11).

Collaboration is an important component for a positive school culture for a number of reasons in these three schools. Collaboration among all teachers at these schools was identified as a critical factor to each school’s success and a strong piece of each of the principal’s leadership (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8 &11). The notion of collaboration at each of the schools between teachers seems to be expected and was not an option. It seems that frequent collaborations were a part of the equation for the success of these schools. Many of the teachers agreed that collaboration was one of the most beneficial factors in teacher improvement (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8 &11).

Collaboration is a theme that quickly emerged in every survey conducted in all the schools. Teachers stressed the importance that the principal placed on collaboration (See Figure 11). From the survey, teachers believed that collaboration was the single greatest influence on their success (See Figure 11). Over 90 percent of the time the teachers and principals strongly agreed that teachers in the school share responsibility for the achievement of all students (See Figure 11). Many of teachers agreed with the notion that teachers routinely collaborate, using real student work as the focus of their discussion (See Figure 11). In addition to, or perhaps
because of strong leadership, "strong" teacher collaboration was highlighted in all three schools in this study (See Figure 11).

**Figure 11 Percentages of Respondents Who Strongly Agree with Theme Teacher Collaboration**

![Pie chart showing percentages of respondents who strongly agree with various aspects of teacher collaboration.]

- Teachers and the staff in my school use community partners to ensure success in our school: 100%
- My school uses a system to obtain a variety of perspectives when making decisions: 90%
- Staff members at my school work together to solve problems related to school issues: 88%
- Teachers at my school have frequent communication with the families of their students: 98%
- The staff at my school routinely work together to plan what will be taught: 90%
- The staff at my school works in teams across grade levels to help increase student learning: 95%
Innovative, Successful Agents of Change Themes

Although each school has some differences, the three shared the common theme of excellence in academic achievement. Each of the schools has teachers and leaders who are innovative, successful agents of change. Innovative, successful agents of change are the principals and teachers in these high-poverty, high-performing schools. These innovative people have the poise or thought processes to cause a change from the traditional ways or the norm of dealing with students and their issues in high-poverty, high-performing schools. Each school had strong leaders, excellent teachers, and excellent instruction, which are fundamental to improving student learning and achievement.

Strong Leadership. In all three schools, the principals set directions, developed people, and designed the organization (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8, 9A &11). The principals developed shared goals and a common sense of purpose, which set direction. They developed people by demonstrating proper behavior, stimulating and motivating teachers to achieve and improve, and providing them the essential support to do so. In designing the organization, the principals worked to positively affect school cultures, adjusted school structures as needed, and developed high level collaboration and communications within the schools. The three principals in this study demonstrated strong leadership and the ability to have teacher and students follow their lead. All three stressed that nothing should happen at the school that was not in the best interest of the students or that hindered their learning processes (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8, 9A &11).

Each of the principals believed strongly in the need for all teachers to share the goals of the school and beliefs about how those goals should be accomplished. These principals create and foster mentoring relationships that can improve teacher self-confidence, knowledge of the
content and effective instructional strategies for kids living in poverty and high expectations for everyone in the school. These principals demonstrated a high degree of teamwork in regards to the achievement of goals and objectives related to the mission of the school. For the teachers at these schools, having a principal set clear direction resulted in a unified school wide focus and mission which lead to shared, informed decision that helped ensure the schools' success (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8, 9A &11).

Many challenges create obstacles for high poverty, high performing schools in general. Finding the right ingredients to create school improvement is difficult at best. Considerable research has been conducted to describe strong effective school leadership for high poverty schools. At each of these schools the principals create structures to ensure success. Mainly, they were instructional leaders, motivators who put strong emphasis on teachers as leaders. These principals created a positive school culture with high expectations for teachers and students and a belief in the need for high level collaboration as well as communication and continuous improvement. These principals are strong leaders who worked to develop and cultivate positive school culture. These three high performing schools have strong leaders who place emphasis on instruction, students, expectations, continuous improvement, collaboration, and doing whatever it takes to improve the future of students at risk (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8, 9A &11).

Analysis of the data identified three themes of success in high poverty, high performing schools. The themes revolved around school culture, instructional and effective leadership with support for effective instruction, and support for achievement. When examining the three schools, all three principals set and maintained a clear purpose and direction for their schools and employed a very strong, positive influence on people’s zeal to follow their lead (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8, 9A &11). All three demonstrated the core skills that Leithwood and Riehl (2005) assert
are necessary for school success. At each school, the school’s fundamental purpose was meeting the needs of children. These needs were paramount and were explicit. This was not a meager rhetorical embellishment, but rather a deeply held belief that became very apparent over time. The principals wanted to make those students and teachers feel safe and loved. Everyone provided a secure, nurturing environment. At each school, the principal’s commitments became the school’s commitments; their expectations became the school's expectations; their mission became the school’s mission (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8, 9A &11). All three principals understood that building the right environment was only the first step of many in improving student performance. These principals understood that students and teachers have to believe that the goals being set for them are achievable as well as realistic and that they will be provided the resources and tools needed to achieve them. Not one of the three principals would allow the conditions of high poverty to be used as an excuse for low performance. They knew if teachers and the students were going to improve their performances, the leadership needed opportunities to build their intellectual and experiential capacity. Each principal believed in modeling best instructional practices and, whenever and wherever possible, redesigned organizational structures to enable higher levels of performance by all. Central to these organizational changes was the desire to strengthen school cultures and build collaborative processes (See Figure 6, 6A, 7, 8, 9A &11).

**Strong Teachers.** The teachers in all three schools were great teachers that made the difference between a student who achieves at high levels and a student who slips through the cracks. The teachers succeeded as part of a strong, well-supported instructional team with the help of great principals. These teachers have to do more to ensure that every student has an opportunity to
learn. They all use culturally relevant material to ensure effectiveness. Additionally, every school had effective leaders, and every teacher and leader had access to the preparation, on-going support, recognition, and collaboration needed to succeed (See Figure 6B, 7, 7B, 9A, 10 &11).

The teachers in each school have focused on creating high standards for all students. They set high expectations and accountability for all the people involved in the system because the adults have the main responsibility to improve student learning. These teachers have collaborated and aligned curriculum and assessment to ensure that all students at least meet if not exceed state and district learning standards (See Figure 6B, 7, 7B, 9A, 10 &11). At these schools every teacher and principal has set high expectations for themselves and their students. High expectations were communicated in concrete ways throughout the school. There was a strong belief that all students could succeed academically and that as a whole they were capable of making this happen. The teachers at all these schools create a caring, nurturing environment which is related closely to high expectations. Respectful relationships were prevalent throughout the surveys (See Figure 6B, 7, 7B, 9A, 10 &11).

**Strong Instructional Practices.** All three schools clearly had many things they do to ensure success and each school seems to make use of effective instructional practices that are needed to implement change processes. For each of these schools instruction is personalized for the students. These schools have identified approaches to instruction that enhance learning for all students. All the schools reflect on instructional practice related to the expectations of the schools. These schools take the opportunities to encourage teachers to raise their expectations and their support of their students. They use instructional practices to meet high learning standards for all students (See Figure 7, 7A, 7B, 9A, 9B, 10 &11).
These schools also paid attention to each teacher’s expertise and gave academic support including learning time and opportunities for all students to learn. Surveys results indicated that the curriculum was believed to be an important aspect of the instructional program of each school (See Figure 7, 7A, 7B, 9A, 9B, 10 &11). These teachers have realized students in high poverty schools need the strongest teachers along with ample time and opportunity to learn the standards. The ideology of high standards and expectations requires more than lip service; it requires the schools to believe that all students can learn, effective instructional practices, and behaviors that demonstrate that everyone believes in the students and believe in their own abilities to teach students to high standards (See Figure 7, 7A, 7B, 9A, 9B, 10 &11).

**Summary**

From my understanding, we have a standpoint from which to challenge power and change ourselves. It took a long time before I realized how oblivious I was to my own positionality in this study. As an African American teacher in a successful high poverty school, I never had to examine myself until now. No one challenged me to examine myself because I have always believed in the notion that all children can learn and I did not need to challenge myself because things usually worked for me. I never had to examine myself until now. My study did more for me as educator than some of the courses I took. My study was different because it gave a voice to those teachers and principals that defy the odds. My study will make believers out the not believers.

Consequently, there were no single characteristics or factors that accounted for the success of the high poverty, high-performing school or improvement of the school. As a matter of fact, the research found that high-poverty, high-performing schools tend to have a
combination of common characteristics. Most studies found five or more characteristics; some
found as many as eight or nine. Studies often focused on elementary schools. However, the
characteristics apply equally to secondary schools (e.g., Henchey et al., 2001). When success
happens it leaves clues. Each clue is essential to the success of the school and the course to
changing a low performing school into a high performing school where there is a village of
learners. These clues require a real sense of determination balanced with patience, steadfastness,
dedication to a focus, positivity, honesty and constant celebration of success along the way. We
could depend on those experts, principals and teachers who have hypothesized those clues in
regards to improving student achievement that will be maintained over time in the most
challenging schools. We could build on previous experiences and personal strengths with proven
strategies for helping kids in high poverty schools. There is no secret ingredient, no secret
strategies or a magic bullet to successful teaching and leadership in high-poverty, high-
performing schools. However, the concept of knowing definitely what has been proven over and
over again to produce a desired outcome and also doing the work is important. In life as well as
when taking on such a grand task, understanding the challenge to do the hard work and the
opportunity to impact someone’s world is important. No matter when it happens or what will
happen or how many bumps on the roads, one should never give up. Share your successes like
the three schools in this study have and are sure to leave clues for others to follow.

The entire summary passage is too sermonic. Your summary should remind your reader
of what you discovered from the data collected. Implications should be a part of the last chapter.
Children who live in poverty often matriculate to lowest performing schools. State and national assessments time after time show children who live in poverty lagging behind in academic performance in comparison to the children from more affluent areas. All the same, each of the schools in this study showed positive growth and success among children who live in poverty. All of the studies reviewed in this project just about used state standardized test results primarily in mathematics and reading to identify high-performing schools. This case study was conducted to examine how high-poverty, high performing schools managed to show strong academics despite the odds. Data was collected using surveys and reviewing previous research studies. The data collected was then used to examine the characteristics as well processes that contribute to the high level of success of teachers and leaders in three high poverty schools. The three schools were chosen because they consistently demonstrated a high level of achievement compared with other schools with similar demographics. These school achievements are particularly impressive when compared with other schools of similar socioeconomic composition.

The setting for this study was in three high-poverty, high-performing schools in Ohio. These schools were places where many of the students came from low-income, poverty stricken homes and the students were able to construct a distinctive culture which promoted and put emphasis on high academic achievement for all students. These schools placed focus on building strong relationships between the school, the parents, and the community while fostering a sense of family and unity so that students could have a strong institution to rely upon. These schools made students aware of their potential and encouraged them to dream big by exposing
them to a multitude of meaningful experiences and opportunities for their future. Many themes emerged from an analysis of the surveys. These themes were collectivity, promoters of success, teachers and principals as resources for each other, and innovative successful agents of change. The sub themes that emerged were high expectations for all, leaders are instructional leaders, positive school culture, supportive learning environment, high levels of collaboration and communication, strong leadership, high levels of support for teachers,” strong “teachers and “strong” instructional practices which applied to the research questions and aligned with inputs, processes and outcomes expected in this study.

Discussion of Findings

This research study was done to understand what characteristics and processes were present in high poverty, high performing schools. It also examined what were the perceived experiences of leaders and teachers in three Ohio high-poverty, high-performing schools. The focus was to learn what characteristics along with what practices the leaders and the teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools were implemented that transformed kids at risk to the children of promise. What practices and characteristics enable them to be successful despite the odds stacked against them? Furthermore, by investigating the role and characteristics of the school’s principal and teachers it was hoped that the information from this study would help other leaders and teachers understand how to obtain success in high-poverty schools with similar demographics.

At the beginning of the study, I had opportunity to have interaction with the each of the principals. The principals and teachers were the driving force behind these successful high poverty schools. The principals’ and teachers’ whole purpose in these successful high poverty
schools was to prepare students socially, physically, emotionally, and academically. This would be done by exposing them to programs, to high levels of academics and other opportunities they otherwise would not have had. One principal described himself as one who uses a coaching style or one who cheers on success and looks good only because of the talent that he hires. At another school, it is apparent that the principal is very highly regarded and respected by of the teachers and students. In these schools the teachers and the principal records say a lot about their leadership style and instructional practices. One principal described himself/herself as a supportive principal who assists teachers in maintaining all aspects of the building operations. One hundred percent of all the principals had very gentle, pure, and caring heart for these children that face unimaginable obstacles. They were well liked and respected by each other. I could tell that each principal as well as teacher was very knowledgeable about the happenings in’s and out’s in their schools and was very open about sharing pertinent information with all. It was very clear that the schools appreciated me showing interest in their schools and telling their story. I could tell that the teachers and principals genuinely cared about the students and wanted them to learn. Their dedication and passion for student learning was unquestionably evident.

It was noted that students seemed to have a great rapport with their teachers and the teachers seemed to enjoy them just as much. I was told that many of the teachers were true advocates for their students and worked hard to celebrate their efforts and successes in their schools. It could be said that many principals and teachers wore many hats other than classroom teacher or principal. All of the principals involved seemed very reliable and knowledgeable of latest educational standards and protocols. The participants in the study seemed like the type of teachers and leaders who cared about the whole child, cultivate solid relationships with their students and got the students to believe in themselves as they made clear that they believed in
them. Overall, the common theme of study was classified into four themes which all had sub themes (See Table 2). These themes are collectivity, promoters of success, teachers and principals as a resource for each other and innovative successful agents of change.

**Discussion of Collectivity**

Respect for each other and working to together while implementing a clear mission and vision as well as shaping positive school culture was one of the common themes. All the schools in this study had instructional leaders who enhanced the school culture and encourage high levels of collaboration among teachers. The cultures in these schools were described as having a culture in which high expectations for students and teacher was expected and a sense of collaboration and shared goals among all of the stakeholders in the school. These principals developed a strong and positive culture in their school setting. The word culture has been described in various ways. In these schools, the relationships between the principals and the teachers helped to facilitate change as well as shape the school's positive culture.

To shape the school’s culture, the schools’ principals made sure all the stakeholders had a shared vision, understood traditions, collaboration among teachers and principals, shared decision making, was innovative, and practiced high levels of communication. Also, the principals shaped the school culture by guiding the beliefs of the schools and encouraging the teachers to work together to foster a more productive school environment for teaching and learning. Furthermore, the principals of the three schools constantly communicated to the teachers the school’s vision and the schools high expectations, and created a safe learning environment for students to further shape the school's culture. Shaping the school's culture is an intangible act but is a very vital component of a successful school.
The ways schools shape their culture varies considerably. However, in these schools, the process was having highly collaborative teachers, principals and others who shared problems, philosophies, and content knowledge. The principals and teachers worked together jointly on ways to best work with issues to serve their students better. The shaping of a positive school culture as well as having high levels of collaboration did not develop overnight, but was shaped by the ways principals and the teachers supported the underlying norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions in the school. Finally, the principals were able to identify the special challenges in these high poverty settings. They transformed their schools into places where all students are successful and all teachers continually improve their craft. In the high-poverty, high-performing schools in this study, the schools fine tune as well as improved their instructional methods and curriculum to meet the needs of all students in these high poverty schools. The shaping of school culture increased the sense of efficacy among all of the major stakeholders.

Each of these schools had identified their school’s core purpose and had clear goals set to meet the schools mission and vision. All decisions and planning were centered on the mission and vision of the schools. A shared emphasis on this focus or the mission of the schools provided direction and purpose for teacher collaboration as well as an increase in certainty regarding teaching practices. This clear focus in these schools helped assists in aligning standards and curriculum, aligning the decisions in schools with the school's mission, creating programs for the students and activities in the schools that led to the schools success and improvements. The school's vision is expressed in vivid details and has helped the schools accomplish success. These high performing schools succeed in establishing the goals, a positive school culture and levels of collaboration and communications that resonates in these schools as well as in the schools successful outcomes. Schools in today’s society can be compared to
running a business. Each department places an important role in making the business successful. If the accounting department or the marketing department makes a mistake on forecasting profits or ways to sell the product, the business cannot be successful or meet the needs of the shareholders. Teachers and principals have to work together to ensure that the profits are positive and losses in the business can always become a gain when each entity works together.

**Discussion of Promoters of Success**

These schools were student-centered, no excuses environment where goals are set and students were lifetime learners. A promoter of success is another theme that emerged. Promoters of success are teachers and leaders who have high expectations for all major stakeholders. The principals were instructional leaders and helped create a supportive learning environment. Ultimately, in these high-performing schools a culture of high expectations is shared by the school’s principal, teachers, staff, and students. Most importantly, to this culture is the belief that all children can learn, achieve and succeed academically. Much of the research in this study, points to the presence of a culture of high expectations as a requirement or even a prevailing theme that makes it possible for the teachers and principals to succeed in a high-poverty areas. The principals established a set of high expectations for themselves and their teachers. The teacher then established a set of high expectations for themselves and their students as well. The beliefs in setting high expectations for themselves lead to higher students learning to have high expectations for themselves as well as their teachers. In these schools, all the stakeholders model this concept of a culture of high expectations. Many of the principals claimed with strong convictions that "I enthusiastically believe and my teachers believe all our students can learn, and I have never found that in another school". Additionally, one of the school’s leadership
made sure to root their belief system in actual, measurable goals. Kannapel & Clements (2005) stated that "high expectations communicated in concrete ways" was important also. In due course, the culture of high expectations becomes what Haberman (1999) calls a "common ideology" that lends the school a sense of purpose and a sense of identity (Jesse et al., 2004). For these schools, this notion has come to fruition.

In these schools, the culture of high expectations is rooted in a caring and nurturing environment, where all stakeholders in the school treat each other with respect. These school teachers forged relationships with their students despite them living in high poverty and connected this with their education. Because of these expectations, the school environment generated a sense of resilience in students. The teachers and principals have high expectations of learners and encouraged them to achieve to the best of their ability. The teachers made sure the students had high expectations and goals in life to keep them motivated towards success in school as well as have high academic achievement success. The students seem to perform well in all areas on state tests in their schools. The students are motivated and inspired by their teachers and the principals to succeed. I could tell that these schools were schools who had high expectations and that the whole school’s environment was conducive to learning.

Leadership styles varied in some ways in each of the schools, but all shared a collaborative decision making process philosophy. At each of the schools, not one had authoritarian or dictatorial leadership styles and the teachers were involved in making most of the key decisions. There were many reasons to believe that the principals were instructional leaders. The principals at these schools communicate explicit and comprehensive vision of how children in their schools were going to learn. This was clear in the success on the state mandated test and school ratings. The principals understood their students learning styles and were able to
motivate them so that they became interested and engaged in the learning process. These principals were knowledgeable and had skills to think and plan strategically. They created a school vision around personalizing instruction to ensure a students’ success in school. These leaders were instructional leaders that used the proper data to make informed decisions at all levels in the school.

The principals were instructional leaders that created a culture of teaching and learning where there was a great emphasis on learning and meeting children at their present levels. These principals effectively managed resources as well as collaborating and communicating with all the major stakeholders. The principals engaged, and empowered others inside their schools as well as outside of the schools in pursuit of excellence in their school and learning. These principals created a culture in which all students could learn and they did this by being leaders of instruction and not a manager of schools. The positive school culture helped the teacher in many ways and the teacher in these high-poverty schools where not only leaders but the teachers were great leaders of excellence. They understood that “one size fits all” concept did not apply to their schools.

Each of these principals tapped in on their teacher’s strengths and weaknesses and also recognized that teachers desire were to be recognized and appreciated for their success with high poverty students. These principals were good communicators and effective instructional leaders who established fundamental beliefs regarding learning and develop a mantra that all students can learn and no child should be left behind because of their socioeconomic status. The principals of these schools actively encouraged, supported, and collaborated with teachers to make the best use of the talents, experience, and creativity in their schools. This encouragement
and support were to help the school work towards the purpose of improving student achievement.

All of the schools had a safe, respectful stimulating learning environment. Teachers and leaders were connected with each other as well the students. The student’s connection with the staff created engaged learners. The teacher at this school believed that instruction should be personalized. These teachers at each school were successful at working with at-risk students by focusing on the strengths of their students. The teachers empowered overwhelmed youth to see themselves as survivors rather than as victims. The students are asked to be champions and fight for the American dream. They have helped the student’s process adversity in their lives, to see adversity as temporary and to see stumbling block not as inescapable but as resolvable or short-term. The school teachers and principals honored the ideals of no child left behind and made the school’s student-centered. They used their strengths plus the students’ strengths, interests, goals and dreams as the starting point for learning and utilized students’ intrinsic motivation for learning.

**Discussion Teachers and Principals As Resource for Each Other Theme**

The teachers and principals as a resource for each other concept wanted the teachers and principals to work together to set goals and ensure success for all the students in the school. Collaboration and shared leadership as well as high level collaboration and communications were a vital part of all the schools' success. There was a high level of collaboration identified among the teachers and principals at each school. The schools regularly communicated across teaching areas and programs and were eager to learn from each other. Teamwork and collaboration are very typical in each of these schools. The schools provided settings for teachers
to evaluate and help one another as well as actively seek to improve each other’s teaching to aid students in meeting specific academic standards. These schools addressed obstacles to learning and seem to collaborate to identify solutions for all students in their schools.

Shared leadership in these schools was vital to each of the school's success. Collaborative and shared leadership means many people other than the administrators have the information and the power to make decisions as well as enact change. In these schools, shared leadership required an operational school that allowed more people to lead the creating of the school’s vision, goals, and mission as well as for more people to participate in making decisions at all levels. From my interaction with the principals, these schools’ shared leadership led them to form teams and gave them many responsibilities that played an important part in the school’s success. There were many things implicit to these principals’ leadership behaviors and the principal and teachers practices that foster the concept of working effectively with others, building meaningful relationships, and collaborating with each other. In these schools, the leadership concepts shifted from a focus on the individual leadership to a collective act of leading high poverty students towards success.

The schools in this study exhibited collaborative and shared decision-making traits. These schools provided many opportunities for the teacher and the principals to be resources for each other. The creation of the mission statement was collective process and methods of aligning the curriculum or the types of curriculum used exemplified a shared decision-making process. Collaborative and shared decision-making encompassed the principal and teachers expressing opinions as well as generating new innovative ideas to each other. Finally, these schools communicated in ways that presented new insights and ideas to others.
Discussion of Innovative Successful Agents of Change Theme

Teachers and principal are doing what it takes to make sure failure is not an option was the rules of engagement at these schools. These schools had strong leaders, high levels of support for teachers, “strong” teachers and strong instructional practices. All of the schools appeared to be on the same page when it came to what is being taught, what the academic expectations were, and where each teacher and the principal focus was guided towards as well as what strengths each entity had that fit into the curriculum of the school. Teaching in these schools was a collaborative effort, not an individual activity involving individuals who decided on their own what to teach and when to teach it.

The teachers and principals in these three high-poverty, high-performing schools where agents of change in their schools. These teachers and principals had great personal stories and journeys to share with other teachers and principals. These schools had change agents present in the schools. These teachers and principals learned about what other successful schools were doing well and perfected that approach. The teachers and principals in these schools were change agents within their schools and obtain information in a meaningful way so that they could implement a curriculum to fit their students’ needs. These change agents were unique in the sense that they have a big picture and was apprehensive about those he did not believe in their no excuse concept for their students. These change agents felt compelled to impact their current students as well as future students. They were looking ahead and dreaming big to ensure that their students would prosper in this world. Failure was not option but success was the only result. The teachers and the principals in these three high-poverty, high-performing schools were agents of change and they set the pace of the race and then allow the students to come in first hand and hand with them.
Looking at each school’s test scores and ratings, the teachers as well as the principals analyze the standards to ensure they understood the knowledge and skills that students are required to learn. The teachers and principals took responsibility and ensured that the content being taught was reviewed sufficiently in a rational and developmental manner. The teacher and principals in each school assess and enhance curriculum by filling any identified achievement gaps in the taught curriculum. The teachers and principals identify effective instructional strategies and methods for teaching children who live in poverty. They understood that assessments must also be aligned with the learning targets and a purpose of the assessment was to meet as well as excel state requirements.

Effective leaders in these schools promoted a shared mission and set goals by framing and communicating a common effective school vision and a setting clearly defined expectations for teachers, students and themselves. The great teachers and leaders in these schools used innovative techniques to ensure all students would succeed and expended their resources to beyond the classroom. They focus on combining beliefs and actions in the high-poverty, high-performing schools, such as academic expectations, opportunity to learn, and time for learning. The classroom teacher in these high poverty schools was visible in their students’ lives. They understood that the principal and the teachers were responsible for providing an excellent education for all students in the school.

The leaders in these high poverty schools allocated resources necessary for implementing effective instruction, ensuring that curriculum, assessment, and instruction are aligned state standards and worked with the social issues many students who live in high poverty areas. These schools had strong leaders, high levels of support for teachers, “strong” teachers and strong instructional practices. The core work of schools took place in the classroom where students
were given the opportunity to develop into productive members of society and given the chance to obtain the American dream. The effective teachers had strong leaders, high levels of support for teachers, and strong instructional practices helped the students to meet as well as excel at the state standards through teacher and principals guidance, curriculum content, high academic expectations and a variety of learning activities that were culturally relevant to their lives. These teachers and principals redefined excellence. They allowed the developed innovative ways of meeting the need of their students and not letting the normal obstacles present in student who live in high poverty areas effect the success they believe could happen.

**Summary**

Studying each of the schools helped to put many things in perspective and made me want to explore as well as share more stories about successful high poverty high performing school stories. Knowing that some of these schools were once low performing schools that had encountered many of the issues that affect children of poverty education pursuit of the American dream was now a place where they have defied the odds became very intriguing. Many of the success stories in this study came from a lot of different factors and reasons that have afforded them their success. It could be said that some of the success of these schools came from a personal dream of the principal and it took teamwork to develop, implement, and run the school.

I learned a lot from my study of these three schools and people who make it successful. Each entity in these schools takes care of one another and relies on each other’s individual strength or expertise. All of the schools offer a home away from home for their students, making sure to exhibit empathy for these children who live in poverty and never lower their expectations for anyone nor lower their standards in any case. These schools were places where students felt
the presences of friendly, welcoming people. These schools established a sense of belief that all students can learn. They create an environment of mutual respect with rapport with the students and community. They established meaningful relationships that have significance and goes hand in hand with the schools vision and expectations that everyone will be successful. These schools entire system puts forth excellent results. They were thriving schools that are doing really great things for children who were once labeled at-risk. They have all had a great reputation. Actually, educators want to come there to teach and to parents want to send their children there.

Implications

As I contemplate this study and what developed from the research and survey, I am biased because of my own personal experiences of working in a successful high poverty school. Principals who openly convey and share what is expected of teachers and that are supportive and encouraging of teachers as well as students, obtain different resources for the school, implement positive school culture, use and communicate with teachers regarding effective instructional practices while having faith in the expertise of all entities involved there are the leaders who are able to beat the odds and come out successful. A principal has to be an instructional leader and be aware of each grade level curriculum specific assessment data in order to implement essential strategies to meet goals and standards. These principals were ready. It is obvious that it is very important that the principal provide a direction for achievement to the teachers and students. Principals develop an instructional response that will improve instructional practice and raise student achievement. Furthermore, in order for change and the leaders to affect change as change agents so that they can be successful and their school's vision can be fulfilled, they must make their teachers buy into his or her school's vision. This factor will play a major role in the success
of the school. Principals know and understand that in order to achieve any goals and the schools become successful, everyone must buy and encourage teamwork among all teachers and staff. The principals must help teachers recognize that student and the schools’ success is a product of a team effort, which only prospers if all entities have a clear sense of purpose, expectations and the exact same goals in mind. A principal’s leadership must be useful and proactive.

Most teachers in these schools shared a common core belief that they want to make a positive difference in the lives of their students’ and they want to help the students learn as well as by successful. The teachers at these schools wanted to be a teacher who will always be affectionately considered by former students as a part of or the reason for their success in life. Keeping some of the above in mind, these belief systems are idealistic but sometimes they do not always pan out the way in which they were intended. Consequently, what I have learned from my experience and from the survey is that establishing positive relationships is the key. Without positive relationships, there is no link between the teacher and the student. Without any type of positive relationships, learning does not happen in these schools as much as it should and as effortless as it should. Positive relationships are extremely vital if a teacher is to achieve the intended goals of the school and goals for learning. It is also essential as a teacher to use and implement effective instructional practices and methods. Even though there may be many things which may not apply to you as a teacher either because of grade level or content area, it is crucial as a growing teacher to find a way to make the information relevant in your classroom instruction. The more knowledge a teacher has about effecting change in their school and the school system as well as student achievement gaps, student’s deficits and weaknesses on assessments, the better equipped they will be as a teacher that understands what it takes to get their students to master their subjects. Teachers in high poverty, high performing schools should
use any instructional support systems provided at their schools to support any accommodation need for students that may need additional support. These teachers should produce meaningful lessons that differentiate to meet the needs and abilities in their classes.

For teachers, collaboration is a must. Teachers have to learn to share ideas and instructional methods that work in their class as well as the school for children of poverty. This will make it so that everyone can share that same success. Teachers have to realize that high expectations and high student achievement is the goal for all students even those who live in high poverty area. A sense of high efficacy in the teacher’s ability to teach is needed. Also, understanding that making yourself looks good is all right, but bigger gratitude follows when one is able to assist in making everyone look good.

The following implications are based on the results of the research and review of related literature:

**Collectivity**

1. In high-poverty, high-performing schools, it is important that principals encourage trust and inspire a shared vision in these schools to create a supportive learning environment to create a successful school.

2. In order to work collaboratively within the school environment, it is important that principals in high-poverty schools establish a sense of trust with all stakeholders in the school.

3. The school culture exerts a powerful and universal influence over everything in the school.
4. Reject stereotypes, institutional racism, and the deficit theory as well as help students and colleagues unlearn misunderstandings about poverty and their ability to succeed despite their circumstances.

Promoters of Success

1. The data collected in this study supports the concept that teachers and principals in high-poverty schools are more effective when they develop personal connections with the students.

2. It is essential that the school’s teachers and principals develop positive caring relationships with students living in high poverty areas to help them reach a high level of expectations and success.

3. In addition to establishing high expectations for teachers and students, one of the principal’s most important roles is to be an instructional leader. Effective principals inspire, support, and work together with teachers to make the best use of their talents, knowledge, and innovation toward the schools vision and mission as well as the improving student achievement.

Teachers and Principals as Resource for Each Other

1. Teachers and principals have characteristics and practices that attributed to the success of high poverty schools and when everyone takes part in the decision making process it leads to a successful schools.

2. Part of the responsibility for leading in successful high poverty schools is sharing in the responsibility to facilitate change and participate in learning with colleagues.
3. The evidence collected in this study implies that teachers who have a hands-on role are more likely to take ownership and work harder towards building a successful high poverty school.

**Innovative Successful Agents of Change**

1. Principals and teachers need to educate themselves about class and poverty and make curriculum relevant to children of poverty, drawing on and validating their personal experiences and intelligences.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

There is a multitude of data that came from this study that deserves further study. Among these are the following:

- Now that some of the success factors have been identified, would a quantitative study of these factors at some of these high poverty, high performing schools with similar demographics and levels of achievement, lead to a clearer understanding of which factors have a stronger impact on student achievement?

- Future research should be done on alignment between culturally relevant instruction or pedagogy and desire to increase student achievement. This research could eradicate the academic achievement gap between students of color, specifically African American students, and their white counterparts.

- Conduct further research to compare the behavior and practices of principals in low and high socioeconomic schools to determine similarities and differences.
Conclusions

Whether the change in the high poverty, high performing schools came from leadership inside or outside the school or teachers' hard work, the research on high-performing schools demonstrates that schools in the most problematic neighborhoods can become places where children are successful and perform well academically. Schools that foster a culture of high expectations for both students and teachers as well as emphasize high academic performance while engaging are on the road toward becoming high performing schools. As is reflected in many other studies and cited the characteristics of successful schools studied rarely implemented just one improvement strategy. To be more precise, high-performing, high-poverty schools often have a system that incorporates many of the aforementioned characteristics, processes, qualities and conditions.

Perhaps the most powerful argument against any research on high poverty, high performing school is the fact that there are some cases where teachers are doing all of the right things yet student academic achievements remains low. Therefore, we know that there are no magic remedies to deliver improved student achievement. Successful schools can serve as a model to other schools. They can provide insight into what can work and what does not work. However, there are severe limitations for using these schools as evidence of what will work.

Sometimes it takes only one person to speak out to make a change but today we hear the voices of some teachers and principals in successful high poverty schools. Many people say that the tongue is a might sword. I have just begun to use my sword to affect change in high poverty schools. I have always been a believer but now others will hear the voices of some other true believers. We will no longer have to hear the term “at risk”, “marginalized”, “unreachable” or “un-teachable” if we listen today.
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Title of Study: From Children at Risk to Kids at Hope: Exploring the Characteristic of a High-Poverty High-Performing Schools, Teachers, Leadership and the Factors That Help Them Succeed in increasing student achievement

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study exploring the characteristics of successful high poverty schools teachers and principals. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?
The person in charge of this research study is Ms. Felicia Steagall of the University of Cincinnati (UC) Department of Education. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Lionel Brown.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how high poverty, high performing schools succeed despite the odds being stacked against them. Furthermore, the purpose of this research study is to develop an understanding of what are the characteristics as well as the perceived experiences of leaders and teachers in high-poverty, high-performing schools that allow them to succeed despite the odds being stacked against them. Furthermore, to focus on and learn what practices leaders and teachers in high poverty, high-performing schools are implementing that transforms kids at risk to children of promise.

Who will be in this research study?
About 12 people will take part in this study. Three teachers from each school and one principal from each of the schools will be selected to participate. You may be in this study if: Their school serves 60 percent or more economically disadvantaged students, as reported in for the past 3 years. Their school met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2010-2011. In the high school, their school met the AYP graduation rate criterion of 60 percent for the 2010-2011 school years. For elementary schools, at least 75 percent of all students in each grade levels (3, 4, 6, 7, and 8) passed the Ohio Achievement Tests in reading or mathematics. For high schools at least, 75 percent of all students in each grade levels 10–12 passed the Ohio graduation test. Taking part in this research study being conducted at your school is not part of your job. Refusing to be in the research study will not affect your job. You will not be offered any special work-related benefits if you take part in this study.

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?
As teachers and a principal in high poverty, high performing schools, you will be asked to submit school demographic information as well as respond to survey questions about your attitudes and beliefs towards the factors and characteristics that make your high poverty school a high
performing school. This research study will consist of only one phase which will begin in March 2012 /April 2012 and continue until June 2012. Participants will complete an in-depth survey. This in-depth survey will gather data from school principal and teachers who have agreed to be participants. The survey will be analyzed by the principal investigator. In completing this survey, you may choose not answer any questions by indicating no basis to judge on the survey.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?
There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
Participants will not receive any direct benefit. However, participants may help the researcher further understand how successful high poverty, high performing schools succeed.

Will you have to pay anything to be in this research study?
You will not have to pay anything to take part in this study.

What will you get because of being in this research study?
You will not be paid to take part in this study.

Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
If you do not want to take part in this research study, you may simply not participate.

How will your research information be kept confidential?
Information from participants will not be shared with anyone outside the study. No one other than the researcher will have access to survey question answers, notes, or any information about this study. All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the file cabinet. All data will be destroyed after the researcher has analyzed the answers. The data will be destroyed three years after the completion of this study. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants of this research study. Names of school sites will also be changed to maintain anonymity. If you choose not to participate, no one will know of your refusal or no one will know of your participation in this research study. The principal of the school will provide the principal investigator with a list of teachers in the school and teachers will be randomly selected. The principal of the school has no part in this selection process and will not be able to review your responses to the survey. Nor will the teachers be able to review the principal’s responses to the survey. Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

What are your legal rights in this research study?
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?
If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact Ms. Felicia Steagall at 513-403-0371 or steagaf@cps-k12.org. Or you may contact Dr. Lionel Brown at 513-556-3406 or brownlw1@ucmail.uc.edu.
The UC Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-S) reviews all non-medical research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the Chairperson of the UC IRB-S at (513) 558-5784. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB-S, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

**Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?**

No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have.

You may start and then change your mind and stop at any time. To stop being in the study, you should tell Ms. Felicia Steagall at 513-403-0371 or steagaf@cps-k12.org.

**Agreement:**

I have read this information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will receive a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

Participant Name (please print) ____________________________________________

Participant Signature _____________________________________________ Date ______

Please return this form by ____________, 2012 in the enclosed envelope (postage is included).
APPENDIX B
Sample Recruitment Letter Teacher
University of Cincinnati
Department of Education
Principal Investigator: Ms. Felicia Steagall
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lionel Brown

From Children at Risk to Kids at Hope: Exploring the Characteristic of a High-Poverty High-Performing Schools, Teachers, Leadership and the Factors That Help Them Succeed in increasing student achievement.

Dear __________,

As a teacher in a high poverty, high performing school, I would like to formally invite you to become a participant in a research study. I am a doctoral student at the University of Cincinnati. As I aggressively pursue my educational goals, I am concentrating on advancing my skills of perception, analysis, and research in order to develop a more critical and reflective understanding of high poverty, high-performing schools environmental and personnel characteristics that supported their success. Furthermore, by investigating the role, practices and characteristics of the school’s principal and teachers it was hoped that the results of this study could lead to further understanding behind the success of high-poverty, high performing schools and influence schools with similar demographics, where poor children are not succeeding.

This information is very valuable and we have gotten the permission of your school’s principal to use your school in the research study. As a participant in this study, your principal and three of the teachers in your school will be asked to submit school demographic information and respond to survey questions about your experiences in a high poverty, high-performing schools. If you are willing to participate, you will be mailed a survey which should be done at any place convenient as well as private to you. Please remember that this is strictly voluntary and if you do not wish to participate no one will be told of your decision. This information is not tied to any district or school data. Your principal will only not know the names of teachers participating in the study.

For this study, you will be asked to answer questions about your school success as a high poverty, high performing school as well as the questions about your practices, characteristics, experiences and expectations in regards to your high poverty, high-performing school. Your participation in this study and your responses will be strictly confidential. An “Informed Consent Document” will be provided to you as well as your principal when you agree to be a part of the study. The informed consent documents details all issues related to the study. Finally, as a participant in this research, you not will receive any direct benefit or direct monetary benefit. However, your participation will help the researcher increase her understanding of the key characteristics and practices that impact the success of high poverty, high-performing schools. Only if you wish to participate and consider assisting me, please sign and return the “Informed Consent Document” enclosed in this packet. All postage is included with the envelope which is addressed to where this informed consent document should be sent. Once the informed consent document is received, you will then receive the research study survey with further instruction on how to complete it. Taking part in this research study being conducted at your school is not part of your job. Refusing to be in the research study will not affect your job. You will not be offered any special work-related benefits if you take part in this study.
If you have any questions, please feel to contact me to clarify any of these questions you may have. Thank you for considering this opportunity to participate in this research study.

Sincerely,

Ms. Felicia Steagall, MBA, Med
University of Cincinnati - Department of Education- Urban Educational Leadership
E-mail: Steagaf@cps-k12.org or Cell phone: 513.403.0371
APPENDIX C
Sample Recruitment Letter Principal
University of Cincinnati
Department of Education
Principal Investigator: Ms. Felicia Steagall
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lionel Brown
From Children at Risk to Kids at Hope: Exploring the Characteristic of a High-Poverty High-Performing Schools, Teachers, Leadership and the Factors That Help Them Succeed in increasing student achievement.

Dear ____________,

As a principal in a high poverty, high performing school, I would like to formally invite you to become a participant in a research study. I am a doctoral student at the University of Cincinnati. As I aggressively pursue my educational goals, I am concentrating on advancing my understanding of high poverty, high-performing schools environmental and personnel characteristics that supported their success. Furthermore, by investigating the role, practices and characteristics of the school’s principal and teachers it was hoped that the results of this study could lead to further understanding behind the success of high-poverty, high performing schools and influence schools with similar demographics to succeed as well.

This research looks at the role, practices and characteristics of the school’s principal and teachers. This information is very valuable and we would like your permission first as the school’s principal. Once you as the school’s principal, grant the research investigator, Felicia Steagall permission to use your school, we will then begin recruiting three teachers to participate. In order to recruit teachers from your building, I will need a list of teachers in your building to send recruitment letters too. It is up to the teacher to participate and this strictly voluntary. As a participant in this study, you and three of your teachers will be asked to submit school demographic information and respond to survey questions about your experiences in a high poverty, high-performing schools. All the information is confidential and no school names, your name nor the teachers’ names will be used. Pseudonyms names for each school and participant will be created. Your teachers will be told that they are not required to participate and this is information strictly for the research to understand the key to your school’s success. Your teachers will be selected by the principal investigator. If you are willing to participate, you will be mailed an informed consent formed which needs to sign first. The informed consent documents details all issues related to the study. After the informed consent document is received you will be sent a survey which will follow and should be done at any place convenient as well as private to you. You will be asked to answer questions about your school success as a high poverty, high performing school as well as the questions about your practices, characteristics, experiences and expectations in regards to your high poverty, high-performing school. Your participation in this study and your responses will be strictly confidential. An “Informed Consent Document” will be provided to you as well as your teachers when you agree to be a part of the study.

Finally, as a participant in this research, you not will receive any direct benefit or direct monetary benefit. However, your participation will help the researcher increase her understanding of the key characteristics and practices that impact the success of high poverty, high-performing schools. Only if you wish to participate and consider assisting me, please sign and return the “Informed Consent Document” enclosed in this packet. All postage is included with the envelope which is addressed to where this informed consent document should be sent. 
Once the informed consent document is received, you will then receive the research study survey with further instruction on how to complete it. Taking part in this research study being conducted at your school is not part of your job. Refusing to be in the research study will not affect your job. You will not be offered any special work-related benefits if you take part in this study. If you have any questions, please feel to contact me to clarify any of these questions you may have.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to participate in this research study.
Sincerely,

Ms. Felicia Steagall, MBA, Med
University of Cincinnati - Department of Education- Urban Educational Leadership
E-mail: Steagaf@cps-k12.org
Cell phone: 513.403.0371
### APPENDIX D-Teachers Survey

**Think about your school as you read each of the statements below. Then check the statement that best describes how much you agree with that statement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Basis to judge</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clear Vision</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>My school has a clear sense of purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school shares a common understanding of what it takes to become or maintain success at our school</td>
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<tr>
<td>The staff at my school is committed to achieving the school’s goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>The staff keeps the school’s goals in mind when making important decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school’s primary emphasis is improving student learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High Standards/Expectations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>In my school all students are expected to achieve high standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers do whatever it takes to help all students meet high academic expectations.</td>
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<td>I believe all students can learn at my school.</td>
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<td>All students are consistently challenged by a rigorous curriculum at my school.</td>
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<td>As a teachers, I use effective strategies to help low-performing students meet high academic expectations and standards</td>
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<td>My school has high expectations for academics for all students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have high expectations for academics for all students.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High levels of collaboration and communication</strong></td>
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<td>My school uses a system to obtain a variety of perspectives when making decisions.</td>
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<td>Teachers are able to discuss teaching issues on a regular basis.</td>
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<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff members work together to solve problems related to school issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The staff at my school works in teams across grade levels to help increase student learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The staff at my school routinely work together to plan what will be taught.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a teacher at my school, I have frequent communication with the families of the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The staff members at my school trust one another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a teacher at my school, I use community partners to ensure success in our school</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school has a high level of communication and collaboration among important stakeholders to ensure success at my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use a high level of communication and collaboration techniques among important stakeholders to ensure success at my school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards.</strong></td>
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<td>The curriculum I use is aligned with state standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school's curriculum is aligned with state standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional staff members have a good understanding of the state standards in the areas they teach.</td>
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<td>Instructional materials used at my school are aligned with the state standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction at my school builds on what students already know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schoolwork is meaningful to students at my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers use a variety of approaches and activities to help students learn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom activities are intellectually stimulating.</td>
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</table>
I know the research basis for the instructional strategies being used in my school.

**A supportive learning environment.**

- The school environment is conducive to learning.
- I encourage students to give input on my instruction.
- I show genuine care for each student.
- I utilize students as learning aids for each other.
- I encourage students to ask meaningful questions.
- I encourage students to articulate and share their ideas with one another.
- I am engaging students at all learning levels.
- I create an environment where students feel comfortable taking risks.
- I create a supportive learning environment where all students can learn.

My school has a supportive learning environment where all students can learn.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy for Teaching**

- As a teacher, I feel that I am making a significant educational difference in the lives of my students.
- As a teacher, if I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated students.
- Children are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them.
- As a teacher, I usually know how to get through to students.
- Most of the student's school motivation depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.
- As a teacher, there is a limited amount that I can do to raise the basic performance level of students.
As a teacher, I am successful with the students in my class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Basis to judge</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Differentiate Instruction**

As a teacher, I begin where students are
I teach students and standards with the most effective resources and materials.
I teach with varied instructional strategies around the different modalities, styles, and multiple intelligences.
As a teacher, I realize that people learn differently.
As a teacher, I use effective assessment tools for assessing learning during and after the learning.
I differentiate instruction so that I meet the needs of all my learners
My school as whole uses differentiate instruction methods so that I meet the needs of all my learners

**Culturally relevant**

As a teacher, I use culturally relevant resources and strategies to make learning relevant to diverse students.
As a school, we use culturally relevant resources and strategies to make learning relevant to diverse students.
As a teacher, I make sure my students can relate their own experience or ideas to the lessons being taught in the classroom.
As a teacher, I display diverse cultural materials, photos, words, art etc that represent cultural diversity.
As a teacher, I encourage my students to pursue their own learning and understanding of the topic because I make it relevant to them.
I use culturally appropriate language and encourage students to do so as well.
As a teacher, I create an environment where all students can openly and safely
talk about experiences of stereotypes, bias, and institutional racism.

I choose books and lessons that allow students to more deeply examine global issues.

As a teacher, in my class, students can make connections between themselves and people that are different than them.

Students in my class understand and use culturally appropriate language.

Additional Comments:
**APPENDIX E-Principal Survey**

Leadership High Poverty, High Performing Survey

Think about your school as you read each of the statements below. Then circle the statement that best describes how much you agree with that statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My school has a clear sense of purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school shares a common understanding of what it takes to become or maintain success at our school</td>
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<td>The staff at my school is committed to achieving the school’s goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school’s primary emphasis is improving student learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As the leader of the school, I communicate a clear vision for our school.</td>
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</table>

**High Standards/Expectations**

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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my school, all students are expected to achieve high standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My teachers do whatever it takes to help all students meet high academic expectations.</td>
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<td>I believe all students can learn at my school.</td>
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<td>Teachers at my school use effective strategies to help low-performing students meet high academic expectations and standards</td>
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<td>As a leader, I set high expectation in my school</td>
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</table>

**High levels of collaboration and communication**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My school uses a system to obtain a variety of perspectives when making decisions.</td>
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<td>Staff members at my school work together to solve problems related to school issues.</td>
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<td>The staff at my school works in teams across grade levels to help increase student learning.</td>
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<td>The staff at my school routinely work together to plan what will be taught.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Teachers at my school have frequent communication with the families of their students.

Teachers and the staff in my school use community partners to ensure success in our school.

Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards.

The curriculum my school is aligned with state standards.

My instructional staff has a good understanding of the state standards in the areas they teach.

Instructional materials used at my school are aligned with the state standards.

Instruction at my school builds on what students already know.

Schoolwork is meaningful to students at my school.

Teachers use a variety of approaches and activities to help students learning.

Classroom activities are intellectually stimulating.

I know the research basis for the instructional
My school has clearly defined goals involving student achievement.

My school aggressively pursues goals of student achievement.

My school effectively communicates what its goals of student achievement are to all stakeholders.

My school does things to educate the community as to what effective education is.

My schools solicits input from others to learn new ways to improve student achievement.

My school utilizes every opportunity to foster a desire amongst the community to improve student achievement.

My school makes all major decisions based upon its goals of student achievement.

When making decisions, my school values its goals of student achievement over other considerations (e.g. political pressures, public opinion, economic concerns, etc.).

My school has a strong program of professional development centered on effective teaching and instruction.

As a leader in my school, focusing on achievement is one of my major goals.

The culture of the school is conducive to learning.

One of my top priorities is to shape a positive school culture.

The needs of the children come first in our school.

There is a feeling of respect among and between staff members and students.

Successes in my schools are celebrated frequently.

The school is a happy place for learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>Focused Achievement</td>
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<td>My school has clearly defined goals involving student achievement.</td>
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<td>My school aggressively pursues goals of student achievement.</td>
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<td>education is.</td>
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<td>My schools solicits input from others to learn new ways to improve student</td>
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<td>achievement.</td>
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<td>My school utilizes every opportunity to foster a desire amongst the</td>
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<td>community to improve student achievement.</td>
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<td>My school makes all major decisions based upon its goals of student</td>
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<td>achievement.</td>
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<td>When making decisions, my school values its goals of student achievement</td>
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<td>over other considerations (e.g. political pressures, public opinion,</td>
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<td>economic concerns, etc.).</td>
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<td>My school has a strong program of professional development centered on</td>
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<td>effective teaching and instruction.</td>
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<td>As a leader in my school, focusing on achievement is one of my major</td>
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<td>goals.</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
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<td>The culture of the school is conducive to learning.</td>
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<td>One of my top priorities is to shape a positive school culture.</td>
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<td>The needs of the children come first in our school.</td>
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<td>There is a feeling of respect among and between staff members and students.</td>
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<td>Successes in my schools are celebrated frequently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school is a happy place for learning.</td>
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**Shared Leadership**

My staff makes decisions concerning teaching and learning with me.

Teachers and staff members are encouraged to participate in decision-making.

Teachers are leaders in the school.

The staff at my school and I together develop the plans for my school.

The staff at my school participates in the hiring process.

As the principal, I make some academic decisions without the input of teachers.

Leadership in the school is shared between the principal and staff.

The staff plans the program for the school in collaboration with the principal.

The staff gives the principal input on the purchase of resources.

**Instructional Leader**

As the leader of the school I make clear to the staff my expectations for meeting instructional goals.

As the leader of the school, I understand how children learn.

As the leader of the school, I encourage teachers to implement what they have learned in professional development.

As the leader of the school, I carefully track students' academic progress.

As the leader of the school, I know what is going on in my classroom.

As the leader of the school, I actively monitor the quality of teaching in this school.

As the leader of the school, my leadership skill in this role influences instructional practices.

As the leader of the school, my leadership in this role advances major learning goals in the school.

In my role as the leader of the school, I have a clear understanding of my responsibilities as an instructional leader.

As the leader of the school, I monitor progress in
alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment

As a leader in my school, I promote continuous improvement in teaching and learning at the school.

As the leader of the school, I facilitate a system that ensures alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

As the leader of the school, Promote continuous and sustainable improvement.

I consider myself an instructional leader

**Change agent**

Colleagues in my school are receptive to changes in practices that advance student learning goals.

As the leader of the school, I am known as being visionary.

As the leader of the school, believing that schools are for learning,

As the leader of the school, I value human resources.

I promote meaningful change in my school.

I am willing and actively to challenge the status quo.

As the leader of the school being proactive, and taking risks, are common to successful leaders of educational change.

I am a change agent in my building

Please answer the following question.

What do you believe are the three most important characteristics of leaders in high-poverty schools?

Describe your leadership style/characteristics. How do you see yourself as a leader?

Describe three practices and policies at your school that you believe contribute to your success as a high poverty, high performing school.

What are the three most effective things you have done at your school that you believe contribute to your success as a high poverty, high performing school?