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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE EQUITY AND ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE IN A LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
in the College of Education
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2013

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed-method, descriptive study was to determine the teachers' perceptions who were employed in the target school district from 2003 to 2011, regarding school district second-order change leadership decisions, events, and challenges, and the extent to which equity and access to excellence for all students were achieved. Also investigated was the relationship, if any, that existed in achieving equity and access to excellence based on school district second-order change leadership from 2003 to 2011. Teacher perception data were analyzed from a survey presented to teachers in over 16 schools who had been consecutively employed in the target school district from 2003 to 2011.

The findings of this research suggest that teachers' perceptions of specific school district leadership decisions, events, and challenges contributed to improving opportunities for students who historically were not provided equitable opportunities for academic achievement and post high school career advancement. Beginning in 2003, the target school district underwent a leadership transition period in which a new superintendent established history-making goals and objectives for the school district. The findings suggest that based on teachers' perceptions, school district efforts provided for greater access to technology, high quality instruction, specific programs of study such as the implementation of magnet programs, and college preparation courses. The greater access provided the opportunity for equity and access to excellence for all students, especially those who historically lacked access and investment with respect to their demographics (race, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity). There were limitations

to this study. Objectivity may be questioned since the participants were employees of the school district. It was assumed that participants in the study responded accurately and honestly to the questions asked in the interviews and survey.

Future research is recommended that would include a larger and more diverse sample. Further recommendations include separate studies to examine the differences between student achievement as a result of school district leadership efforts to attain access to equity and excellence based on college readiness assessment exam scores such as the SAT and/or the ACT, and college or technical school entrance and completion, with regard to student subgroups such as race, ethnicity, and family income.

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother and leading lady, Annette Bailey-Moss;
who has been my biggest cheerleader and has given me absolute love, support and encouragement through all challenges.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my father, Sidney Moss (Sr.), for always encouraging me to pursue the highest of heights in my academic career.

My gratitude and commitment to high standards and excellence is embodied in the sustained vision of upward mobility long held by my immediate and extended family members, and most notably by my beloved grandmothers
Mrs. Hilda Brown-Bailey and Mrs. Mary Joseph.

I am the successful and enthusiastic educator that I am today
because of my long-time mentor and teacher,
Ms. Mary-Alice Foster, who always encouraged me to keep my eyes on the prize.

When I look back at my life then and now, I realize that because I had the courage to dream a dream and follow it, I've been able to write my own life's story through times of great challenges and even greater triumphs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank and recognize my support team of friends and colleagues, specifically the Ed. D. Executive Leadership 2013 Cohort, who has been my support during this process. I am blessed to have family members who have provided me with a strong support system. Their strength, encouragement, and sustained commitment to my success have kept me focused on this journey to completion.

My deepest and sincere appreciation is extended to my supportive field study committee who walked with me hand-in-hand down a road that had many bumps and steep climbs but in the end helped to push me to my destination. I thank my committee: Dr. Rosemarye Taylor, chair; committee members, Dr. Walter Doherty, Dr. Jennifer Platt, Dr. Carolyn Walker-Hopp, and Dr. Kenneth Murray; for their encouragement and insightful feedback. I would also like to humbly thank, Dr. Mary Ann Lynn, for her continued guidance, feedback, and insight throughout this writing endeavor. I was honored to have each of you share and extent your wisdom and knowledge. I thank you all for giving me your confidence and acting as my compass through this journey. I stand proudly on your shoulders.

Thank you all for making my dream come true and encouraging me to reach for greater pursuits.

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CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM AND ITS CLARIFYING COMPONENTS

Introduction

In his speech before a crowd at the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) Convention in 1961, Martin Luther King, Jr. (1961) stated:

> I look forward confidently to the day when all who work for a living will be one with no thought to their separateness as Negroes, Jews, Italians or any other distinctions. This will be the day when we bring into full realization the American dream--a dream yet unfulfilled--A dream of equality. (p. 1)

In that same speech, Dr. King spoke of the greatest of all dreams engrained in the foundation of American democracy (King, 1961). The dream where all children, including his own, of all races, religions, and colors can one day collaborate and learn in the pursuit of knowledge. To guarantee that such dreams become reality, numerous leadership practices, court cases, legislations, and judicial oversight school plans have been undertaken to insure that an equal education is afforded to every child.

Throughout history, the meaning and methods of education have evolved, sparking intense debate (Sadker & Zittleman, 2006). The debate of creating a competitive system of education with high expectations, common standards, a rigorous curriculum, and heightened school accountability has taken center stage. At the heart of this debate lie the ability and leadership decision-making practices of school principals and school district administrators to develop and implement swift and decisive education reform changes to effectively impact student achievement (Rotherham & Willingham, 2009). Educational researchers have found that low-achieving, low-income, and

predominantly black and Hispanic students have demonstrated little growth in critical areas such as mathematics, reading, and science when compared to their counterparts (Lubienski, 2002). In undertaking this study, the researcher's reference to equity means that all students were provided with access to a high quality education for academic growth and development, without regard to their race, ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, or disability (Childress, Doyle, & Thomas, 2009). Excellence refers to the establishment of high educational standards for students, teachers, and school-level administrators in a school district (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). "Large school district" was defined as having more than 60,000 enrolled students with diverse background characteristics of ethnicity, grade-point average, socio-economic status (SES), and educational level of parents (McCracken & Barcinas, 1991).

The school principal is the essential component to student success (Murphy et al., 2000). Yet little, beyond the contextual framework of the community and school district, is known about the intricacies of effective leadership planning and decision-making practices that take place behind the scenes in the office of the chief school district officer, the superintendent. Superintendents of large school districts are often faced with the challenges of meeting federal and state mandates, ensuring fiscal responsibility for school district expenditures, and demonstrating learning growth and development of ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged student populations (Orr, Byrne-Jimenez, McFarlane, & Brown, 2006).

Orr et al. (2006), cite that leaders of large school districts are expected and federally mandated to accomplish what few have been able to do: to dramatically

improve student performance and ensure equity at every level in the school district. They are, in essence, confronted with two simultaneous tasks: (a) to assimilate the role of a school district superintendent and (b) to foster rapid and dramatic change to improve student achievement within a complex setting (Orr et al., 2006). The superintendent is thus held publicly responsible for the success or failure of not just every student and school but for the school district as a whole. This is measured by exercising effective leadership decision-making practices that directly impact student performance on standardized tests and demonstrate compliance with federal mandates (Houston, 2001).

Leadership is dependent upon the content and the nature of change (Fullan, 2002). With increased accountability, school restructuring has placed a heavy emphasis on changes in governance, community involvement, and individual accountability at all levels of the professional chain of command, standards, and teaching and learning practices. All of these essential yet complex changes must demonstrate adequate growth in student learning and ensure that at every level all students have access to a quality and highly effective instructional education (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010). To effectively meet these challenges and demonstrate high performance in student academic growth on standardized test scores, a school district leader needs to identify with the personal, social and academic needs of their student population (Childress et al., 2009). According to Waters and Marzano (2006) "there is a positive relationship between district-level leadership and student achievement" (p. 20).

Restructuring requires thinking "outside the box" while fostering a sense of commitment as opposed to control as a primary leadership strategy (Rodriguez,

Murakami-Ramalho, & Ruff, 2009). Developing commitment, as cited by Fullan (2002), implies an emphasis on organization-building through vision, structure, culture, and distributed leadership. This design is often referred to as second-order change. Unlike first-order change, this strategy characteristically involves unique changes that are in sharp contrast from the past. Second-order change requires the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and tasks (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). Though often considered to be more resistant, second-order change is perceived as uniquely able to identify problems as well as providing for solutions to those problems (Waters et al., 2003).

In *Leading for Equity,* Childress, Doyle, and Thomas (2009) noted the accounts of the Montgomery County Public School district in Maryland beginning in the late 1990s where it was perceived among school district and school-based education leaders that investment in low-achieving and low-income minority students was dramatically lacking. Childress et al. (2009) described the inequity in access to educational resources for low achieving schools compared to their high-achieving counterparts. Students in low-achieving schools lacked much needed educational tools and resources and suffered from adequate infrastructures to assist in student growth and development.

When the disparity of schools was brought to light, the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) Board hired a new superintendent of schools, Jerry Weast, who took a dramatic departure from the business as usual approach to leadership. Weast, by definition, was a second-order change leader. He brought new attitudes, knowledge, and training to the challenges of MCPS. Childress et al. (2009) asserted that the key step in

the process for attaining equity was the school board's agreement on the goal to dramatically improve performance of all students, especially for students not served well historically by the school district. Through his second-order change leadership, Superintendent Weast restructured MCPS in less than a decade into a system committed to breaking the links between race and economic class and academic achievement and providing for a setting where all students would have access to equity and excellence (Childress et al., 2009).

The target school district in this study reaffirmed the commitment of Dr. King to social justice and attaining equity and excellence for all children. This study focused on the perceptions of teachers about leadership steps taken from 2003 through 2011 to address problems of social justice associated with achieving equity and access to excellence for all students, without regard to their race, ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, or disability. Taking on both components of historical and perceptual evidence, this study utilized and incorporated survey data, qualitative interviews of teachers, and student achievement data.

Conceptual Framework

The framework of this study was based on three theoretical constructs similarly reported by Wilhite (2012): (a) second-order change leadership, (b) social justice, and (c) school district leadership and decision-making practices, "as represented by equity and access to excellence following implementation of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," (p. 4).

Second-Order Change Leadership

Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results (Mayer & Holms, 1996). Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson (2010) have emphasized the importance of school leaders evolving into the role of instructional leaders as opposed to managers, noting a powerful link between the decision-making practices of school instructional leaders and student performance and pupil competitiveness. These researchers also observed that ineffective decision-making practices have yielded little to no significant results in student achievement.

Watzlawick et al. (1974) acknowledged this practice as first-order change. This decision-making practice involves examining a variation in the way processes and procedures have been performed in a given system and essentially leaving the system itself relatively unchanged (Watzlawick et al., 1974). An example of first-order change is found in designing a new reading program or reading initiative to enhance student reading scores, collecting the same data as before, and making little to no change in the delivery of the program to students. Though the existing processes or procedures have been refined, the larger aspect of equity and excellence is non-existent. Holding schools accountable, in the case of enhancing student reading scores, depends on having people in schools with the knowledge, skills, and judgment to make the improvements that will increase student performance (Waters et al., 2003).

On the other hand, second-order change involves a break with the past and requires new knowledge and skills for implementation (Waters et al., 2003). To better understand second-order change, consider the following scenario. A large school district

has implemented a reading initiative for the past four years with the hope that it would lead to increased student scores on the reading portion of the third-grade Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Analysis from the past four years has shown little to no difference in third-grade reading scores on the FCAT since implementation of the new reading initiative. Upon further analysis of these data, second-order change practice would involve a reassessment of the reading initiative already in place and/or a dismantling of the initiative altogether and the implementation of a new initiative or program with striking differences that will yield positive results (Rodriguez et al., 2009).

Social Justice As Represented by Equity and Access to Excellence

Darling-Hammond (1997) cited "The challenge of the twenty-first century is creating schools that ensure for all students in all communities, a genuine right to learn" (p. 5). To educate all children effectively, Darling Hammond (1997) suggested that school leaders embrace opportunity to learn standards first introduced by the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST) (Reagle, 2006). Additionally, Darling-Hammond (1997) supported two standards that would guide schools in promoting equitable education in instructional delivery and professional practice.

1. All students should have equitable access to the school funding necessary to enact the state's learning standards.
2. All students should have access to well-prepared teachers and other professional staff who understand how to teach challenging content to diverse learners. (p. 281)

Likewise, Childress et al. (2009) acknowledged that the key step in the process for attaining equity and access to excellence was the initial decision made by the

Montgomery County Public School Board to come to an agreement on the goal to dramatically improve performance of all students. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) shared salient themes with most large school districts in the nation: the fact that success in accessing rigorous and demanding coursework is largely predictable by race, ethnicity, and family income. The MCPS Board took one additional step in the hiring of a new superintendent of schools who took a second-order change approach to leadership and dramatically restructured the MCPS system of education. The superintendent's second-order change approach to leadership succeeded in making access to college or satisfying work a reality for all students over a 10-year period in the school district.

Marzano and Waters (2009) identified value-added leadership responsibilities and practices from school district leaders that directly correlate with a positive impact in providing sustainable support to school-based administrators, supporting the efforts of teachers in the classroom to facilitate effective best practices, and enhancing student growth and achievement. Marzano and Waters (2009) and Goodman and Svyantek (1999) acknowledged the trickle-down impact that school district leaders have on closing the achievement gap. Childress et al. (2009) wrote about the need for courageous, bold, collaborative, wise, and creative leadership in order to expand opportunities for academic excellence and achievement among diverse student populations. School district leaders must serve every child by committing to whole-school district transformation. The Montgomery County Public Schools case study offered by Childress et al. (2009) demonstrated, as acknowledged by Wilhite (2012), that if and "when school district leaders strive for excellence and equity of instructional quality for each student in every

classroom every day" (p. 5), they will dramatically reduce the risk of widening the achievement gap.

Furthermore, Marzano et al. (2005) found that school district leaders who (a) established collaborative goals (b) determined nonnegotiable goals, (c) aligned federal, state, and school district goals, (d) monitored these goals, and (e) continuously reassessed goals, were more likely to demonstrate a positive relationship to student achievement. In another analysis of effective school leadership, Orr et al. (2006) acknowledged that decision-making practices by school and school district leaders should focus persistently and publicly on: (a) equitable and powerful teaching, and learning; (b) instructional improvement; (c) develop and expand an instructional leadership cadre; (d) alter leadership work practices between the school and school district; and (e) provide explicit and sustained leadership support.

In a like manner, Childress et al. (2009) identified the following six core themes as necessary to set a standard of excellence and equity and suggested that school district leaders in large school districts could benefit from them. First, school district leaders must create common and rigorous standards. Second, school and school district leaders must ensure that there is an appropriate curriculum alignment from Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 for successful student development. The third theme cited by Childress et al. (2009) and supported by Fullan (2002) and Little (1990) acknowledged the need for school district and school leaders to provide access to teachers, students, parents and community stake-holders to work collaboratively in achieving school district goals. Little (1990) found that effective collaboration among teachers, school administrators,

and stakeholders in the community was linked to gains in student achievement, higher quality solutions to problems, and an expanded pool of ideas, methods, and materials that benefit all who are involved in the learning process.

A fourth theme was that school district and school leaders must set high expectations for themselves and for teachers. All persons involved in student learning should be collectively accountable. Similarly, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) reported that the most successful schools were those that implemented professional learning communities and teachers took collective, not just individual, responsibility for student learning. Fifth, school district and school leaders, and teachers, must be committed to breaking the links between race and class and academic achievement. Sixth, when the school district has reached its goal of providing a rigorous and equitable access to education, regardless of race, ethnicity, or family income, the school district as a whole must acknowledge that setting high expectations and demanding excellence and equity mattered (Childress et al., 2009).

Orr et al. (2006) acknowledged that school leaders are expected and federally mandated to accomplish what few have been able to do: to dramatically improve student performance and to ensure equity at every level in the school district. Therefore, the success of a school district to ensure a quality and high-performing education for all students hinges, to a large extent, on the decision-making practices of the superintendent and school district leaders.

School district Leadership and Decision Making Practices

Waters et al. (2003), acknowledged that "effective leadership means more than simply knowing what to do--it's knowing when, how, and why to do it" (p. 2). Effective school leaders enhance student learning and serve as instructional leaders to all school personnel. They know how to balance promoting change while at the same time protecting aspects of values, norms, and culture (Waters et al., 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Executive leaders of large school districts are faced with the heavy challenges of increasing student achievement scores, ensuring that all students regardless of family income, race, language, or ethnicity have access to a rigorous, high-performing education, curriculum, educational tools, and infusion of high quality effective instruction in the classroom to prepare students for college and beyond. Togneri and Anderson (2003) posited that to increase student achievement both instructional practice and support systems should be reassessed and changed if necessary and available to all students. For all students to learn and improve, teachers, administrators, school board and support systems need to work together in developing effective strategies. For school systems to become excellent the achievement gap between low-income students and their more advantaged peers has to close (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). For this to take place, according to Reagle (2006), every child will have to have access to quality instruction and practices.

Purpose of the Study

Designed to be a replicated study offered initially by Wilhite (2012), using teachers as the sample group, this study sought to determine the perceptions of teachers "who were employed in the target school district from 2003 to 2011 regarding superintendent second-order change leadership (decisions, actions, events) [and the extent to which] equity and access to excellence for all students were achieved" (p. 7). Also investigated was the relationship, if any, that existed in achieving equity and access to excellence based on school district second-order change leadership from 2003 to 2011.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions, similar to those used in the study conducted by Wilhite (2012), were used to explain the vocabulary used in this study. The terms listed were defined in accordance with their significance and context within the study.

Access: the opportunity for all students to engage in high-performing academic instruction, have the use of educational tools, have high academic expectations, and results (Childress et al., 2009).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): measurement by which schools, school districts, and states are held accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 to determine whether all students, as well as individual subgroups of students, are making progress toward meeting state academic content standards (U. S. Department of Education, 2001).

Equity: providing all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, or disability with access to a quality education that will provide for academic growth and development (Childress et al., 2009).

Excellence: establishing high standards of education for students, teachers, and school administrators in a school district (Marzano et al., 2005). Teachers must be prepared to effectively facilitate learning for every individual student, no matter how culturally or economically similar or different from themselves (Gorski, 2010).

First-order change: decision-making practices that examine a variation in the way processes and procedures have been executed in a given system, and essentially leaving the system itself relatively unchanged (Watzlawick et al., 1974).

Large school district: a school district with more than 60,000 students enrolled and a student population with diverse background characteristics of ethnicity, grade-point average, curriculum of enrollment, SES, and educational level of parents (McCracken & Barcinas, 1991).

Teacher based: Instructional contracted employees with the target school district such as deans, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, and teachers on assignment.

Second-order change: unique changes that are in sharp contrast from the past. Second-order change requires the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and tasks (Watzlawick et al., 1974).

Social justice: obligation to provide educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally (Gorski, 2010).

Socio-economic status (SES): The linkage of people's education to their life chances, family/individual income, and well being (Barry, 2006).

Unitary status: The assignment of students to schools without regard to race, color or creed. A school district has achieved unitary status when it is devoid of racial discrimination with regard to "student assignments, faculty and staff assignment, transportation, facilities, resources and staff allocation, and extracurricular activities" (Dehlinger, 2008, p. 2).

Research Questions

The following research questions, similar to those offered by Wilhite (2012, pp. 7-8), guided this study.

1. What are the school district second-order change decisions that are known or perceived by teachers to have led to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in a large school district?
2. Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the significant events known or perceived by teachers to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 students?
3. What were the perceived challenges by teachers in creating equity and access to excellence and to what extent were these perceived challenges for all students addressed between 2003 and 2011 in the target school district as determined by teacher perception?

4. What are teachers' perceived recommendations for further improvement with regard to achieving excellence and equity for all students?

Methodology

This study was based on Wilhite's (2012) study of administrators' perceptions of steps toward achieving equity and access to excellence in the same school district. Designed as a mixed-method study, the research components used in this study were both of a qualitative and quantitative nature. The instrumentation used to collect data included a modified survey and interviews to create a case study based on recommendations made in Wilhite's study. The population consisted of teachers employed from 2003 to 2011 in the target school district. Table 1 contains the data sources used to answer the four research questions. Additional details of the methodology utilized in this study are discussed in Chapter 3.

Table 1

Research Questions, Data Sources, and Variables

Research Questions	Data Sources	Variables
1. What are the school district second-order change decisions that are known or perceived by teachers to have led to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in a large school district?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey for Teachers (items 8,10-11, 13-26, 28, 31-32, 34 Appendix A)	Independent—significant decisions between 2003 to 2011 contributing to achievement of equity and excellence Dependent—teacher perceptions
2. Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the significant events known or perceived by teachers to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 students?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey for Teachers (items 9, 12, 27, 29-30, 33, Appendix A)	Independent—significant events between 2003 to 2011 contributing to achievement of equity and excellence Dependent—teacher perceptions
3. What were the perceived challenges by teachers in creating equity and access to excellence and to what extent were these perceived challenges for all students addressed between 2003 and 2011 in the target school district as determined by teacher perception?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey for Teachers (items 35-37, Appendix A) Interviews with volunteer teachers	Independent—challenges to creating equity and access to excellence Dependent—teacher perceptions
4. What are teachers' perceived recommendations for further improvement with regard to achieving excellence and equity for all students?	Equity and Access to Excellence Survey for Teachers (item 37, Appendix A) Interviews with volunteer teachers	Independent—recommendations for further improvements Dependent—teacher recommendations

Significance of the Study

The Florida Department of Education has recognized the target school district as a high performing school district (Weber, 2011). Given the challenges of mandates and public demands for higher standards, expectations, and results faced by executive leaders of large school districts, this study will provide fundamental insight into how school district leaders engage the challenges faced. The superintendent of the target school district compiled a list of executive actions and school district events that took place from 2003 to 2011 that he and cabinet members considered significant. Examples of such actions, decisions and/or events included but were not limited to school district strategic plan revisions starting in 2003, infusion of reading into all high school content areas in 2005, development and implementation of the Transition Program for incoming ninth-grade students, implementation of content area and school level cadres, and the creation of the school district coaching institute. This study sought to add to the body of knowledge on how to achieve equity and access to excellence and by doing so enhance learning opportunities for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.

Limitations

1. The significant decision, actions, and events used for the survey were provided by the superintendent and executive level cabinet administrators in the target school district (Wilhite, 2012, p. 12).

2. By surveying teachers employed in the target school district, this may bring into question the objectivity of the respondents (Wilhite, 2012, p. 12).
3. By using an interview method, obtained results from the survey questionnaire, the resulting concepts and themes may not be applicable for generalization purposes to other school districts (Wilhite, 2012, p. 13).
4. The study methodology provides the opportunity to delve more deeply into contexts and develop understanding, but is subject to statistical challenges. (Brooks & Watkins, 1994; Wilhite, 2012, p. 13)
5. It was the assumption of the principal investigator that participants in the study would respond with truthfulness and honesty to the questions asked in the surveys and those offered later in the structured interviews portion of the study (Wilhite, 2012, p. 13).
6. There were several limitations associated with recruitment of participants in the study which have been detailed in Chapters 3 and 4.
7. The researcher was not able to determine, to what extent all of the supervising principals at the schools sampled consented to have their teachers participate in the study and distributed the survey consent forms as requested.
8. The resulting sample size was small, with only 7% of the 489 eligible teachers responding.
9. Most of the survey respondents were representative of grades 9-12.

Delimitations

The researcher delimited the administration of questionnaires and interviews specifically to teachers employed continuously in the target school district from 2003 to 2011.

Summary

School leadership decision-making practices are a powerful indicator of student success in the classroom and beyond. There exists an intense debate over heightened school leadership and teacher accountability linked with the goal of increased student achievement for all. Centered in the debate lie the ability and leadership decision-making practices of school principals and school district administrators to develop and implement swift and decisive education reform changes to effectively impact student achievement. School district and school leaders have a professional obligation to ensure that all students are provided equity and access to excellence in a high-performing education system.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature was conducted by the researcher using scholarly journal articles, reports, and texts related to second-order change leadership efforts to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students at the national and state level, through the University of Central Florida (UCF) online library and databases. The researcher also searched for reports and published findings through websites and databases offered by (a) U.S. Department of Education, (b) U.S. Department of Justice, (c) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), (d) The Center for Education Reform (CER), (e) National Equity Project, and (f) The Florida Department of Education. In preparation for the research, the researcher conducted an extensive search of relevant literature and diverse perspectives. Articles and case studies were collected and sorted first by topics, then events. The focus of the literature review was on studies, influences and practices of second-order leadership to achieve equity and access to all students at the national, state, and school district levels. This chapter contains a synthesis of all the literature reviewed.

This chapter has been organized to present an introduction to the conceptual framework of equity and access to excellence for all students as demonstrated by school district leadership decisions, events, and challenges. An explanation of the following strands as offered by Wilhite (2012, p. 4) is presented: (a) second-order change leadership, (b) social justice, and (c) second-order change leadership in practice to achieve equity and access to excellence. The discussion in this chapter focuses on

national scholarly perspectives of second order-change leadership, followed by chronological national and state efforts (judicial and legislative) to achieve equity and access to excellence as it relates to the above mentioned strands emphasized in this study. Research related to growth in student academic achievement and the effects of national and school district practices to achieve student success is presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a review of current research and findings related to second-order change leadership decision, events, and challenges.

For the purpose of this chapter, and to illustrate efforts at the national, state, and school district levels to attain equity and access to excellence for all students, Figure 1 contains elements discussed in this chapter that reflect findings from the sources. The researcher used this figure to organize, document, and match efforts at the national and state levels to the conceptual framework strands of second-order change leadership, social justice, and second-order change leadership best practices to achieve equity and access to excellence.

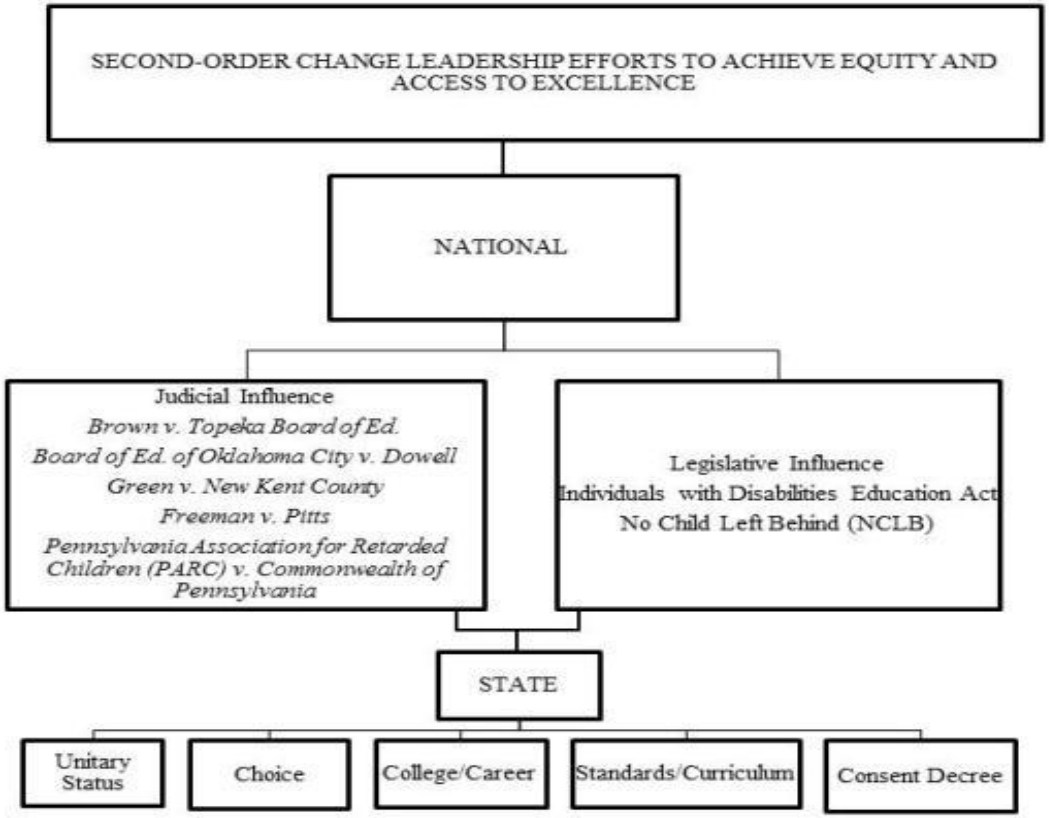


Figure 1. Efforts to Achieve Equity and Access to Excellence for All Students

Second-Order Change Leadership

According to Lubienski (2002), student assessment reports have shown that low-achieving, low-income, and predominantly black and Hispanic students have demonstrated little growth in critical areas like mathematics, reading, and science when compared to their counterparts. Educational leaders on the national, state, and school district stage are charged with the tasks of providing all students with a rigorous academic education, ensuring student learning growth and achievement regardless of race, creed, and socioeconomic status. To ensure student growth and achievement while also grappling with the reality of the possible existence of inequity, school district leaders need to initiate change in various ways (Waters et al., 2003). According to Waters et al. (2003), not all change is of the same order. Having the right focus of change is paramount to improving schools and enhancing student achievement. Leaders of large school districts are expected and federally mandated to accomplish what few have been able to do--to dramatically improve student performance and ensure equity at every level in the school district (Orr et al., 2006).

> It is very important that school leaders are able to recognize the different ways that change might impact on their communities, and therefore to select practices and strategies to implement change very carefully. First order changes are those which build on existing conditions, are focused and have support from experts. Second order changes break with the past, are more complex and may create huge disturbances. (Waters et al., 2003, p. 2)

Early researchers of school effectiveness have reported that leadership was a defining characteristic of successful schools (Waters et al., 2003). As expressed by Waters and Marzano (2007), leadership makes a difference. Waters and Marzano (2007),

also found there to be "a positive relationship between district-level leadership and student achievement," (p. 20).

In a study commissioned by the National Governor's Association, *Knowing the Right Things to do: School Improvement and Performance-Based Accountability,* Elmore (2003) stated,

> Knowing the right thing to do is the essential problem of school improvement. Holding schools accountable for their performance depends on having people in schools with the knowledge, skills, and judgment to make the improvements that will increase student performance. (p. 9)

Unlike first-order change, second-order change characteristically involves unique changes that are in sharp contrast to prior actions. Second-order change requires the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and tasks (Watzlawick et al., 1974). The theoretical literature on leadership, change, and the adoption of new and innovative ideas to improve student achievement offered by Walton, (1990), Fullan, (2002), and Waters et al. (2003) posited that not all change is of the same magnitude or elicits the same characteristics. , Table 2 presents the differences in characteristics between first and second-order changes as presented by Waters et al. (2003).

Table 2

Characteristics of First- and Second-Order Change

First-Order Change	Second-Order Change
An extension of the past	A break with the past
Within existing paradigms	Outside of existing paradigms
Consistent with prevailing values and norms	Conflicted with prevailing values and norms
Focused	Emergent
Bounded	Unbounded
Incremental	Complex
Linear	Nonlinear
Marginal	A disturbance to every element of a system
Implemented with existing knowledge and skills	Requires new knowledge and skills to implement
Problem and solution oriented	Neither problem nor solution oriented
Implemented by experts	Implemented by stakeholders

Note. Adapted with permission from *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Leadership Tells us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement*, by T.J. Waters, R. Marzano, R., and B. McNulty, 2003, p. 7. Copyright 2003 by the Mid-continental Research for Education and Learning.
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Not all change represents the same order of change for each individual, group, or stakeholder. The implication of change for individuals or organizations determines the magnitude or order of change. Changes that are consistent with existing values or norms meet the criteria of a first order change characteristic and will likely serve as an advantage for individuals with similar interests (Waters et al., 2003). Likewise, changes

or restructuring can be implemented with existing knowledge and resources. For instance, from an educational perspective, this frame of reference could extend itself to include a new curricular program, a new instructional initiative, or a new data collection and reporting system built on already established patterns and knowledge (Waters et al., 2003).

In striking contrast, second-order change requires individuals or a group of stakeholders to develop new skills and learn new approaches. Generally, a change becomes second-order, as expressed by Waters et al. (2003), when it is not necessarily obvious how it will make matters better for people with similar interests. In an educational context, high stakes testing can serve as an example. A middle school principal has recently received end-of-year testing results for all grade levels. The report revealed that sixth-grade reading levels declined by a large percentage. Review of additional assessment reports also indicate a similar decline in reading comprehension levels for sixth-grade students for the past three years at the same school. The school district has been using the same reading intervention program for the past five years. A first-order change leader may look at this scenario and consider the following interventions: (a) adjusting the upcoming school year bell schedule to include block scheduling, (b) changing teachers by grade levels, or (c) hiring new reading teachers. In this scenario, the first-order change school leader is focused specifically on the teachers in the reading department.

> Recognizing which changes are first and second order for which individuals and stakeholder group helps leaders to select leadership practices and strategies

> appropriate for their initiatives. Doing so enhances the likelihood of sustainable initiatives and a positive impact on achievement. (Waters et al., 2003, p. 8)

Leadership is the key to proactively and productively managing turbulence (Planche, Sharratt, & Belchetz, 2008). Second order change leaders would examine the previously described scenario by casting a wider net. They might be inclined to (a) look at the effectiveness of the reading program itself, (b) work with teachers to develop a campus wide reading after school program to provide additional support, (c) collaborate to implement effective classroom instructional best practices not familiar to the school environment, and/or (d) develop a collaborative goal to infuse reading across the curriculum.

Researchers of school leadership, (Waters et al., 2003; Fullan, 2006) have found that second-order change practices tend to attract more resistance than first-order change practices. Initially, the social studies or mathematics teachers may not understand their particular interest in infusing reading into their content area and may very well be resistant to a change in the delivery of their content. However, they may eventually recognize their shared responsibility and accountability for student reading learning gains if the reading goal proves beneficial in enhancing student performance in the following school year's sixth-grade student reading assessment. Researchers Louis et al. (2010) have cited the importance of school leaders evolving into the role of instructional leaders as opposed to managers. To infuse reading across the curriculum, as an example, reading becomes the centerpiece of every classroom. The school principal involves all

stakeholders, not just the reading teachers, to have shared responsibility and individual accountability.

Changing the Culture of an Organization Through Second-Order Change Leadership

Researchers of organizational leadership determined that learning is a continuous process, and organizations that are in the process of getting better at it depend on the creation of cultures that are supportive and collaborative in nature (Planche et al., 2008).

> The ability of school organizations to collaboratively address the learning needs of faculty as well as students, can provide the tools for the evolution of schools from isolated, atomistic organizations to responsive, self-appraising learning environments that are stimulating to both learn and work in. (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994, p. 23)

Fullan (1996) in discussing school change identified the challenge of reculturing:

> The nature of the reculturing we are talking about is developing collaborative work cultures that focus in a sustained way on the continuous preparation and professional development of teachers in relation to creating and assessing learning conditions for all students. . . it is truly a massive change because it goes to the core of the culture of the schools, and eventually go hand in hand with major structural changes. (p. 220)

According to Fullan (2002), school culture is a critical component to assessing the past and also making way for future school improvement. School leaders knows when and how to bring about change (Fullan, 2002). Waters et al. (2003) described culture as the "extent to which the principal fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation" (p. 8). Depending on school content and culture, first- and second-order change strategies can lead to student achievement. However, school leaders must be savvy in their approach. As emphasized by Fullan (2006) and described in the previous scenario, the school principal considered the culture of the school. Taking into account

the school context, both first- and second-order change characteristics were considered. In the scenario presented, the problem was declining reading scores of sixth-grade students. The principal ultimately broke with past practices and worked with teachers to develop and implement classroom best practices for all content areas, thus promoting reading as the centerpiece of every classroom. This caused a break in the traditional system that required the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The intent of the school principal's change strategy, as addressed by Waters et al. (2003), was to demonstrate that by collaborating and developing new and innovative ideas and practices, the results would yield increased learning gains related to student achievement and the success of the school as a whole. Restructuring requires creative thinking while fostering a sense of commitment as opposed to exercising control as a primary leadership strategy (Rodriguez et al., 2009). To avoid the conflicting values associated with clashing with teachers, the school principal in the scenario chose to build upon the knowledge that already existed in the school building and collaborate with teachers to examine the problem.

Encouraging teachers to place individual problems in the larger perspective of the whole school ensures a broader range of perspectives from which to not only interpret problems but also to solicit varying perspectives (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992). In the same scenario, the school principal, demonstrated second order change characteristics and utilized the practice associated with culture described by Waters et al. (2003), as (a) "promoting cooperation among staff," (b) "promoting a sense of wellbeing," (c)

"promoting cohesion among staff," (d) "developing shared understanding of purpose," and (e) "developing a shared vision for the school" (p. 8).

Leithwood and Poplin (1992), found that the responsibility for the "predictable failure of educational reform" (p. 1) was contingent to a large extent on existing power relationships in schools. Leithwood and Poplin (1992) emphasized that such relationships include those among teachers and administrators, parents and school staff, and students and teachers. It is the role of the school leader to develop a collaborative culture of inquiry (Emihovich & Battaglia, 2000). According to Waters et al. (2003), establishing agreements on the purpose of schooling, proposed changes, and a shared vision of possibilities is paramount if cooperation among staff, community stakeholders, and a sense of well being on the part of students is to be maintained and re-established as the change is being implemented.

To effectively make second-order change leadership practices, school administrators should focus their attention on facilitative power (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992). Transformational leadership generates collectiveness and empowers those who play a key role in the process. Leithwood and Poplin found that transformational school leaders who utilize second order leadership practices are more or less in pursuit of three fundamental goals (a) developing and maintaining a collaborative school culture, (b) fostering teacher development, and (c) encouraging proactive collaboration to problem solving to meet the needs of all learners. Orr et al. (2006) acknowledged that decision-making practices by school and school district leaders should focus persistently and publicly on: (a) equitable and powerful teaching, and learning, (b) instructional

improvement, (c) developing and expanding an instructional leadership cadre, (d) altering leadership work practices between the school and school district, and (e) providing explicit and sustained leadership support.

To a great extent, school improvement and culture reform takes places inside individual classrooms. Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles (1988) expressed that teachers need a culture and a structure within which to build trust. Schein (1984) suggested "the very process of passing on the culture provides an opportunity for testing, ratifying, and reaffirming it" (p. 14). Reculturing, as noted by Fullan (1996), demands a new lens to be developed through which to view and experience the organization.

Little (1990), found that effective collaboration among teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders in the community was linked to gains in student achievement, higher quality solutions to problems, and an expanded pool of ideas, methods, and materials that benefit all who are involved in the learning process. In a case study involving 12 schools, Leithwood and Jantzi (1991) identified common strategies used by school-based administrators to assist teachers in building and maintaining a professional learning community. These strategies included involving teachers in collaborative goal setting at the departmental and whole school level and designating a professional development time during the school day for teachers to meet and collaborate.

In collaborative school cultures, teachers not only plan and talk with each other, they also observe and critique each other (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992). Reflective inquiry is a critical part of development for educators. Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992)

acknowledged that individual and collective learning are deeply embedded in changing school culture, and contradictions and conflicts are an essential part of the process.

Though Planche et al. (2008) advocated that learning organizations should be concerned with outcomes, accountability, and efficiencies, a learning community must also be concerned with the growth of all its members. Planche et al. viewed leadership as broad-based. Teacher empowerment through capacity building is essential to improving school efforts, student achievement, and professional experiences.

As noted by Waters et al. (2003), change involves the presence of problems and attempts to solve problems within school systems. Collaboration is a critical piece of the puzzle in addressing the problems that may exist in an organization and in ensuring that all students have equal access to a high quality system of education. In the context of first-order change, the change that occurs, essentially allows the basic nature of the system or the problem to exist. The work of student improvement is the careful and collaborative movement from first- to second-order change as suggested by Elmore (2003) and cited in Planche et al. (2008). Collaboration is merely one method of a second-order change leadership solution that requires a careful, methodical, and well-crafted plan of implementation to ensure equity and access to excellence for all students. Second-order change is a change in the structure, dynamics, and outcomes of an organization based on the idea that improvement at every level is expected and required (Planche et al., 2008).

Social Justice

Judicial Influence to Achieve Equity and Access to Excellence

Judicial and legislation actions aimed at providing equity and access to all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status were impactful in forever changing the organizational structure of education in the United States. The judicial branch of the United States government has long played a significant role in education reform. Landmark court rulings in the federal and state level court systems impacted the demographic makeup and organizational structure of schools beginning in the early 1950s with the well-known *Brown* (1954) court decision.

Brown v. Topeka Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

The 1954 *Brown* ruling overturned the long held doctrine of "separate but equal," (*Plessy v. Ferguson,* 1896, p. 550). The United States Supreme Court ruled that separate school systems violated "laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment," *(Brown v. Topeka Board of Education,* 1954, p. 483). The Court ordered public schools to begin the process of integrating school "at the earliest practicable date [and with] all deliberate speed," *(Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 1954, pp. 300-301). In an effort to hasten integration the landmark *Brown* (1954) ruling also ordered district courts to supervise school districts that practiced *de jure* segregation *(Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 1954).

Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell, 498 U.S 237 (1961)

Although the *Brown* (1954) ruling was clear in its mandate to end school segregation on the basis of race, school districts across the United States continued to encounter significant difficulty in desegregating schools. In 1961, Robert Dowell, a black student, along with other black students, filed suit against the Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools in an effort to end segregation (Fitzpatrick & Trimble, 1991). In 1963, the Oklahoma City Public School Board was ordered by the United States District Court of Western Oklahoma to desegregate the school system (Fitzpatrick & Trimble, 1991).

The school district attempted to remedy the court's order through neighborhood zoning (Fitzpatrick & Trimble, 1991). Despite this effort, the Oklahoma City Public School System was still in violation of the court order to desegregate its schools largely because residential segregation resulted in single-race schools. In an effort to eliminate single-race schools, the district court, as acknowledged by Fitzpatrick and Trimble (1991), ordered the school district to use busing as a remedy to transport students of different races. By 1977, busing proved successful in desegregating Oklahoma City Public Schools, and the court withdrew its enforcement plan declaring that the board had complied with reaching unitary racial composition (Fitzpatrick & Trimble, 1991). In 1984, according to Fitzpatrick and Trimble (1991), the board adopted the newly developed student reassignment plan which, in effect, had re-segregated some schools in the school district. Parents of black students sought to reopen the *Dowell* case as a result of the Oklahoma City Public Schools' newly adopted student reassignment plan, on the

grounds that it violated the U.S. Supreme Court's order in the *Brown* decision. The district court, however, refused to reopen the case (Fitzpatrick and Trimble, 1991). The appellate court, as noted by Fitzpatrick and Trimble (1991), would later reverse the lower court's decision.

The Supreme Court remanded the Dowell case to the district court to determine if the school district had complied with the original desegregation decree (*Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell,* 1961). The U.S. Supreme Court, in offering guidance to the district court, "held that the court supervision ends when the Board complies in good faith with the desegregation decree" (Fitzpatrick & Trimble, 1991, p. 316). The Court also added that the district court should assess whether the vestiges of past discrimination had been eliminated to the extent practicable (Fitzpatrick & Trimble, 1991). The Court concluded that "When a school district is released from a desegregation decree, court authorization of new school policies and procedures is no longer needed" (Fitzpatrick & Trimble, 1991, p. 316). The Court did, however, acknowledge that school districts remained subject to the mandate of the equal protection clause (*Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell,* 1961).

Green v. County School Board of New Kent, 391 U.S. 430 (1968)

In 1964, 10 years after the landmark *Brown* (1954) decision that declared "separate but equal" unconstitutional, public schools in New Kent County, Virginia remained completely segregated (Allen & Daugherity, 2011). Passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act attempted to facilitate compliance of many schools school districts across the

United States with the Supreme Court's decree to desegregate schools by threatening to cut-off federal funding to localities refusing to comply with the Court's order to integrate schools (Allen & Daugherity, 2011).

Allen and Daugherity (2011) reported "Calvin Coolidge Green, president of the New Kent County NAACP [(National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and] a Richmond schoolteacher [filed suit along with other plaintiffs against] the New Kent County School Board [for failing] to [comply with the *Brown* (1954) decision and] integrate the county's schools," (pp. 2-3). The New Kent County Public School Board argued that under its freedom of choice plan, students and their parents were required to petition the Board for permission to switch schools, and that the school district, therefore, was not in violation of the desegregation decree (Allen & Daugherity, 2011). Although some black students did petition and transfer to white schools, as expressed in a case summary offered by Allen and Daugherity (2011), no white students petitioned to attend the black school. In 1966, the U.S. District Court ruled against Green. Despite an appeal, the Fourth Circuit Court reaffirmed and upheld the decision of the lower court (Allen & Daugherity, 2011).

In 1967, Green appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court and argued that the school district's "freedom of choice" initiative placed the burden of integration on black students (Allen & Daugherity, 2011). "Attorneys for Green [also] argued that the school [district deliberately planned] to preserve [the segregated school system by busing] black students up to 20 miles to attend the all-black [school despite the fact that the homes of the black

students were in much closer proximity] to the white school" (Allen & Daugherity, 2011, p. 3).

In 1968, nearly 14 years after the *Brown* (1954) ruling, "the U.S. Supreme Court declared, the state, acting through the school and local school officials, organized and operated a dual system, part 'white' and part 'negro,' in nearly every component of "school operations: faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities, and facilities," (Allen & Daugherity, 2011, p. 4). Allen and Daugherity (2011) reported, the dual system operated by the New Kent County "school system [violated] the Court's decision in the" (p. 4), *Brown* (1954) ruling, which placed a duty on school boards to end segregation. "The Court [ordered] the New Kent County School Board, to develop" [and implement] a new plan" (Allen & Daugherity, 2011, p. 4), that eliminated segregation (Fife, 1996). The Supreme Court took a step further and also ordered that the U.S. District Court maintain oversight of the school board's plan to ensure compliance with the order to integrate (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent*, 1968).

Green (1968) established a precedent that impacted school systems and courts across the country (Fife, 1996). As a result of the *Green* (1968) ruling, district courts were given the authority to order the gradual withdrawal of court supervision over school districts (Fife, 1996). The professed Green factors required racial desegregation in the areas of transportation, student assignment, teaching staff, extracurricular activities, and facilities (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent*, 1968).

In order to meet unitary status, thus no longer subject to oversight and monitoring from the district courts, schools boards had to present evidence of progress in each of the

mentioned areas. In order to meet unitary status, the courts made an addition to the "Green" factors in the case of *Freeman (*1992). In *Freeman* (1992) the courts added the area of quality of education. In her study, Dehlinger (2008) reported that the courts outlined such quality of education issues to include: "(1) representation of minorities in advanced classes, (2) overrepresentation of minorities in special education courses, (3) overrepresentation of minorities in student discipline statistics, and (4) disparities in drop out, retention, and graduation rates," (p. 3).

Freeman et al. v. Pitts et al., 503 U.S. 467 (1992)

Vergon (2012) reported, "in wake of [the] *Green* (1968) [decision,] more than one million black children entered formerly all-white schools in southern school districts," (p. 2). One such school district was the DeKalb County School System (DCSS), as reported by Vergon (2012), which "entered into a consent order in 1969" (p. 2), and began efforts to do away with its longstanding school system of racial segregation. In 1986, nearly 17 years later and after complying with integration orders by the courts, the school district petitioned the district court to declare the school district unitary or free of segregation "and relieve it of judicial oversight," (Vergon, 2012, p. 2). The court found that DCSS had indeed "achieved unitary status, [but] in [only] four of the six [required] areas [outlined] in" (p. 2), the 1968 *Green* (1968) decision (Orfield, Eaton, & Harvard Project on School Desegregation, 1996). DCSS had not yet purged racial discrimination when it came to the areas of "faculty assignments and the allocation of resources," (Vergon, 2012, p. 2). Attorneys for the DCSS argued that between 1969 and 1986, black student

enrollment grew from 6% in the late 1960s to nearly 47% in 1986, causing a greater imbalance in schools attended predominantly by black students (Vergon, 2012).

The District Court granted DCSS its petition to be relieved of judicial oversight, but only in the four areas in which the school system had made good faith efforts of eliminating segregation (Orfield et al., 1996). An appeal to the Eleventh Circuit Court later reversed this ruling. As a matter of law and as expressed by the Eleventh Circuit Court in *Freeman* (1992), "a trial court must retain full remedial authority over a school system until it has achieved unitary status in all of the *Green* (1968) categories" (p. 9). On appeal, Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court considered the primary questions of:

> (1) Does a district court have the authority to withdraw supervision of a school system that is under a court-ordered desegregation decree in the areas in which the school system complies with its decree if it does not comply in every area?
>
> (2) In the case of DeKalb County School System (DCSS), was the court of appeals correct in reversing the District Court's decision to withdraw supervision incrementally" (Oyez Project, 2011, p. 1)?

The Supreme Court held in *Freeman* (1992)that the lower courts "must only maintain control and supervision over a school district in the categories in which it had failed to meet desegregation plans" (Oyez Project, 2011, page 1). The Court provided guidance to the lower courts, as noted by Vergon (2012), and identified the following three factors that should be considered in granting oversight relief to school districts:

> Whether school officials provided full compliance in the areas to be withdrawn from court supervision; whether retaining control of some areas was necessary to

> achieve compliance in other areas not yet considered unitary; and whether school officials demonstrated good faith commitment to the whole plan. (p. 2)

The Court contended in *Freeman* (1992) that the DeKalb County School Board had met all three of the conditions despite the existence of resegregation. The Justices acknowledged,

> Where segregation is the product not of state action but of private choices, it does not have constitutional implications. It is beyond the authority and beyond the practical ability of the federal courts to try to counteract these kinds of continuous and massive demographic shifts. (Orfield et al., 1996, p. 495)

The *Freeman* (1992) ruling was a significant step toward ending decades-long court monitoring of desegregation efforts. One of the major obstacles facing school districts in their attempts to desegregate schools, supported by Vergon (2012), was "sustaining racial balance in the face of demographic changes" (p.2). More than 35 years after the *Brown* (1954) decision, Vergon (2012) determined the *Freeman* (1992) ruling not only lessened this obstacle, but it also relaxed compliance standards and hastened the ending of judicial oversight of school districts.

The *Brown* (1954) decision marked the start of three decades of intensive efforts by the federal government to integrate public schools (Dobbs, 2004). Social efforts in attaining equity and excellence for all students did not stop at the judicial bench. Efforts aimed at ensuring a quality education embedded in rigor, high standards, and accountability for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic income have also been brought about through legislation.

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 343 F. Supp. 279 (1972)

Prior to 1975, children with disabilities were by and large deprived of an education. According to Martin, Martin, and Terman (1996), "During the 1960s and early 1970s, no state served all its children with disabilities" (p. 27). Just as the Supreme Court had ruled in the *Brown* (1954) decision in regard to race, the federal courts made it clear in the case of *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) that schools were obligated to provide students with "equal protection of the law" without discrimination on the basis of disability (Martin et al., 1996, p. 28).

The *PARC* (1972) case challenged a Pennsylvania state law (Stat. Sec. 13-1304; Stat. Sec. 13-1326; Stat. Sec. 13-1330; Stat. Sec. 13-1375) that permitted schools the authority to deny services to children "who have not attained a mental age of five years at the time they would ordinarily enroll in first grade" (Martin et al., 1996, p. 28). As a result of the Pennsylvania law, children with mental retardation were routinely denied public school services based on their ineligibility. Parents with children who were considered to be ineligible for public school services were provided other options. Best (2012) reported these other options to include "send their child to a private school, hire a private tutor, or institutionalizing their child," (p. 5).

Best (2012) reported, in 1971, the Pennsylvania chapter of the Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) "filed a class action lawsuit in federal district court," (p. 6). Best (2012) cited three questions at issue:

1. Did the statutes in Pennsylvania deny disabled students due process and equal protection?
2. If the state had undertaken to provide education, did it have the right to deny education to the plaintiffs?
3. Is a label or categorization given to a person a reason to preclude due process and equal protection? (p. 9)

PARC (1972) challenged that the Pennsylvania law denied due process because it lacked appropriate provisions for notice and a hearing (Martin et al., 1996). Plaintiffs in the case also argued that the "presumption that retarded children are uneducable and untrainable lack a basis in fact" (Best, 2012, p. 9). School agencies in Pennsylvania responded by arguing that providing access to disabled children, specifically those labeled as "mentally retarded" (Best, 2012, p. 12), would place an overwhelming administrative and financial burden on the school systems.

According to Best (2012), the Court held that failure to provide access to public school services "violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment" (p.13), and ruled that children with disabilities had an equal right to public education. The Court also stated that such an education should be in a form that was meaningful for students' with special needs (Best, 2012). Furthermore, as discussed by Martin et al (1996) and Best (2012), the court acknowledged that failure to provide notification to parents regarding evaluation, especially in the case of denial of education, was the equivalent of a denial of due process and thus violated the Fifth Amendment.

PARC (1972) was resolved by consent decree. The *PARC* (1972) decision outlined the following in the Court's ruling: (a) school districts were required to identify and teach all children with mental retardation; (b) schools were to implement an

evaluation system for placing students; (c) the State Department of Education was required to develop educational programs that met the needs of special education learners, specify financial impact of each program, and also include efforts for teacher recruitment and training; and (d) children under the age of six were to be included for services.

The famous *PARC* (1972) court case was the genesis for free appropriate public education and paved the way in changing who schools must educate, how they must educate, and redefined the meaning and purpose of school systems. *PARC* (1972) would eventually galvanize leaders at the national level to react and respond with passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004).

Legislative and Litigation Influence to Achieve Equity and Access to Excellence

Prior to 1975 an estimated one million children with disabilities in the United States were denied the right to a public education and at least four million more were segregated from their non-disabled peers (Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, 2006). As a result, children with disabilities often failed to receive an education. This eventually led to several judicial proceedings including *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education of the School District of Columbia* (Apling & Jones, 2002). To compensate for the lack of equity and access to excellence guaranteed to all students, specifically those with a disability, a series of federal legislative actions were produced beginning with the 1975 passage of the Education for All Children Act (EACA) (Apling & Jones, 2002). In 1990, the EACA was officially re-

titled Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Martin et al., 1996). Revisions to the IDEA were introduced in 1997 and later reauthorized in 2004.

IDEA provides states with federal dollars for special education and related services (Apling & Jones, 2002). For states that accept these federal funds, there are also a set of requirements that must be followed and met (Martin et al., 1996). For example, IDEA established principles under which special education and services must be provided and it also provided the following detailed principles as reported by Apling and Jones (2002, p. 2).

1. States and school districts are required to make available a free public education to children with disabilities.
2. Regardless of the severity of their disability states and school districts should put into place a system that identifies and evaluates all children suspected of having a disability to determine which children may be eligible to receive special education services.
3. Children receiving special education services are required to have an individual education program, also known as an IEP, which details "specific special education and related services to be provided" (p. 2), to meet the learning needs of the child. The IEP team must include the parent and may also include a regular education teacher, special education teacher, school psychologist, speech language pathologist, behavioral specialist, school administrator, etc.
4. IDEA also provides that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities must be educated with children who are not disabled. (p. 2)

Leaders at the national level of government changed the methods and means of ensuring a quality education and providing for educational opportunities for student with disabilities. Legislative leaders did so in an attempt to "strike a careful balance between the [duties of local education agencies to] (a) ensure that schools environments are safe and conducive to learning for all children, and (b) to ensure that children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education," (Apling & Jones, 2002, pp. 4-5).

In 1984, Florida adopted the Florida Educational Equity Act (FEEA), which "prohibits discrimination in all educational programs and activities operated by public educational institutions" (Broward County Public Schools, 2012, p. 2), "on the basis of race, national origin, sex, disability, or marital status" (Broward County Public Schools, 1997, p. 7). The FEEA required that state educational agencies "develop and implement a three-year plan to increase students and staff participation in traditionally underrepresented areas of study and employment" (Broward County Public Schools, 2012, p. 2).

In implementing the Florida Consent Decree, certain measures were put into place to ensure the delivery of the comprehensive instruction to which English Language Learners (ELL) are entitled. The first component, relating to identification and assessment, stated that upon enrollment in a school district, in order to ensure the provision of appropriate services, all students with limited English proficiency (LEP) must be appropriately identified (Florida Department of Education, 1990). Parents of ELL students were provided a survey by the school district to assess the academic needs of the student. The survey as offered by Ariza, Morales-Jones, Noorchaya, and Zainuddin (2006) may include such questions as: (a) Is another language other than English used in the home? (b) Does the student have a first language other than English? and (c) Does the student most frequently speak a language other than English?

Each student determined to be limited English proficient was further assessed in basic subject areas so as to aid the student's teacher in developing an appropriate instructional program (Florida Department of Education, 1990). The Consent Decree

detailed the procedures for placement of students in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, their exit from the program, and the monitoring of students who have since exited the program (Florida Department of Education, 1990). English Language Learners were, therefore, entitled to equal access to all programs appropriate to their academic needs (Ariza et al., 2006). The Florida Consent Decree declared that ELL pupils were guaranteed the right to equal access to appropriate English language instruction as well as instruction in basic subject areas which was understandable to the students given their level of English proficiency and equal and comparable in amount, scope, sequence, and quality to that provided to non-ELL students (Ariza et al., 2006).

To address equal access and program effectiveness, the Florida Department of Education (1990) was required to adopt an evaluation system. The purpose of such a system was to collect and analyze data regarding the progress of ELL students and also include comparisons between the ELL population and the non-ELL population concerning retention rates, graduation rates, dropout rates, grade point averages, and state assessment scores (Florida Department of Education, 1990).

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* provided the impetus for decades of serious dialogue aimed at reforming public schools in the United States (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Since 1983, legislation at the federal and state level has been authored and passed through the legislature in an effort to create a uniform system of education with an emphasis on rigorous standards and heightened school accountability. It was also intended to ensure a globally competitive workforce in the future with a focus on reading and STEM coursework (science, technology, engineering,

and mathematics.). National and state legislators have also authored and introduced legislation aimed at improving schools and closing the achievement gap. Post 1983 discussion, legislation, and debate over education reform would eventually culminate in passage of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Ravitch, 2010). According to Sommella (2010), the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), "put in place a system of federal regulation to monitor public schools through accountability systems" (p. 13) NCLB served as "the federal government's assurance policy to hold schools accountable for equity in achievement and excellence for all," (Sommella, 2010, p. 13).

Essentially a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind was first signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002 (*Education Week*, 2011). NCLB legislation set in place "requirements that reached into virtually every public school in America," (*Education Week*, 2011, p. 1). Sommella (2010) reported, "NCLB expanded the role of the federal government in education and took direct aim at improving the education of disadvantaged students," (p. 13). This legislation encompassed a number of broad measures designed to drive gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools accountable for student progress (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

NCLB required states to annually test students beginning in Grade 3 in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In addition, to provide a national comparison of state by state results, a sample of fourth and eighth graders in each state was required to participate every other year in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing program (U.S. Department of

Education, 2012). Ravitch (2010) advocated for the NAEP as a common standard, expressing the view that the NAEP, given periodically to representative samples of students, yields more credible indicators of student achievement when compared to exams created and administered by states.

NCLB also required that states implement benchmarks and goals for all students. All students were required to be brought to "proficient" levels based on state assessments (No Child Left Behind, 2001). In a comparative study designed to analyze student achievement in Florida charter and non-charter schools, Sommella (2010), explained the impact of the legislation on Florida students. By the year 2014, NCLB stipulated that all students would be "proficient" in the area of reading prior to entering fourth grade. Educational researchers have shown that low-achieving, low-income, and predominantly black and Hispanic students have demonstrated little growth in critical areas like mathematics, reading, and science (Lubienski, 2002). Under NCLB, individual school performance is assessed annually to meet the federal requirements of "adequate yearly progress" also known as AYP. AYP pertains not only to the school population as a whole, but also to certain demographic subgroups, taking into account family income (economically disadvantaged), race, and other factors related to student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Schools receiving funding from Title I, a federal aid program for disadvantaged students, that fail to meet the AYP target two years in a row, are subject to such measures as additional assistance in the areas of instruction and organizational change. Also, students are offered a choice of attending another public school in their school district of

residence (*Education Week*, 2011). Title I funds are expected to "better target resources to school districts with high concentrations of poor children" (*Education Week*, 2011, p. 4). If a school fails to make adequate yearly progress three years in a row, students in such a school are "offered supplemental educational services, including private tutoring" (*Education Week*, 2004, p. 2). A school that experiences continued failures, e.g., continuously earned a school letter grade of "F," may be subject to outside corrective measures, including possible structural changes in leadership and governance by the state (*Education Week*, 2011; Ravitch, 2010).

Darling-Hammond (1997) determined "all students should have access to well-prepared teachers and other professional staff who understand how to teach challenging content to diverse learners" (p. 281). NCLB also called for enhancing teacher qualifications. President Barack Obama addressed the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on March 10, 2009 (Sommella, 2010). In his speech President Obama stated, "Despite resources that are unmatched anywhere in the world, we have let our grades slip, our schools crumble, our teacher quality fall short, and other nations outpace us," (The White House, 2009, p. 3). In her writing about school systems, testing, and choice, Ravitch (2010) expressed the view that legislation like NCLB had been developed as a result of public outcry and demands for changes in the shortcomings of the American education system. Ravitch (2010) emphasized this point in noting that NCLB requires that teachers in core academic subject areas, such as mathematics, reading, and science, to be "highly qualified." NCLB defined highly qualified as a teacher who has earned full

certification, a bachelor's degree, and who also has demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching (*Education Week*, 2011).

Legislative attempts and efforts to enhance student achievement and heighten school accountability have been embedded with stipulations and requirements to ensure equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The overarching goal of NCLB was to improve student achievement. Given the scope and detail, of the No Child Left Behind Act, school district and school leaders across the United States have been charged with meeting the demands of the legislation and providing a high performance quality education for all students.

Second-Order Change Leadership in Practice

School district leaders often are faced with the challenges of meeting federal and state mandates, ensuring fiscal responsibility for school district expenditures, and demonstrating learning growth and development of ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged student populations (Marzano & Waters, 2009). To determine the impact and influence of school district leadership on student achievement, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) conducted a meta-analysis of research (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The researchers in the McREL study examined findings from 27 studies conducted since the early 1970s. The studies reviewed by Waters and Marzano (2006) included an in-depth look at 2,817 school districts and the achievement scores of over three million students in those school districts. The researchers

investigated the following basic research questions in the meta-analysis of research on superintendents and school district leaders:

- What is the strength of relationship between leadership at the school district level and average student achievement in the school district?
- What specific school district level leadership responsibilities are related to student achievement?
- What specific leadership practices are used to fulfill these responsibilities?
- What is the variation in the relationship between school district leadership and student achievement? (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p.7)

Waters and Marzano (2006) concluded that there was a positive correlation of school district leadership decisions and practices on student achievement. Of the 27 reports examined in the meta-analysis conducted by Waters and Marzano (2006), 14 contained information about the relationship between school district leadership decisions and practices and student achievement. The 14 reports included data from 1,210 school districts (Waters & Marzano, 2006). According to the study's findings "The computed correlation between school district leadership and student achievement was .24 (95% confidence interval: .19 to .30). The fact that the 95 percent confidence interval does not include 0 indicates that this correlation is significant at the .05 level" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p.10).

Additionally, it was also determined that superintendents who have demonstrated significant student achievement in their school district focused much of their efforts on creating goal-oriented school districts with an emphasis on high standards and expectations on teaching and learning. Childress et al. (2009), acknowledged that setting high expectations, and demanding excellence and equity matters in seeking individual student achievement and growth for a school district as a whole. Table 3 provides a

summary of the superintendent and school district leadership responsibilities and practices identified in the McREL study by Waters and Marzano (2006).

Table 3

Superintendent and School District Leadership Responsibilities and Practices

Superintendent Responsibilities and Practices
Goal-setting process: The superintendent involves board members, school district leaders and building-level administrators in the goal setting process.
Developing a shared vision for the goal setting process.
Developing a shared vision.
Developing coherent goals which support collaboration, involvement, and quality in achievement and a change from status quo.
Communicating clear expectations to central office staff and school based staff.
Non-negotiable goals: The superintendent builds non-negotiable goals based on relevant research, student achievement and instruction.
Modeling understanding of instructional best practices.
Establishing clear priorities and objectives.
Adopting instructional best practices and methodologies that provide for effective delivery of instruction.
Incorporating instructional strategies that reach learners of different styles.
Incorporate instructional practices that meet the needs of learners of multiracial populations.
Adopt non-negotiable goals to be sustained for at least a 5-year period.
Adopt and implement learning and professional programs that are proven best practices.
Provide training to all staff.
Monitoring of goals: The superintendent continuously monitors and evaluates implementation and effectiveness of the school district goals, impact of instructional initiatives, impact on student achievement, and impact on implementers.
Using instructional tool to monitor the implementation of school district instructional programs.
Visiting schools in the school district to observe classrooms.
Instructional leadership cadres.
Annual evaluations of principals.
Reviewing individual and whole school district achievement assessment data.

Superintendent Responsibilities and Practices

Board alignment and support: The superintendent acquires support from school board members for their support of school district goals targeting student achievement and instruction.

Establish agreement and working relationship with the school board president and members.
Explain the problem of practice that exists in the school district and the rational and expected outcome of the new initiatives and goals.
Provide professional development for the board.

Resources: The superintendent monitors and coordinates resources used for professional development of teachers and principals to achieve school district goals.

Providing opportunities for school level administrator and teacher professional development.
Training all instructional staff using a common model with best practice interventions to meet the needs of all learners.
Providing resource allocations.
Providing access to professional growth opportunities, e.g., in-service training/opportunities in and outside school district.

Relationship with schools: The superintendent remains grounded in the day-to-day activities of schools; provides autonomy to principals to lead their schools; asserts authority over principals in aligning school district goals and use of resources for professional development.

Clear communication of expectation to school principals and staff.
Developing a shared vision.
Commitment of the school district central office and all schools for continuous improvement.
Hiring personnel with talent and a focus on continued professional learning.
Ensuring teacher and principal evaluations.
Ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on student achievement.
Maintaining high expectations for school performance.
Providing leadership and professional development of curriculum development.
Ensuring that all schools and the school district as a whole comply with federal and state mandates.
Ensuring that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not segregate students into racial or other inappropriate groups.
Rewarding students and school district personnel for achievement of school district goals (i.e. recognition assembly, awards, etc.)

Note. Adapted with permission from *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement,* a Working Paper by T.J. Waters & R.J. Marzano, R.J., 2006, p. 15. Copyright 2006 by the Mid-continental Research for Education and Learning. Reprinted by permission of McREL.

Researchers (Little, 1990; Childress et al., 2009; Fullan, 2002) have also acknowledged the need for school district and school leaders to provide access for teachers, students, parents and community stakeholders to work collaboratively in achieving school district goals. Little (1990) found that effective collaboration between teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders in the community was linked to gains in student achievement. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) reported that the most successful schools were those that implemented professional learning communities where teachers took collective, not just individual, responsibility for student learning. According to Waters and Marzano (2006), effective superintendents included stakeholders in the decision making process and in establishing goals for the school district. Stakeholders encompassed personnel from the school district office as well as building level administrators and board members. Effective superintendents ensure that the collaborative goal process focuses on enhancing achievement and classroom instructional practices (Waters & Marzano, 2006). According to Bolman and Deal (2008), the structural frame for a successful organization to achieve goals and objectives, involves establishing clear specialized tasks, sequential work, a blueprint for pattern of expectations and procedures, and a stable environment.

In school districts that were identified as having higher levels of student achievement, Waters and Marzano (2006) discovered that local school boards of education were aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. Non-negotiable goals should be the primary focus of the school district's

efforts (Childress et al., 2009). Childress et al. (2009) asserted that the key step in the process for attaining equity and access to excellence was the school board's agreement on the goal to dramatically improve performance of all students, especially for students not served well historically by the school district.

Darling-Hammond (1997) argued that all students should have equitable access to education funding necessary to enact the state's learning standards and meet learning expectations. Goodman and Svyantek (1999) have acknowledged the trickle-down impact that school district leaders can have on closing the achievement gap. Waters and Marzano (2006), in their meta-analysis study of superintendent characteristics, stated, "Effective superintendents ensure that the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the school district's goals" (p. 4). Wilhite (2012) determined "when school district leaders strive for excellence and equity of instructional quality for each student in every classroom every day" (p. 5), their efforts will not only reduce the risk of widening the achievement gap, but will also yield academic learning gains for all student. Childress et al. (2009) cited the need for courageous, bold, collaborative, wise, and creative leadership to aid in this endeavor.

The direction that a school district takes, and the eventual overall success of the school district to ensure a quality and high-performing education for all students, hinges on the decision-making practices of the superintendent and school district leaders. Marzano et al. (2005) found that school district leaders who have established collaborative non-negotiable goals aligned with federal and state efforts and who have

continuously monitored those goals are more likely to demonstrate a positive relationship to student achievement and ensuring equity and access to excellence for all students.

Summary

Throughout history, the meaning and methods of education have evolved, sparking intense debate and resulting in significant efforts made at the national, state, and local levels of government. The problem of practice of second-order change leadership for school district leaders and educational organizations in attaining equity and access to excellence for all students' centers on multiple demands placed on them. They must effectively meet the demands of state and federal mandates, develop a collaborative and culture changed environment, effectively balance the need for improved teacher quality and instruction, establish clear and results-driven non-negotiable goals, and sustain monitoring and improvement. At the forefront of the debate of education reform in pursuit of attaining equity and access to excellence for all students, there exist heightened public perceptions of school and educator accountability linked with the goal of increased student achievement.

As described by Orr et al. (2006), superintendents and school district leaders are confronted with two simultaneous tasks: to assimilate the role of a school district superintendent; and to foster rapid and dramatic change to improve student achievement within a complex setting. Leaders of large school districts are expected and federally mandated to accomplish what Orr et al. (2006) have determined few have been able to do. At the helm of any school district is the superintendent who is held publicly

responsible for the success or failure of not just every student and school, but for the accomplishment of the school district as a whole. In this chapter, literature has been reviewed related to second-order change and the perspectives governing second-order change leadership. The challenges of mandates and public demands for higher standards, expectations and results faced by executive leaders of large school districts in pursuit of equity and access to excellence for every student regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status were also discussed. Chapter 3 contains an explanation of the methodology and procedures utilized in successfully completing this study.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study related to teachers' perceptions is a companion to a previous study of administrators' perceptions of steps taken to achieve equity and access to excellence in the same school district (Wilhite, 2012). The methodology used in this study was a mixed method. The instruments included a modified survey and interviews to create a case study.

Context

The study was conducted in one large school district in Central Florida. The target school district is the largest employer in the county and is home to more than 60,000 enrolled students. More than 70% of employees who are employed in the target school district also live and raise their families in the school district (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011c). According to *The Sanford Herald* (2011), the target school district was recognized as one of seven Florida school districts to have made significant strides in the areas of expanding student access and improving student performance.

Guiding the decisions, beliefs, and practices of the target school district was its Strategic Plan for Continuous Improvement to Ensure School district Wide Excellence and Equity. Discussion of the Strategic Plan had first begun during the 2002/2003 school year (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b). Review and development of the Strategic Plan has been accomplished each school year in an effort to design and meet the

annual and long term objectives of the target school district (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b).

Population

The population for this study was comprised of teachers teaching in 16 selected schools that were part of a school district program, Choices: Diversity Incentive Transfer Options Program (Choices Department, 2012). This program was designed to balance the free and reduced-price meals participation at district schools. To be eligible for a diversity transfer, students were required to be qualified to receive free/reduced-price price meals.

Information provided by the Choices Department (2012) indicated…

> Students may apply for a diversity incentive transfer to a school outside of their designated zone under the following conditions: Students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals who attend a school with a high percentage of free and reduced-price meals may transfer to schools with a low percentage of free and reduced-price meals. . . . Students who do not qualify for free and reduced-price meals who attend a school with a low percentage of free and reduced-price meals may transfer to schools with a high percentage of free and reduced-price meals. (pp. 1-2).

Demographic data for the 16 Choice schools are presented in Table 4. Included in the table are school identifiers assigned to each school to preserve the schools' anonymity, total school student populations, percentages of students being provided free or reduced-price meals, and percentages of black, Hispanic, white, and other students attending each of the schools.

Table 4

Choices: Diversity Incentive Transfer Options Program Schools 2009-2010

#	School	Student Enrollment	Free/Reduced Lunch	Percentages			
				Black	Hispanic	White	Other
1	CLE16	801	40.0	12.5	17.1	55.4	15.0
2	IE8	906	75.9	35.0	20.3	32.2	12.5
3	WE14	868	82.5	31.3	27.0	28.2	13.5
4	WE31	927	30.7	16.3	13.2	58.7	11.8
5	LME33	802	41.9	9.5	15.1	63.6	11.8
6	ME11	457	87.7	44.4	19.7	24.3	11.6
7	SM12	1,454	45.8	20.0	15.0	49.0	16.0
8	MWM9	1,041	36.9	21.1	12.7	57.0	9.2
9	MM2	1,628	59.5	23.8	21.0	44.2	11.0
10	GLM13	1,031	45.7	13.8	21.5	54.2	89.5
11	RLM10	1,063	30.2	8.2	14.2	70.8	6.8
12	JHM7	1,276	24.1	7.2	12.8	70.5	9.5
13	SH3	3,340	42.8	25.9	14.1	47.5	12.5
14	LBH12	2,944	28.4	9.2	21.3	60.8	8.7
15	LH2	2,398	39.7	13.2	19.2	60.6	7.0
16	WSH4	2,184	33.7	8.7	19.1	65.7	6.5

Source of Data: National Center for Education Statistics (2012).

The Sample

An additional criterion used to identify the sample was that eligible teachers were employed in the school district for the entire time period from 2003 through 2011. As of September 1, 2011, there were 1,288 teachers who were teaching in the 16 schools in the target school district, but not all of the teachers had been employed for the entire time

period being investigated. The target school district was not able to provide a specific count of teachers who had been employed at each of the 16 schools from 2003 to 2011.

There was one school, for which exact numbers were available, and this school's data were used to calculate a percentage of teachers at the school who had been employed in the school district for the target time. It was determined that of the 50 teachers employed at school CLE16, 19 or 38% of the teachers from the school had been continuously employed from 2003 to 2011. Because the school district was not able to provide numbers of teachers having continuously taught in the school district for the remaining 15 target schools, the percentage (38%) was considered to be the best estimate and was applied to each school to arrive at the desired sample of teachers to be surveyed. Using this method to calculate the expected sample size, the researcher calculated that of the 1,288 teachers in the 16 schools, approximately 489 were likely to have been continuously employed from 2003 to 2011.

The researcher used several strategies to maximize the number of teachers participating in the research at the selected schools. However, limitations of access to the teachers based on consistently applied rules for doctoral research taking place within the school district contributed to a low response rate. The rules were: (a) the research had to obtain permission from the principal at each target school that was to be surveyed, (b) the researcher was not permitted to use the school district's courier service to deliver content pertaining to the research, and (c) the researcher was prohibited from using school district e-mail to communicate research content. A total of 33 teachers from the 16 schools who

were eligible completed the Survey of Equity and Excellence for Teachers for a final response rate of 7% of the 489 eligible.

The process for participation began when teachers at each school received a copy of an informed consent form (Appendix B) which contained a link to the online survey. The researcher was limited in using suggestions offered by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) for enhancing online survey response rates and having follow-up contact with participants as a result of research protocol compliance procedures authorized by the target school district.

The distribution of the informed consent forms was delayed due to discussion at the executive level of the target school district about compliance with consistent research procedures. As a result, the informed consent forms which were mailed directly to the schools via U.S. Postal Service arrived at the selected schools two weeks before the end of the school year. Per school district compliance procedures, the researcher was not permitted to use e-mail as a means to communicate information to teachers or follow-up about the research study. The researcher was, however, granted permission by the school district to provide principals at each selected school with a letter (Appendix C) encouraging their support of the survey and requesting that they distribute the informed consent forms to teachers at their schools by placing them in teachers' mailboxes. The researcher also (a) contacted each school via telephone in an attempt to speak with the principal either via phone or personal conference and (b) offered to speak with teachers if permitted by the school principal at a faculty meeting.

To satisfy the criterion related to years of service, teachers were asked in the first survey question if they had been employed in the target school district from 2003 to 2011. Those who answered affirmatively were asked to continue with the survey and assured of anonymity. Those who answered negatively were thanked for their participation and did not continue. The last item on the survey asked participants if they would volunteer to be interviewed. Interview respondents were coded for confidentiality.

Instrumentation

The Survey of Equity and Excellence was initially developed by a University of Central Florida doctoral candidate (Wilhite, 2012) based on a list of significant events provided by the school district superintendent. It was reviewed for content validity by Dr. Rosemarye Taylor, Dr. Jennifer Platt, Dr. Kenneth Murray, Dr. Carolyn Walker-Hopp, and Dr. Walter Doherty. These reviewers were knowledgeable experts in school district leadership and second-order change theory. Edits and additions were made to the survey based on their inputs and other variables. With the permission of the author (Appendix D), the instrument was modified by the researcher and was re-titled The Survey of Equity and Access for Teachers (Appendix A).

Section I of the survey contained specific questions pertaining to the respondents' demographics. In Section II of the survey, responding teachers were asked to indicate their perceptions of the educational significance of each decision, action, or event related to achieving equity and access to excellence of the superintendent's second-order change decisions as they related to specific events (Wilhite, 2012, p. 48). Each of the forced

responses to the questions in Section II was assigned values of 0 to 4 as follows: 0 = no knowledge, 1 = extremely insignificant, 2 = insignificant, 3 = significant, 4 = extremely significant.

Respondents had an opportunity in Section III of the survey to identify decisions, events, or challenges representing second-order change decisions or actions not already listed in the survey that demonstrated equity and access to excellence and were asked to recommend next steps. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide their contact information for the purpose of participating in a follow-up interview.

Procedures

The following procedures and time frames established were met for the successful completion of this study. After revision of the instrument and development of the proposal by the researcher, both were approved on March 30, 2012 by the University of Central Florida Executive Leadership dissertation committee and the target school district's designee. On March 23, 2012 permission was granted by the target school district for the research to take place (Appendix E), and the University of Central Florida's Internal Review Board (IRB) subsequently approved the research on April 25, 2012 (Appendix F). No research activities were initiated prior to obtaining IRB approval. In the last week of April, principals of the 16 target schools were mailed a letter about the research study (Appendix C), and informed consent letters (Appendix B) were mailed to the selected schools. Principals were asked to assist in distributing the informed consent letters containing a link to the online survey to the approximate 1,300 teachers in the 16

schools and to encourage them to participate. Participants had a one-month window to complete the online survey.

Data Collection

Survey

A total of 33 (7%) teachers who met the sample criteria completed the online Survey of Equity and Excellence for Teachers using the survey tool zoomerang.com (Wilhite, 2012, p. 49). Four teachers who did not meet the criteria indicated in their response to the first survey item that they were not continuously employed from 2003 to 2011 and exited the survey. The data obtained from participants were reviewed by the investigator. Participants had the option of taking the survey in a private place of their choice.

Respondents to the survey were assured of anonymity. Survey respondents' identities were not known to the researcher unless they expressed interest in participating in a follow-up interview. Individual responses were not shared with the school district. The school district was provided with a combined, summative analysis of all participant responses. Data and findings were reported in aggregate, not individually. Because the survey was anonymous, the researcher knew only if participants had accessed the survey and completed it, but did not know which individuals had completed surveys. Though this assured respondents of anonymity, it eliminated follow-up activities to increase the return rate of the survey.

Interviews

In Section III of the Survey of Equity and Excellence for Teachers, participants had the opportunity to express interest in participating in a confidential follow-up interview. Informed consent was obtained from interviewees prior to the interview (Appendix H). As a courtesy, the structured interview questions were e-mailed to the interviewees prior to the telephone interview for review and optional typed electronic response. Structured telephone interviews lasting 15 to 20 minutes were conducted with a total of eight teachers who volunteered to be interviewed to gain additional information regarding items on the survey and to advance the researcher's understanding of participant responses. Each of the four interview items had sets of questions. The researcher asked one question at a time, and all interviewees were given the opportunity to respond before proceeding to the next question. The interview template contained in Appendix G displays the four interview questions related to the four research questions that were asked of each interviewee.

Data from the eight interviews were used to identify common statements, phrases, and words using the constant comparison method (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005). Using the transcribed summary reports of the responses of all interviewees to each of the interview questions, the researcher used Microsoft Word to count common words and/or phrases shared by respondents in answering each of the four interview questions. The common words and phrases identified in the reports were then grouped based on their relative closeness to educational industry standard terminology and concepts associated with a

school community. Industry standard terminology and concepts in education include those markers or indicators which are commonly associated with k-12 education (Hirsch, 1999). The common words and phrases were then reviewed to arrive at themes that emerged in the responses of the teachers interviewed.

To ensure confidentiality of interviews, participants were assigned a code in place of their names. The education level of the school served by the interviewee followed by a randomly selected three-digit number was assigned as the identifier, e.g., Middle 954. This random code was used to identify interviewed respondents for all activities linked to the study. The link connecting participants' names to the random code was kept separate from all other study documents and was locked in a password-protected computer. When the study was completed and the data had been analyzed, the survey link was destroyed along with interviewed respondents' identities. Aggregated data were available for review by the investigator, members of the investigator's dissertation committee, and the target school district superintendent/designee.

Data Analysis

Results from the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers and data obtained from the structured interview portion of the research sought to gather qualitative and quantitative data regarding teachers' perceptions of the extent to which access to excellence and equity has been achieved, challenges addressed, and those remaining to be addressed in the target school district. Each of the forced response

questions on the teacher perceptions survey was assigned values of 0 to 4 and the average rating for each question reported.

Participants who elected to take part in the interview were interviewed via telephone. All interview responses were recorded for coded analysis purposes and the transcripts can be found in Appendix I. The researcher had originally intended to digitally record all interviews, but none of the interviewees wished to have the interviews recorded. Therefore, the researcher recorded the interviewees' responses by hand in detail, but not verbatim. Thus, in analyzing the data, the researcher reviewed the responses and noted any additional information, again in hand written detail. The researcher grouped concepts from the structured interviews into themes along with supporting examples based on the interviewees' responses to each question (Wilhite, 2012, p. 10).

Summary

In this chapter, the methods and procedures of data collection and analysis have been presented, and the rationale for the population and sample selection has been explained. The study focused on examining to what extent school district leadership second-order change leadership decision, events, and challenges contributed to students achieving equity and access to excellence in a large school district. Teachers from the 16 schools who were in the target school district's Choices: Diversity Incentive Transfer Options Program represented the population in the study. Participants from the 16 schools were selected using two criteria (a) the teachers were continuously employed

with the school district from 2003 to 2011, and (b) the teachers were identified as "teacher based" employees by the target school district, i.e., deans, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, and teachers on assignment. Chapter 4 contains a detailed analysis of the data and also provides the results of the four research questions presented in this study.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the extent to which superintendent second-order change leadership decisions, events, and challenges contributed to students achieving equity and access to excellence regardless of race, ethnicity, and family income in a large school district. Also investigated were the teachers' perceptions of leadership decision-making practices of school district leaders to develop and implement education reform to effectively impact student achievement.

This chapter presents the results of the analyses of data obtained from the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers (Appendix A) and from eight teacher interviews. The chapter has been organized to first review the procedures used in identifying the sample and to present the demographics of the participants. The remainder of the chapter contains a summary of the data analyzed in response to each of the four research questions which guided the study, reports of follow-up interviews conducted with respondents and the themes that emerged from those interviews, and the ancillary analysis related to academic achievement and the use of Advanced Placement examinations in the target school district.

Population

The population consisted of 1,288 teachers employed at 16 selected schools in the target school district. The schools identified for participation were those that the target

school district had designated as participants in its Choices: Diversity Incentive Transfer Options Program. The researcher used the population of 1,288 teachers in the 16 schools to calculate an expected sample of teachers who had been employed continuously in the school district from 2003 to 2011. Based on available data from one school, the sample of teachers expected to have met the years of service in the school district requirement was 489, 38% of the 1,288 teachers in the 16 schools.

Choices: Diversity Incentive Transfer Option Program was designed to balance the free and reduced-priced meals participation at district schools. The Choices Program allowed students who qualified for free and reduced-price lunch who attended a school with a high percentage of free and reduced-price lunch students to transfer to schools with a low percentage of free and reduced-price lunch students. Likewise, the Choices Program also allowed students who did not qualify for free and reduced lunch, but attended a school with a low percentage of free and reduced lunch students to transfer to a school with a high percentage of free and reduced-price lunch students. All of the 1,288 teachers received informed consent forms and had the opportunity to begin the survey process by answering the first question as to their continuous employment in the school district. The response rate (7%) was very low. Only 37 teachers completed the survey, and 4 indicated that they had not been employed for the required time period. This brought the number of usable responses to the 33 who acknowledged that they had been employed continuously from 2003 to 2011 in the target school district. Within responses of the 33 respondents, there were responses to some questions which indicated

that 10 teachers had some interruption of service during the time period, but all were used for analyses. The very low response rate was a major weakness of the study. To strengthen the study, archival student achievement data and follow-up interviews with teacher respondents were conducted.

Demographics of Participants

Section I of the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers (Appendix A) contained specific questions pertaining to respondents' demographic characteristics. The demographic component of the survey provided the researcher with an avenue to verify if respondents met the required criteria to participate in the study. Only teachers who were continuously employed by the target school district from 2003 to 2011 were asked to complete the survey. Questions 1 and 7 of the survey instrument specifically asked respondents information related to their employment status. Table 5 provides information as to the total number of teachers responding to the survey that had been employed in the target school district from 2003 to 2011 and was used to verify whether or not respondents met the employment timeframe requirement to complete the survey.

A total of 37 teachers answered the first question. No one skipped this item. Of the 37, 33 indicated that they had been employed continuously from 2003 to 2011. At this point, three of the four teachers who indicated that they had not been continuously employed in the target school district from 2003 to 2011 excited the survey. One of the four respondents remained and continued to answer random survey questions and then

exited the survey. After the four respondents exited the survey, there remained 33 viable survey respondents.

Table 5

Participants' Continuous Employment in Target School District 2003 to 2011

Options	Frequency	Skipped Question
Yes – Please continue with the survey.	33	0
No – Please exit.	4	0
N	37	0

Data from the survey revealed that of the 33 respondents, a total of 23 (68%) were females, and 11 (32%) were males. Approximately 33 (97%) reported themselves to be teachers, and 1 (3%) indicated the position as dean which in this school district is an instructional position with non-instructional responsibilities

Table 6 describes information from question 7 on the survey in which participants were asked to indicate their year of first appointment as a teacher in the school district. Question 7 served to further qualify respondents who completed the survey as having been continuously employed by the target school district from 2003 to 2011. Of the 33 respondents, 10 reported that they had not been continuously employed between 2003 and 2011 in the target school district but nonetheless did complete the online survey. Results from question 7 of the survey, as demonstrated in Table 6, refuted the initial response of 10 respondents to question 1 of the survey.

Table 6

Year of First Appointment as a Teacher in the School District (N = 33)

Year	Frequency	Percentage
1968-1976	1	3.0
1977-1985	4	12.1
1986-1994	1	3.0
1995-2003	17	51.5
2004-2008	8	24.2
2009-2012	2	6.1
Total	33	99.9

Note. Percentage may not total 100% due to rounding.

Respondents were also queried about the highest degree earned. As displayed in Table 7, seven participants (20.6%), stated that the highest degree earned was a bachelor's degree, followed by 25 (73.5%) who identified themselves as having attained a master's degree, and two (5.9%) who had earned an education specialist degree. Although only 33 of the respondents indicated that they were continuously employed by the school district from 2003 to 2011, there were 34 responses to this question. One of the four respondents who indicated that he/she was not employed consistently in the target school district from 2003 to 2011 responded to this question before exiting the survey. This was also true for survey items 2 and 5.

Table 7

Highest Degree Earned (N = 34)

Degrees	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	7	20.6
Master's degree	25	73.5
Education Specialist degree	2	5.9
Doctoral degree	0	0
Total	34	100.0

Note. Percentage may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table 8 illustrates the reported ethnicity. Of all respondents to the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers, 30 (88.2%) of respondents identified themselves as Caucasian, one (2.9%) as Hispanic, one (2.9%) as African-American, one (2.9%) as Asian, and one (2.9%) as other.

Table 8

Ethnicity of Respondents N=34

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Caucasian	30	88.2
Hispanic	1	2.9
African-American	1	2.9
Asian	1	2.9
Other	1	2.9
Total	34	99.8

Note. Percentage may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table 9 provides the teachers' responses to survey question 5 requesting information as to the grade levels that each respondent identified as representative of the grade(s) served in their current position. One (2.9%) of the respondents acknowledged serving Prekindergarten through Grade 2. Two (5.9%) of the respondents identified that they served students from Prekindergarten through Grade 5, and seven (20.6%) teachers indicated that they served students in Grades 6 through 8. The majority of respondents in the sample (20, 58.8%), identified Grades 9-12 as their assigned area of teaching. Only one respondent (2.9%) reported serving Prekindergarten through Grade 12 students. Table 9 reveals that 34 responses were collected for this survey item.

Table 9

Grade Levels Served by Teacher Respondents N=34

Grade Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Pk-2	1	2.9
Pk-5	2	5.9
6-8	7	20.6
6-12	3	8.8
9-12	20	58.8
PK-12	1	2.9
N/A	0	0
Total	34	99.9

Note. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding

In addition to the grade level of students the respondents served, participants were also asked to provide socioeconomic information about their student population. To

accomplish this, free/reduced-price meal statistics were utilized. Teachers were given a range of estimated free/reduced percentages and asked to select which best mirrored their school student population as a whole. The results are displayed in Table 10. A total of 16 (48.5%) of the respondents indicated that they served a school population where 40-49% of the students received free/reduced lunch. Only six (18.2%) of the respondents said that they served schools with populations where less than 40% of the students qualified for free/reduced lunch. Seven teachers (21.3%) identified themselves as serving schools with greater than 60% of the entire student population qualifying for free/reduced lunch.

Table 10

Reported Percentage of Students Qualified for Free/Reduced-Priced Meals at Respondents' Schools

Percentage Free/Reduced Priced Meals	Frequency	Percentage of Respondents
Below 40	6	18.2
40-49	16	48.5
50-59	4	12.1
60-69	2	6.1
70 or more	5	15.2
Total	33	100.1

Note. Target school district mean = 45%. Percentage may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Analysis of Survey Data

Sections II and III of the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers (Appendix A) addressed concerns pertaining to teacher perceptions of specific school district leadership efforts to attain equity and access to excellence for all students in the target school district. The following sections of this chapter have been organized to present the analysis of the data gathered to answer each of the four research questions and their association with the conceptual framework of (a) second-order change leadership, (b) social justice, and (c) school district leadership and decision-making practices. Though there was no statistical significance, there may have been some educational importance.

Research Question 1

What are the school district second-order change decisions that are known or perceived by teachers to have led to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in a large school district?

The first research question examined the decisions made by leaders in the target school district. Teachers were asked to respond to forced choice items to indicate their perceptions of specific school district decision making items and the perceived effectiveness of the decisions in achieving equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Each of the 20 questions specific to school district leadership decisions were assigned ranges on a Likert-type scale of 0-4. The researcher utilized the range to capture the intensity of respondents' perceptions for

any given item. The values assigned to each question to indicate perceived educational value were as follows: 0 = no knowledge; 1 = extremely insignificant; 2 = insignificant; 3 = significant; 4 = extremely significant.

Table 11 provides an illustration of the results of school district second-order change decisions that were known and perceived to have led to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence as offered by respondents. School district leaders provided the researcher with 20 second-order change leadership decisions. The decisions ranged from various initiatives aimed at raising student achievement scores, to establishing new academic programs and technical area specific schools, expanding student opportunities for college preparedness, and the development and finalization of school district goals and strategic plans.

Table 11

Teachers' Perceptions of School District Leaders' Decisions: Frequencies and Percentages

Survey Stem (N)	Extremely Significant *f (%)*	Significant *f (%)*	Insignificant *f (%)*	Extremely Insignificant *f (%)*	No Knowledge *f (%)*
Triple "A" (33)	1 (3)	20 (61)	5 (15)	1 (3)	6 (18)
Reading centerpiece (34)	7 (21)	15 (44)	4 (12)	0 (0)	8 (24)
Salary restructure (33)	1 (3)	20 (59)	6 (18)	1 (3)	6 (18)
Principal forum (32)	0 (0)	10 (30)	2 (6)	2 (6)	19 (58)
School boards (32)	0 (0)	2 (6)	3 (9)	2 (6)	25 (78)
K-12 focus (32)	0 (0)	6 (19)	1 (3)	2 (6)	23 (72)
School rezoning (33)	1 (3)	21 (64)	5 (15)	0 (0)	6 (18)
History making goals (32)	0 (0)	13 (39)	3 (9)	1 (3)	16 (49)
Virtual school (33)	6 (19)	15 (47)	6 (19)	4 (13)	1 (3)
Succession (33)	2 (6)	8 (24)	5 (15)	1 (3)	17 (52)
Summer transition (33)	4 (12)	17 (52)	5 (15)	1 (3)	6 (18)
Crooms Academy (33)	8 (24)	14 (42)	4 (12)	1 (3)	6 (18)
Three "T"s (33)	1 (3)	12 (36)	11 (33)	3 (9)	6 (18)
IB program (33)	13 (39)	12 (36)	3 (9)	1 (3)	4 (12)
Focus on the future (33)	3 (9)	19 (58)	6 (18)	2 (6)	3 (9)
Strategic plan (33)	1 (3)	8 (24)	4 (12)	2 (6)	18 (55)
Middle schools A's (33)	6 (18)	17 (52)	2 (6)	2 (6)	6 (18)
Graduation high (33)	7 (21)	21 (64)	2 (6)	0 (0)	3 (9)
AP exam takers high (33)	6 (18)	20 (61)	3 (9)	1 (3)	3 (9)
SAT scores high (32)	6 (19)	21 (66)	2 (6)	1 (3)	2 (6)

Respondents were provided a listing of all 20 second-order change leadership decisions and asked to indicate their perceptions of each item's educational importance in achieving equity and access to excellence as either extremely significant, significant, insignificant, extremely insignificant, or no knowledge. The ratings for all items are displayed in Table 11. Five items which yielded extremely significant ratings of 20% or higher combined with significant ratings of 40% or higher were identified as decisions that were perceived by teachers to have great importance in contributing to the achievement of equity and access to excellence. The highest combined percentages of extremely significant and significant ratings include: graduation rate reaches all-time high, 2009 (85%), SAT scores reach all-time high, 2010 (85%), Advanced Placement exams reach 11,000 test takers, 2010 (79%), established International Baccalaureate program at Seminole High (75%), and all middle schools earn A's (70%).

There were two items that were determined to be insignificant or extremely insignificant related to educational importance by respondents, three 'T's (teamwork, thinking, technology) embedded into culture (42%) and launched virtual school (32%) had combined ratings that exceeded 20%. High percentages of respondents indicated no knowledge about decisions that were often far removed from the classroom such as Central Florida Public School Board Coalition established (78%), k-12 focus launched 2006-07 (72%), established principal forum (58%), and succession planning in process (52%).

Table 12 displays the mean ratings for each second-order change leadership decision as perceived by teachers in regard to achieving equity and access to excellence. The decisions and results are listed from greatest perceived educational significance of school district second-order leadership decisions to least educationally significant or no knowledge. Respondents perceived established International Baccalaureate program at Seminole High School (*M* = 2.88), graduation rate reaches all-time high, 2009 (M = 2.88), and SAT scores reach all-time high with 64% test takers, 2010 (M = 2.88) as holding the highest educational significance of school district leader decisions to achieve equity and access to excellence for students. In contrast, respondents perceived k-12 focus launched 2006-07 school system (*M* = 0.69) and Central Florida Public School Board Coalition established, 2004 (*M* = 0.44) as the least significant decisions to achieve equity and access to excellence.

Table 12

Rankings: Teachers' Perceptions of Education Value of School District Second-Order Leadership Decisions

Rank	School District Leadership Decisions	Mean Scale 0-4
1	Established International Baccalaureate program at Seminole High School	2.88
1	Graduation rate reaches all-time high, 2009	2.88
1	SAT scores reach all-time high with 64% test takers, 2010	2.88
2	Advanced Placement exams reach 11,000 test takers, 2010	2.76
3	Launched virtual school, 2008-2009	2.66
4	Focus on the future to prepare students for careers and colleges, 2010-2011	2.52
4	Established Crooms Academy for Technology	2.52
5	All middle schools earn A's in 2006	2.45
6	Reading becomes the centerpiece in high schools, 2005	2.38
7	Summer transition program for incoming 9th graders implemented, 2009	2.36
8	School rezoning	2.33
9	Triple "A" experience embedded in the school culture	2.27
10	Highest salary increases ever/schedules restructured 2005-06	2.26
11	Three "T"s, teamwork, thinking, technology embedded into culture	1.97
12	History making goals established, 2007	1.39
13	Succession planning in process, 2008-2009	1.30
14	Strategic plan 2.0 with new history making goals under construction	1.15
15	Established principal forum, 2004	1.09
16	K-12 focus launched 2006-07 school system	0.69
17	Central Florida Public School Board Coalition established, 2004	0.44

Research Question 2

Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were specific events known or perceived by teachers to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for Pre-kindergarten to Grade12 students?

The second research question examined the events that occurred as a result of school district leadership second-order change actions in the target school district. Participants were asked to respond to forced choice items to indicate their perceptions of specific school district events and the magnitude of those identified events in achieving equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Each of the six questions specific to school district events, was assigned Likert Scale values of 0 to 4. The educational values assigned to each question were as follows: 0 = no knowledge; 1 = extremely insignificant; 2 = insignificant; 3 = significant; 4 = extremely significant. The researcher utilized the range to capture the intensity of respondents' perceptions for any given item.

Table 13 provides an illustration of perceived educational importance of school district events. The events, also displayed in Table 14, consist of efforts to enhance opportunities for college readiness, expand partnerships with colleges, and school district leadership restructuring.

Respondents were provided a list of six events and asked to indicate their perceptions of each item's impact in achieving equity and access to excellence in the target school district. Respondents were asked to indicate educational importance by

selecting either extremely significant, significant, insignificant, extremely insignificant, or no knowledge, as it related to their perception of each item in the effort to achieve equity and access to excellence. The ratings for all items are displayed in Table 13. Two items which yielded educationally extremely significant ratings of 20% or higher combined with significant ratings of 40% or higher, were identified as events that were perceived by teachers to have contributed to the achievement of equity and access to excellence. The three items with the highest combined percentages of extremely significant and significant ratings: school district designated academically high performing (85%), community college/school district partnership identified as #1 in the nation, 2009 (82%), and school district "A" each year of accountability (79%).

In regard to items that were perceived to be educationally insignificant or extremely insignificant in terms of educational importance by respondents, only one event, superintendent leadership transition in 2003 (24%) had a combined educationally insignificant/extremely insignificant rating that exceeded 20%. High percentages of respondents indicated no knowledge about events that were often far removed from the classroom such as Florida Center for Reading Research High School Project (65%), and Unitary status achieved March 21, 2006 (64%).

Table 13

Teachers' Perceptions of School District Events: Frequencies and Percentages

Survey Stem (N)	Extremely Significant *f (%)*	Significant *f (%)*	Insignificant *f (%)*	Extremely Insignificant *f (%)*	No Knowledge *f (%)*
Leadership transition (34)	2(6)	11 (32)	7 (21)	1 (3)	13 (38)
Florida center for reading (34)	1 (3)	6 (18)	5 (15)	0 (0)	22 (65)
Unitary status achieved (33)	3 (9)	5 (15)	4 (12)	0 (0)	21 (64)
District high performing (32)	6 (19)	21 (66)	2 (6)	1 (3)	2 (6)
District "A" each year (33)	7 (21)	19 (58)	4 (12)	1 (3)	2 (6)
Community college/ school partnership (33)	7 (21)	20 (61)	1 (3)	2 (6)	3 (9)

Table 14 provides a quantitative analysis of the rating average for each event perceived to be most educationally important in achieving equity and access to excellence. The events are ranked from highest mean to lowest mean rankings.

Table 14 displays the mean rating for each event as perceived by teachers as having educational value in regard to achieving equity and access to excellence. The events are ranked from greatest perceived value of school district second-order leadership events to least value (least significant or no knowledge) of the perceived events. Respondents perceived school district designated academically high performing, (*M* =

2.88), school district "A" each year of accountability (*M* = 2.85), and community college/school district partnership identified as No. 1 in the nation, 2009 (M = 2.79) as holding the highest educational value of events to achieve equity and access to excellence for students. In contrast, respondents perceived superintendent leadership transition in 2003 (*M* = 1.65) and Florida Center for Reading Research High School Project (*M* = 0.94) as the least valuable events to achieve equity and access to excellence.

Table 14

Teachers' Perceptions of Educational Value of School District Events Ranking

Rank	School District Leadership Events	Mean Scale 0-4
1	School district designated academically high performing	2.88
2	School district "A" each year of accountability	2.85
3	Community college/school district partnership identified as #1 in the nation, 2009	2.79
4	Unitary status achieved March 21, 2006	1.06
5	Superintendent leadership transition in 2003	1.65
6	Florida center for reading research high school project	0.94

Research Question 3

What were the perceived challenges by teachers in creating equity and access to excellence and to what extent were these perceived challenges for all students addressed between 2003 and 2011 in the target school district as determined by teacher perception?

The third research question examined the challenges perceived by teachers that school district leaders encountered in their efforts to attain equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Participants were presented with open ended questions in Section III of the survey. The responses to each of the open ended questions were grouped into themes and are represented in the tables accompanying the descriptions.

In Section III of the modified survey, participants were first asked in Item 35 to list any decisions, events, or programs that they perceived to be of educational importance in achieving equity and access to excellence for all students which were not included in Section II of the modified teacher survey. Two themes emerged: (a) curriculum and instruction and (b) technology. They are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Events, Decisions, or Programs Perceived As Educationally Significant

Themes	*f*	Examples of Comments
Curriculum and Instruction	2	"Replacement of FCAT with EoC exams"
		"It would be good to have more programs for students to learn a trade so they can go right to work after high school for those who are not college bound"
Technology	2	"More funding for technology in all classrooms"
		"Better programs for attendance and gradebook, that allow family access"

Note. Respondents provided multiple responses.

In Item 36, respondents were asked to list challenges they believed school district leaders encountered related to achieving social justice of equity and access to excellence for all students. Three themes emerged: (a) school funding, (b) family and economic situations, and (c) resources. The themes and supportive comments are shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Perceived Challenges School District Leaders Encountered Related to Achieving Equity and Access to Excellence.

Themes	*f*	Examples of Comments
School Funding	3	"We have experienced serious budget shortfalls which limit our ability to invest in new programs, retain quality teachers, and promote the participation of low income students in many programs."
		"Low funding considering our situation and achievements."
		"The loss of the half-cent sales tax for education."
Family and Economic Situations	5	"Continued erosion of positive parental participation in school matters and reduced expectations for their child's performance in school."
		"A struggling economy in recent years."
		"Local economy and its effect on individual students."
		"The economic situations of our students."
		"I think there is a big turnover with the population at many Title I schools due to economic factors."
Resources	3	"FCAT test is too significant for students."
		"Equity of materials available to all students."
		"All students did not have the technology needed to be successful."

Note. Respondents provided multiple responses.

Research Question 4

What are teachers' perceived recommendations for further improvement with regard to achieving equity and access to excellence for all students?

To respond to Research Question 4, data were analyzed from participants' responses to Item 37 of the survey, as to the actions or strategies that they would recommend for any school district to take that wished to provide equity and access to excellence. Of the 33 participants, 8 offered comments.

Survey respondents offered a range of recommendations. Among them were that school district leaders examine efforts aimed at meeting the academic and social needs of diverse student populations and that they develop programs aimed at boosting student attendance. School district leaders' were also encouraged to invest more time and energy in efforts to enhance teacher preparedness and provide continuous professional learning for classroom teachers. Additional recommendations were for school district leaders to develop vocational and trade programs to improve opportunities for graduates to compete in entering the workforce. Respondents also recommended that school district leaders seek additional avenues aimed at encouraging parental support and involvement in the academic careers of their children. Table 17 displays the comments of all respondents grouped in the following themes: (a) resources, (b) parent and family involvement, and (c) school funding.

Table 17

Teachers' Recommendations for Further Improvement

Themes	*f*	Examples of Comments
Resources	6	"Have interpreted movies in all classrooms."
		"Make sure everyone involves supports and is trained in programs."
		"Don't swap programs so much because of the 'buzz' of some new program."
		"Try tweaking existing programs."
		"Provide the material that is needed for all students to achieve."
		"Programs such as magnet schools for special programs helps attract students and fosters academic excellence."
Parent and Family Involvement	3	"Intervention strategies that include a team approach to meeting with parents for issues of poor attendance and/or academic achievement."
		"Performance plans that include a role for teachers, school support programs, students, and their parents."
		"Hold parents accountable for their child's attendance and actions."
School Funding	2	"Buy access through programs that provide captioned movies."
		"Make sure the funding is there and continues to be there to support the programs."

Note. Respondents provided multiple responses.

Analysis of Interview Data

Data from telephone interviews were analyzed using the constant comparison method offered by Elliott and Lazenbatt (2005). The eight participants who agreed to be interviewed were asked four structured questions related to the four research questions which guided this study. The researcher used the structured interview questions to guide and develop the themes presented in the interviewee example comments and frequency tables. Next, using the summaries of the responses of all interviewees for each interview question, the researcher used Microsoft Word to count common words and/or phrases shared by respondents in answering each of the four interview questions. The themes emerged based on interviewees' responses to each of the four structured interview questions.

The eight teachers interviewed represented elementary, middle, and high school segments of the respondents. Although the majority of teachers interviewed were female, they were a diverse group in terms of ethnicity; five of the interviewees were white, one was black, and two were Hispanic. Teaching experience for those interviewed ranged between 6 and 39 years. These data are displayed in Table 18.

Table 18

Demographic Data for Interviewees

Interviewee	School Level	Ethnicity	Gender	Years of Experience	Interviewee Identification
1	Elementary	White	Female	39	Elementary 123
2	Middle	Black	Female	13	Middle 101
3	High	White	Female	28	High 201
4	Middle	Hispanic	Female	7	Middle 102
5	Middle	Hispanic	Female	9	Middle 103
6	Middle	White	Female	6	Middle 104
7	Middle	White	Female	31	Middle 105
8	High	White	Male	30	High 202

The following reports of interviews have been organized to present (a) examples of comments and frequencies for each of the eight teachers to the four interview questions, and (b) a discussion about the emergent theme(s) associated with each question. The questions prepared for the eight teacher interviews are listed in Appendix G. Each interviewee's comment is identified using the coded format found in Table 18. The themes that emerged from the interview analysis are displayed in Tables 19-22.

The interview questions were structured to elicit multiple responses from the interviewees. Each of the four interview items had sets of questions. The researcher asked one question at a time, and all interviewees were given the opportunity to respond before proceeding to the next question.

Interview Question 1

Do you personally think that school district leadership decisions directly impact student achievement in the classroom? In your professional opinion and given your tenure in the district from 2003 to 2011, what groups of students have historically not benefited significantly from a quality education? What specific decisions made by school district leaders' do you feel have widened opportunities for these students and what if, any, were their impact on achieving equity and access to excellence?

The first interview question asked interviewees to offer their professional opinion as to whether or not they perceived school district leadership decision-making practices as impacting student performance and achievement in the classroom. The second part of the question asked interviewees to identify groups of students who they perceived as historically having not benefitted from a quality education. The third and final part of the first interview question asked interviewees to specifically identify school district leadership decisions that they perceived as expanding opportunities for students and what, if any, were their impact on achieving equity and access to excellence.

To analyze the responses to the first interview question as to teachers' perceptions of school district leadership decisions and their impact on student achievement, the constant comparison method was used to count common words and/or phrases shared by teachers in their responses and develop them into themes. The following themes emerged based on Interview Question 1: School district leadership's impact, economically disadvantaged, learning disability, and ethnicity. Teachers' responses to these themes

and their perceived impact on efforts to achieve equity and access to excellence are presented in Table 19.

Table 19

Perceptions of School District Leadership Decisions' Impact on Student Achievement and Quality of Education for Students (N=8)

Theme	*f*	Example Comments
School District Leadership Impact	8	"Yes, I do think that district leadership decisions impact student achievement." (Elementary 123)
		"School district leaders indirectly impact student achievement in the classroom. Teachers directly impact student achievement." (Middle 101)
		"The decisions the district leadership makes impact the subject matter that teachers must teach students." (High 201)
		"Depends on the decision." (Middle 102)
		"I personally think that district leadership decisions are related to student achievement." (Middle 103)
Economically Disadvantaged	7	"Poverty level." (Elementary 123)
		"Economically disadvantaged." (Middle 103)
		"Economically disadvantaged students have suffered the most when it comes to educational success." (Middle 105)
Learning Disability	3	"Undiagnosed learning disabilities." (Elementary 123)
		"Student with disabilities historically have not benefited significantly from a quality education." (Middle 101)
		"ESE E/BD students." (High 202)
Ethnicity	5	"African-American" and "Hispanic." (Middle 101)
		"I feel that the demographic being under-served is second generation Hispanics." (Middle 102)
		"Black and Hispanic groups." (Middle 103)

Note: Respondents provided multiple responses.

Responses to the theme regarding teachers' perceptions of school district leadership decisions and the impact of those decisions on student achievement yielded positive responses. Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 5 both perceived a positive link between district leadership decisions and student achievement in the classroom. Interviewee 2 suggested that school district leadership decisions and actions "indirectly impact student achievement in the classroom" but also acknowledged that school district leadership decisions and actions directly impacted teacher instruction and training. Interviewee 3 expressed that "The decisions the school district leadership makes impact the subject matter that teachers must teach students." Similarly, Interviewee 4 suggested that the impact of school district leadership on student achievement was dependent on the decision under consideration.

Teachers, in responding to this first question, also made reference to the needs of sub-groups within the student population. They identified Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, African-American, and ESOL learners as groups of students that they believed require additional support and assistance to attain educational equity and access to excellence.

Interview Question 2

Have you noticed or observed changes in student performance/achievement or student and teacher access to educational resources in your tenure with the district? What do you attribute those changes to?

In reference to Interview Question 2, interviewees were asked their perceptions of noticeable or observed changes in student performance and teacher and student access to educational resources in the target school district from 2003 to 2011. Interviewees were also asked to provide feedback as to perceived causes of the changes. To analyze the responses to the second interview question as to teachers' perceptions of observed changes in student performance/achievement or student and teacher access to educational resources, the constant comparison method was used to count common words and/or phrases shared by teachers in their responses. The two themes that emerged from Interview Question 2 were data and monitoring, and resources. Responses regarding perceived changes in student performance and teacher and student access to educational resources are found in Table 20.

Table 20

Teachers' Perceptions of Changes in Student Performance/Achievement and Teacher Access (N = 8)

Theme	*f*	Example Comments
Data and Monitoring	4	"Student performance and achievement is truly effective when a child can monitor their own progress." (Middle 104) "Teachers have more access to student's data which will assist them with planning their lessons and it will allow them to gain a glimpse into the whole child." (Middle 101)
Resources	7	"I have noticed a change in student performance due to the limiting of teacher choice in materials." (Middle 105) "There are more resources available than ever before because of the internet." (High 201) "Practice materials purchased for the specific purpose of improving reading comprehension was [were] successful in FCAT scores." (Middle 102) "These changes are due to professional development trainings." (Middle 103) "Changes have occurred in recent years with teacher access to educational resources and money." (Middle 104) "Our hands are tied to specific materials I attribute to a 'one-size-fits-all' mentality on the part of district leaders." (Middle 105) "Student and teacher access to educational resources have increased as the market has grown." (High 202)

Note. Respondents provided multiple responses.

In response to the second interview question, all eight of the interviewees indicated that they observed changes in student performance and achievement and teacher access to educational resources. Interviewees observed changes relating to student motivation, teacher feedback, curriculum development, and teacher access to student data and educational tools. Interviewee 2 specifically discussed a change in teacher access to student performance data. She referenced teacher access to data programs offered in the target school district such as Performance Matters and Skyward which she said, "allows them [teachers] to readily pull up data on students in order to plan appropriately and effectively." She explained Performance Matters to be a web-based instructional improvement system that provides educators with student assessment data which includes leading and lagging indicators associated with student academic performance and also provides teachers with resources to identify and meet the needs of students. Skyward, as referenced and explained by Interviewee 2, serves as a communication tool for school district and school administrators, teachers and parents that provides access to student grades, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores, student attendance, and other student data. Other interviewees' responses that supported this second theme included perceived changes observed and students' additional access to technology resources in the classroom and teachers' access to additional curriculum resources and materials.

Interview Question 3

In your professional opinion, what challenges do you feel impact schools and student performance the most? Do you feel that school district leaders' have made significant efforts in addressing these challenges?

Interviewees were asked to identify specific challenges that they perceived to have impacted schools and student performance in the target school district from 2003 to 2011. In a follow-up question, interviewees were also asked to offer a response as to their perceptions of school district leadership efforts in addressing challenges. To analyze the responses to the third interview question as to teachers' perceptions of challenges that had the greatest impact on schools and student performance, the constant comparison method was used to count common words and/or phrases shared by teachers in their responses. Four themes emerged from Interview Question 3: Academic expectations, resources, teacher preparation and retention, and parent/family home situations. Responses regarding perceived challenges are offered in Table 21.

Table 21

Teachers' Perceptions of Challenges and the Impact of Challenges on Schools and Student Performance (N = 8)

Theme	*f*	Example Comments
Academic Expectations	7	"We know our students; we teach them based on their individual needs, but how are we going to improve all students' achievement while reducing the academic achievement disparity?" (Middle 103) "We have made vocational training a dirty word, and many students drop out because they are not able to meet the academic challenges given to them." (High 201)
Resources	6	"The challenges that impact schools and student performance the most is [are] time, and funding." (Middle 101) "I feel there are several challenges facing the students in my school. Another challenge is student engagement with materials that [are] uninteresting." (Middle 105)
Teacher preparation and retention	5	"First and foremost, teacher turnover." (Middle 105) "Adequate training for teachers." (Middle 101)
Parent/Family Home Situations	7	"The number one challenge for students is parental involvement and home environment." (Middle 102) "Some students miss that home support." (Elementary 123) "The challenges our schools and students face the most today are lack of parent involvement, poverty, and apathy." (Middle 104) "The major challenge facing schools and student performance is the effects of poverty on members of our public school communities." (High 202)

Note. Respondents provided multiple responses.

The dominant theme that emerged from interview responses regarding the challenges associated with schools and student performance concerned the perceived lack of home support and challenges associated with the family environment, including poverty. Interviewee 1 suggested, "Some students miss that home support." Interviewee 4 stated "Many of them [students] have personal obstacles to overcome that stem from family issues. I am of the opinion that parents should be the first and primary teacher, but many parents and students that I have serviced feel that education should be the local school's responsibility." Interviewee 4 also perceived that some parents "adopt a 'hands-off' mentality, either resorting to threatening the student if he or she doesn't perform to the schools standards or taking a complete opposite approach, not caring at all what goes on with their child from 9 am to 4 pm." Interviewee 6 expressed, "The challenges our schools and students face the most today are lack of parent involvement, poverty, and apathy." Interviewee 5 explained her beliefs as follows: "They [students] more frequently lack assistance at home because it is common for the parents to not understand the work that is in English. Students from disadvantaged families' academic experience and the lack of resources impact these groups." Interviewee 7 shared, "First, kids have so much more to worry about than leaders today realize. No power [electricity] at home, not enough food, these are concerns for students in my school."

Directly related to the lack of home support were comments related to the impact of the economy. In referencing the impact that the economy has had on schools and families, Interviewee 6 acknowledged, "Parents mean well and they want to help but

most families are one parent homes and just surviving to put food on the table." As a Title I school teacher, Interviewee 6 also discussed the critical importance of receiving federal funds to aid in gaining access to student learning materials and resources.

Several of the responses also referenced the need for teachers to have appropriate professional development to meet the needs of all students. Interviewee 1, in reference to teacher training and professional development, "Like ESOL, the more tools on your belt the better you are. Teachers just want support from their administrators." Interviewee 2 shared a similar perception in her statement, "The challenges that impact schools and student performance the most is adequate training for teachers, time, and funding."

Interview Question 4

Do you feel that the school district has made significant efforts in closing the achievement gap? What recommendations would you suggest to school district leaders' that may further improve equity and access to excellence to all students that may not have been indicated in the survey?

Interviewees were asked their perceptions of efforts in the target school district regarding closing the achievement gap. Interviewees were also asked to offer recommendations that they perceived would further improve equity and access to excellence to all students. To analyze the responses to the fourth interview question as to teachers' recommendations to further improve equity and access to excellence for all students, the constant comparison method was used to count common words and/or phrases shared by teachers in their responses. Two themes emerged from Interview

Question 4: School district leadership efforts, and recommended steps. Emergent themes and examples of comments offered by interviewees to Interview Question 4 are presented in Table 22.

The first theme, school district leadership efforts, of the fourth interview question revealed that respondents by and large perceived that closing the achievement gap was of importance to school district leaders and that the target school district as a whole had indeed made efforts to improve equity and access to excellence for all students. Respondents did, however, acknowledge that more work is needed to enhance efforts aimed at addressing closing the achievement gap. Virtually all interviewees' seemed to share in the sentiments of Interviewee 5 when she stated, "I feel that there is much more to do," and Interviewee 6 who responded, "We are not there yet."

Thus, this fourth theme, encapsulates the perceived recommendations of interviewed teachers in tackling the challenges associated with closing the achievement gap and furthermore enhancing efforts in the target school district to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. Interviewees offered a range of recommendations that included teacher mentoring programs, additional and sustained funding, and helping teachers to better understand and know how to motivate their targeted students.

Table 22

Teachers' Recommendations to Further Improve Equity ad Access to Excellence (N = 8)

Theme	*f*	Example Comments
School District Leadership Efforts	8	"The district has made strides and efforts to close the achievement gaps." (Middle 101)
		"I believe that the district and individual schools as well as select principals and many teachers have bent over backwards to do more than enough documentation, accommodations, differentiated learning, etc." (Middle 102)
		"I feel that there is much more to do." (Middle 103)
		"Yes, I do believe that the district is helping to close the achievement gap but we are not there yet." (Middle 104)
		"District leaders are due [to receive] some credit toward ameliorating the effects of poverty through magnet school policies in the northern reaches of the district." (High 202)
Recommended Steps	8	"Take the teachers on a bus tour so that they can become familiar with their students' community." (Middle 101)
		"Continue to sponsor teacher-mentoring programs that focus on classroom management and discipline." (Middle 101)
		"Sustain funding to enhance the students' learning environment." (Middle 101)
		"Have another diploma track. One for college bound, one for vocational trade, and one for special diploma." (High 201)
		"Provide more orientation to the minority groups [such as] black and Hispanic students," (Middle 103)
		"Schools should provide more programs that contribute to students' motivation." (Middle 103)
		"I would recommend, and have repeatedly recommended, that district leaders become more proactive and vocal in their support of candidates to statewide offices who value the best interests of the members of district public school communities." (High 202)

Note. Respondents provided multiple responses.

Some suggestions also addressed curriculum, diploma tracks, and vocational education. Interviewee 7 conveyed the sense of several of the responses: "Trust us [teachers] to be professional" in selecting and acquiring access to curriculum material that meet the needs of diverse learners at schools that teachers serve. Interviewee 8 encouraged school district leaders to "become more proactive and vocal in their support of candidates to statewide offices who value the best interests of the members of district public school communities."

Ancillary Analysis

The Florida Department of Education has recognized the target school district as a high performing school district (Weber, 2011). To document the progress toward achieving equity and access to excellence for all students and to further examine the impact that second-order change leadership and school district leadership decision-making practices have on student achievement, student assessment data from the target school district were analyzed. Data reports and findings were obtained through databases of (a) U.S. Department of Education, (b) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and (c) The Florida Department of Education. To better determine and assess the target school district's efforts at enhancing student performance through equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic income, the following 2003 to 2011 student assessment school district-wide scores were examined: Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT); and Advance Placement (AP) Exams.

Lubienski (2002) indicated that low-achieving, low-income, and minority students (black and Hispanic) have historically demonstrated little growth in critical areas such as mathematics and reading. Under No Child Left Behind, individual school performance is assessed annually to meet the federal requirements of AYP and is used to determine academic growth in subgroups of school populations in areas like reading and mathematics (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). AYP subgroups address such factors as race, family income (economically disadvantaged), and students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

The following data generated by the Florida Department of Education (2012) and illustrated in Table 23 show AYP performance (percentage of students below proficient as measured by FCAT Reading for students in the target school district from 2003 to 2011. These data were used to enhance the researcher's perspective on achievement gains of students in the target school district and also to add to the body of knowledge as to the extent to which the target school district has demonstrated equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability.

Steinberg (2010) acknowledged statistical significance in educational research at the K-12 level as 5% or more. Among black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged student populations, data revealed that the target school district has demonstrated growth in adequate yearly progress (AYP). Between 2003 and 2011, the data indicated an improvement in the number of black students who were below proficient level in the area

of reading on the FCAT by 14%. In 2003, 63% of black students were reading below proficient. That percentage decreased to 49% by 2011. Between 2003 and 2011, the data indicated an improvement in the number of Hispanic students who were below proficient on FCAT Reading by 15%. In 2003, 51% of Hispanic students were reading below proficient as measured by FCAT. That percentage decreased to 36% by 2011. AYP results for subgroups indicated an annual upward trend or in some cases a steady trend in reducing the number of students who were reading below proficient as measured by FCAT. Students are identified as below proficient if they receive a score of two or one on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

Table 23

Percentage of Students Below Proficient on FCAT Reading for Grades 3 - 10

AYP Student Subgroups	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
White	30	29	28	27	25	21	21	21	20
Black	63	61	58	57	56	51	49	49	49
Hispanic	51	51	49	48	46	42	37	37	36
Asian	28	27	25	24	22	19	16	16	15
Economically Disadvantaged	56	54	52	52	50	45	41	40	40
English Language Learners	91	76	74	75	71	63	57	56	55
Students with Disabilities	68	66	62	63	59	55	54	55	55

Table 24 shows AYP performance data (percentage of students below grade level) generated by the Florida Department of Education (2012), in the area of mathematics as measured by the FCAT for students in the target school district from 2003 to 2011. Table 28 illustrates a downward trend in the percentage of students in each subgroup who were not proficient in mathematics. Among black students, data displayed indicates an improvement in students' proficiency in mathematics over the eight-year period, with 63% of students not reading at grade level in 2003 and 42% not reading at grade level in 2011, 21% improvement. Of particular interest is the 5% improvement that can be seen between 2005 and 2006 and 2007 and 2008. Between 2003 and 2011, the data indicated

an improvement in the number of Hispanic students who were below grade level in mathematics by 18%. In 2003, 47% of Hispanic students were below grade level in the area of mathematics. That percentage decreased to 29% by 2011. Similarly, AYP data for students with disabilities showed an improvement of 18% in mathematics achievement from 2003 to 2011. Data also indicated that the greatest improvement in reducing the number of students who were non-proficient in mathematics was among English Language Learners (ELL). The percentage decrease in ELL students who were non-proficient in mathematics between 2003 and 2011 was 35%.

Table 24

Percentage of Students Below Proficient in Mathematics for Grades 3 - 10

AYP Subgroups	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
White	24	23	21	19	17	15	15	15	14
Black	63	60	57	52	51	46	45	44	42
Hispanic	47	45	42	39	37	34	32	30	29
Asian	15	16	15	12	10	10	8	7	7
Economically Disadvantaged	55	52	48	46	43	40	37	34	33
English Language Learners	77	65	63	60	56	51	48	46	42
Students with Disabilities	65	63	58	55	53	50	50	49	47

The academic trend in the areas of reading and mathematics suggested by AYP results and reflected in Tables 23 and 24 are indicative of incremental improvements. Analysis of data also indicated smaller incremental improvements for reducing the number of students who were economically disadvantaged and students with disabilities by at least 1% annually.

The target school district was recognized by the College Board as one of seven school districts in Florida for the Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Roll (*The Sanford Herald*, 2011). An important component of the honor requires school districts to ensure

that their percentage of minority students taking AP exams did not decrease by more than 5 percent (Pinellas County Public Schools, 2012). Table 25 displays the percentage of Advanced Placement (AP) students' tested in the target school district from 2003 to 2011 by student subgroup. The researcher utilized this information to better examine school district efforts and confirm survey responses indicating that more students in the target school district had access to AP courses than previously.

Table 25 indicates that in the target school district there was an incremental increase for the number of Advanced Placement (AP) test takers from 2003 to 2011. There was also growth in access to AP exams for some student subgroups. The student subgroup with the highest percentage of students tested was Asian with an average of 85% tested (Florida Department of Education, 2012a). Next, was white averaging 46% tested, followed by Hispanic averaging 38% tested (Florida Department of Education, 2012a). Between 2003 and 2006 the percentage of black AP test takers increased by 1.5% from 18.6% to 20.1% (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Table 25

Percentage of Student Subgroups Taking AP Tests from 2003-2011

Percentages by Years	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
2003				
Percentage of subgroup tested	41.6	18.6	41.8	83.7
2004				
Percentage of subgroup tested	45.0	19.6	45.2	85.4
2005				
Percentage of subgroup tested	49.0	19.9	43.8	98.4
2006				
Percentage of subgroup tested	49.8	20.1	43.2	87.6
2007				
Percentage of subgroup tested	50.8	17.0	37.7	88.0
2008				
Percentage of subgroup tested	55.3	20.0	40.5	95.7
2009				
Percentage of subgroup tested	36.8	16.2	28.6	65.7
2010				
Percentage of subgroup tested	40.8	16.9	32.7	74.1
2011				
Percentage of subgroup tested	42.3	18.7	28.9	84.7

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2012a.

To assess the results revealed by the survey with respect to the target school district efforts of expanding AP coursework opportunities to its student population in an effort to achieve equity and access to excellence, a report was generated from the Florida Department of Education (2012a) database using accountability reporting data. This data is presented in Table 26. The table displays percentages of Advanced Placement test takers by student subgroup scoring between 3 and 5 on the AP tests. The scores are reported for four student subgroups: white, black, Hispanic, and Asian. Earned AP

scores between 3 and 5 are not shown where the number of test takers was less than 15. Depending on the college or university, students who earn a score of 3 or higher (on a 5-point scale) on an AP exam may qualify for college credit (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Table 26 indicates the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher (on a 5-point scale) from 2003 to 2011 improved. Although the target school district has broadened the pool of Advanced Placement (AP) test takers between 2003 and 2011, the data observed in Table 26 also revealed that the target school district has maintained within 5 percent the percentage of students in each student subgroup tested who scored between 3 and 5 from 2003 to 2011. However, when the data is broken down by subgroups, and the subgroups are then compared to peered subgroups, observation of the data revealed a difference in the percentage of subgroups scoring between 3 and 5 on AP exams from 2003 and 2011 (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Pass rates have been considerably higher for white and Asian subgroups than for Hispanic and black subgroups. Though the percentage of black AP test takers increased by 1.5% from 18.6% to 20.1% from 2003 to 2006, the data revealed that for each year, from 2003 to 2006 less than half of the black AP test takers had scored a 3 or higher on the AP test (Florida Department of Education, 2012a). Between 2003 and 2011 the average percentage of black AP test takers scoring a 3 or higher was 39% (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Between 2003 and 2011, the average percentage of Hispanic AP test takers scoring a 3 or higher was 50% (Florida Department of Education, 2012a). The highest percentage of Hispanic AP test takers scoring a 3 or higher on an AP test was in 2006 (Florida Department of Education, 2012). In 2006 43.2% of Hispanic students were tested, and of that percentage, 55.3% of scored a 3 or higher on an AP test (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Additionally, from 2003 to 2011 the average percentage of white AP test takers scoring a 3 or higher was 56% (Florida Department of Education, 2012a). From 2003 to 2011 the average percentage of Asian AP test takers scoring a 3 or higher was 59% (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Table 26

Percentage of Student Subgroups Who Took Advanced Placement Tests and Scored 3 - 5 from 2003-2011

Percentages by Years	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
2003				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	53.1	39.7	53.2	50.5
2004				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	53.5	34.0	52.1	60.1
2005				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	54.9	35.2	54.8	65.4
2006				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	56.7	38.1	55.3	59.8
2007				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	56.7	45.9	52.5	59.5
2008				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	56.7	41.5	19.5	59.1
2009				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	56.2	37.9	50.5	55.4
2010				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	58.4	36.5	53.6	56.6
2011				
Percentage of subgroup tested who scored 3-5	58.0	44.2	53.6	62.0

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2012a.

Summary

The chapter began with a brief review of the methods and procedures used to identify the sample for the study and the demographic characteristics of participating teachers. Additionally, discussion of the survey, interview, and ancillary data were tied to the theoretical constructs of second-order change leadership, social justice, and school district leadership and decision-making practices.

The results of the analysis of Section II of the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers, which concerned teachers' perceptions of the significance of school district second-order change decisions, events, and challenges related to achieving equity and access to excellence for all students, were presented in tabular form and discussed.

Analysis of data obtained in (a) Section III of the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers from the responses of open ended questions regarding decisions, events, challenges, and recommendations and (b) eight interviews with participants were also presented in tabular form and discussed. Using the constant comparative method, categories were identified which led to themes that were reported in tabular form and explained.

Finally, additional analysis was provided using quantitative data reported by the Florida Department of Education (2012) on student assessment based on results of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, adequate yearly progress (AYP), and Advanced Placement reports for the target school district. These data were used to enhance the

researcher's perspective on achievement gains of students, access to advanced placement exams in the target school district, and also to add to the body of knowledge as to the extent to which the target school district has demonstrated equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability.

Chapter 5 will present a discussion of the results from the four research questions and also offer a discussion of the findings. Chapter 5 will conclude with a discussion on implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

It is often said that the decisions we make today, will ultimately lay the foundation for the future. Martin Luther King Jr., Oliver Brown, Robert Dowell, Calvin Green and many other pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement and the education reform movement utilized the judicial process to challenge the ways and means in which we educate our youth. Efforts on the part of organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NCAAP) and the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) raised the critical question of, who do we educate in society; and challenged the theory of a free and appropriate education. Legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Florida Educational Equity Act (FEEA) established the requirements for student educational accommodations, and demanded rigorous standards, enhanced student performance and achievement results. Together, these individuals, organizations, and documents ushered in a series of reforms and established the decree that all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, learning disability, or socioeconomic status, must be afforded a high performing system of education that will provide them with the skills, tools, and knowledge necessary to compete in a globally competitive market.

Furthermore, leaders of large schools districts are faced with the challenge and responsibility of meeting these demands. Therefore, the decision-making practices of school district leaders will have a lasting impact on how well we prepare students for

college and beyond. Researchers of second-order change leadership like Darling-Hammond (1997), Orr et al. (2006), Waters and Marzano (2006), Childress et al. (2009), and others have cited the important need for courageous, bold, unbounded, and out-side of the box decision-making practices on the part of school district leaders in the pursuit of providing all students with equity and access to excellence.

Darling-Hammond (1997) supported the claim that all "students should have equitable access to school funding necessary to enact the state's learning standards and students should have access to well-prepared teachers and other professional staff who understand how to teach challenging content to diverse learners" (p. 281). Orr et al. (2006) determined that school leaders are expected and federally mandated to improve student performance and to ensure equity at every level in the school district. Louis et al. (2010) cited a powerful link between the decision-making practices of school instructional leaders and student performance and pupil competitiveness.

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) and Childress et al. (2009) found that the most successful school district leaders were those who (a) created common and rigorous standards; (b) ensured that there is an appropriate curriculum alignment from pre-K to 12^{th} grade; (c) provided access to teachers, students, parents and community stake-holders to work collaboratively in achieving school district goals; (d) set high expectations; and (e) were committed to breaking the links between race and class and academic achievement succeed in attaining equity and access to excellence for all students. Waters and Marzano (2006) found that school district leaders who practiced

these associated components of second order-change leadership as offered by Newmann and Wehlage (1995) and Childress et al. (2009) were more likely to increase student achievement and expand educational opportunities to better prepare students to become globally competitive and successful citizens.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of teachers who were employed in the target school district from 2003 to 2011 regarding school district leadership second-order change decisions, events, and challenges. This study was also conducted to examine to what extent school district second-order change leadership has contributed to students achieving equity and access to excellence in a large school district.

Summary and Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1

What are the school district second-order change decisions that are known or perceived by teachers to have led to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in a large school district?

Analysis of responses of the 33 participants in the study suggested that teachers' perceived school district leadership decisions that specifically promoted college readiness initiatives as either significant or extremely significant in achieving equity and access to

excellence for all students. This finding was consistent with previous research supported by Childress et al. (2009) which indicated that successful and high achieving school districts were those that set high expectations for student achievement and developed and aligned curriculum that infused rigor, ready goals, and measureable benchmarks. Respondents also scored school district leadership decisions which provided students with opportunities for academic diversity, such as graduation rate reaches all-time high, 2009, the established International Baccalaureate (IB) program at Seminole High School, the creation of Crooms Academy for Technology, and the launch of virtual school in 2008 as educationally significant or higher with an average rating of 2.52 or higher on a Likert-type scale of 0-4.

Childress et al. (2009) determined that the key step in the process for attaining equity and access to excellence was the decision of the school board to agree on the goal to dramatically improve performance of all students, especially for students not served well historically by the school district. These researchers cited the need for school district leaders to exercise courageous, bold, collaborative, wise, and creative leadership to aid in this endeavor. Surveyed teachers and interviewees acknowledged the importance of organizational change and teacher preparation for that change for the purposes of attaining academic equity and access to excellence for all students.

The monumental 1954 *Brown* court ruling overturned the long held doctrine of "separate but equal," (*Plessy v. Ferguson,* 1896, p. 550) and sparked a series of educational reform measures. To meet unitary status and to no longer have oversight and

monitoring from the courts, Dehlinger (2008) reported, school districts had to show evidence of progress toward the elimination of segregation in six areas: (1) student assignments, (2) faculty and staff assignment, (3) transportation, (4) facilities, (5) resources and staff allocation, and (6) extracurricular activities," (p. 2). The courts made an addition to the "Green" factors in the case of *Freeman et al. v. Pitts et al. (*1992), adding quality of education, in order to meet unitary status. Dehlinger (2008) reported that the courts outlined such quality of education issues to include: "disparities in drop out, retention, and graduation rates" (p. 3). In a similar reference to student graduation, Interviewee 3 recommended that leaders in the target school district develop an additional diploma track for special education students with an emphasis on vocational training. She also encouraged school district leaders to expand career preparation opportunities for students who complete high school but may not choose to go directly to college.

Interviewee 8 credited school district leaders with designing magnet schools in the northern part of the target school district in an attempt to enhance efforts of achieving equity and access to excellence for all students. Among the diverse magnet and specialized schools cited by Interviewee 8 were the Health Academy at Seminole High School and Crooms Academy of Information Technology. School district leaders in the target school district rezoned school boundaries and strategically designed and implemented International Baccalaureate (IB), magnet, and specialized career training programs in schools in the northern parts of the target school district that were heavily populated with black students. This was done in an effort to attract diverse student

groups, i.e., white, Hispanic, varying socioeconomic statuses, from across the school district and to provide students with access to rigorous college and career ready programs (Wilhite, 2012).

All eight of the teachers interviewed indicated that they perceived school district leadership decisions and actions as having an impact, to some extent, on student learning and classroom instruction. All eight of the interviewees acknowledged that they had observed changes in student performance and achievement to some extent, and changes to teacher access to educational resources. Interviewees perceived changes relating to student motivation, teacher feedback, curriculum development, and teacher access to student data and educational tools. Interviewees referenced changes in student performance due to what they perceived as limiting of teacher choices in curriculum materials. On the other hand, interviewees did however acknowledge changes in student performance due to what they perceived as an increase in teacher access to curriculum resources as a result of the internet and other technological tools.

Research Question 2

Between 2003 and 2011, to what extent were the significant events and decisions known or perceived by teachers to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 students?

The analysis of data regarding educationally significant events and decisions indicated that teachers in the target school district scored school district initiatives which specifically aimed at preparing students for college as either educationally significant or

extremely significant in providing equity and access to excellence for all students. Individual item analysis revealed that more than 79% of all survey respondents' perceived the following events as having significant educational importance in achieving equity and access to excellence: (a) school district designated academically high performing, school district "A" each year of accountability, and (b) forming partnerships with community colleges and the school district . Similarly, analysis of interview comments revealed that interviewees perceived that district leadership efforts geared toward student performance, data collection, and progress monitoring were of great educational importance in increasing student achievement. Interviewees acknowledged that teachers have more access to student data and were of the perception that access to student achievement data was of great educational value in assisting teachers with identifying struggling students and developing classroom instructional lessons tailored to the needs of all learners.

Over time, effective collaboration between teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders in the community has been linked to gains in student achievement (Little, 1990). Waters and Marzano (2006) concluded in their meta-analysis of 27 studies that school district leaders who have demonstrated significant student achievement in their school districts focused much of their efforts on creating goal-oriented school districts with an emphasis on high standards and expectations on teaching and learning and career and college ready initiatives. Childress et al. (2009) determined that the most successful school district leaders were those who created common and rigorous standards; provided

access to teachers, students, parents and community stake-holders to work collaboratively in achieving school district goals; set high expectations; and were committed to breaking the links between race and class and academic achievement succeed in attaining equity and access to excellence for all students.

Analysis of interviewees' comments suggested that (a) school district leadership decisions and actions that directly impacted the subject matter taught in classroom, (b) professional development opportunities offered to teachers, and (c) efforts made to enhance student and teacher access to technology and curriculum resources were largely perceived as contributing to student achievement and development. Interviewees specifically discussed a change in teacher access to student performance data such as Performance Matters, access to parent-teacher communication tools like Skyward, and teacher access to curriculum resources and material adopted by the target school district. Interviewee 8 stated, "Student and teacher access to educational resources have increased as the market has grown. Darling-Hammond (1997) supported two standards that would guide schools in promoting equitable education in instructional delivery and professional practice.

1. All students should have equitable access to the school funding necessary to enact the state's learning standards.
2. All students should have access to well-prepared teachers and other professional staff who understand how to teach challenging content to diverse learners. (p. 281)

Research Question 3

What were the perceived challenges by teachers in creating equity and access to excellence and to what extent were these perceived challenges for all students addressed between 2003 and 2011 in the target school district as determined by teacher perception?

According to survey results, teachers in the target school district overwhelmingly acknowledged challenges faced by the target school district in its efforts to attain equity and access to excellence for all students. Respondents specifically referenced the financial challenges faced by the school district as a result of losing a half-cent sales tax referendum. They also acknowledged the financial difficulties in purchasing technology for classrooms and costs associated with maintaining school buildings. Additionally, respondents cited the challenges faced by the target school district in meeting the financial and academic needs of transient student population schools. Other similar challenges noted by respondents included increasing and maintaining FCAT and college entrance achievement test scores and increasing student daily attendance rates at schools with a high percentage of students on free/reduced lunch.

These findings were consistent with findings of other researchers. Waters and Marzano (2006), in their meta-analysis study of superintendent characteristics, found that effective superintendents of large urban school districts ensured that the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials were appropriately allocated to accomplish the goals of the school district. Marzano and Waters (2009) also determined that school district leaders were faced with the challenges of meeting federal

and state mandates, ensuring fiscal responsibility for school district expenditures, and demonstrating learning growth and development of ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged student populations. Ravitch (2010) found that school district and school leaders across the United States were charged with providing a high performance quality education for all students, e.g., meeting the demands of educational legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act.

The target school district's efforts to revamp its attendance and gradebook reporting system for the purpose of making access easier for parents and families to inquire about student grades and academic progress was positive. Responses to the open-ended survey questions and responses provided by interviewees specifically referenced academic monitoring tools offered by the target school district such as the Skyward Family Access gradebook system and the Performance Matters program. Skyward Family Access provides parents with the opportunity to track their child's grades, attendance, and coursework. Performance Matters provides data analysis and information for students, parents, and teachers on student grades, attendance, and standardized test scores.

By the same token, the dominant theme that emerged from interview responses regarding the challenges associated with schools and student performance was the perceived lack of home support and family environment. Additionally, directly related to the lack of home support were comments offered by interviewees relating to the impact that the economy has had on schools and families. Respondents recognized the financial

impact and hardships experienced in the local economy on (a) job creation, (b) sustainability for working families residing in the school district, and (c) dwindling property values that may in turn affect property taxes and consequently lower school funding. Overall, interviewees repeatedly called attention to economically disadvantaged students, the hardship of the economy on student achievement, and its impact on parental involvement.

Research Question 4

What are teachers' perceived recommendations for further improvement with regard to achieving equity and access to excellence for all students?

In making recommendations for further improvement, survey respondents and those interviewed cited the need for school districts to develop and implement programs that provided a broader and more diverse opportunity for students to learn and engage in instruction. Survey respondents also recommended that school districts achieve this by offering a diversity of specialized courses either through magnet schools or vocational programs. To ensure that students who are not college bound are prepared to compete in the global market, survey respondents recommended that school districts develop career preparation programs to prepare students who may not go directly to college following high school for the workforce. Interviewee 3 recommended that school district leaders develop and establish vocations schools. Goodman and Svyantek (1999) advocated for attention and investment to be devoted to curriculum building and instructional best

practices that meet the needs of diverse learners, acknowledging the trickle-down impact that school district leaders can have on closing the achievement gap.

Survey results also included recommendations for school districts to develop strategies to promote parent involvement and student success in schools, particularly for at-risk or struggling learners. Interviewed respondents specifically cited the need to improve the rigor and quality of education offered to Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students. Similarly, interviewed respondents overwhelmingly mentioned the need to ensure continuous academic growth and college readiness for black and Hispanic student populations. Interviewees specifically acknowledged the importance of closing the achievement gap among black and Hispanic populations when compared to their white counterparts.

Lastly, respondents to the teacher perception survey open-ended questions and interviewees also recommended that school districts invest in teacher professional learning opportunities that include content area best practices for reaching diverse learners including ESE and ELL (English Language Learners) students. A common response among the respondents was the need for teachers and the school district as a whole to set high expectations for student achievement and the need for all educators, parents, and students to have shared ownership of school performance.

The overall theme identified in the responses to the fourth interview question was that the school district had made significant efforts to improve equity and access to excellence for all students. However, all interviewees addressed the need for continued

efforts by school district leaders, building level administrators, and teachers to focus on closing what they perceived as the existing achievement gap. When asked to identify students or groups of students they perceived as historically not benefiting from a quality education, interviewees identified several groups. Economically disadvantaged students were mentioned six times, students with learning disabilities were mentioned three times, and black and Hispanic students were mentioned a combined five times.

Similarly, to address the concerns relating to the achievement gap and enhancing efforts at achieving equity and access to excellence for all students in the target school district, interviewees offered a range of recommendations. Among them, interviewees recommended that school district leaders invest in teacher mentoring programs, continue to fund effective student support initiatives and programs, and offer teachers support in the form of teacher professional learning on how to effectively identify and motivate their targeted students. Interviewee 8 recommended that school district leaders become active and engaged in the political process by supporting candidates to statewide offices who value what he called "the best interests of the members of district public school communities." Other suggestions offered by interviewees addressed curriculum, diploma tracks, and vocational education. The recommendations for further improvement in regard to achieving equity and access to excellence for all students were supported by Childress et al. (2009).

Discussion of Ancillary Analysis

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) required that states implement benchmarks and goals for all students. NCLB required students to be brought to "proficient" levels based on state assessments. Educational researchers have shown that low-achieving, low-income, and predominantly black and Hispanic students have demonstrated little growth in critical areas like mathematics, reading, and science (Lubienski, 2002). However, among its black, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged student populations, the target school district has demonstrated growth as measured by adequate yearly progress (AYP) data and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

AYP results for subgroups indicated an annual upward trend in student proficiency levels. Holistically, from 2003 to 2011, data showed growth and improvement in subgroups by at least 5%. The academic trend in the areas of reading and mathematics, suggested by AYP results, was positive and indicative of incremental improvements. In 2003, 63% of black students in the target school district were reading below a proficient level (Florida Department of Education, 2012). By 2011, that percentage decreased to 49% (Florida Department of Education). Between 2003 and 2011, AYP data generated by the Florida Department of Education (2012) indicated a decrease of 14% in the number of black students who were below proficient level in the area of reading on the FCAT. Similarly, in 2003, 51% of Hispanic students in the target school district were reading below a proficient level as measured by FCAT (Florida Department of Education, 2012). Between 2003 and 2011, AYP data for the target

school district indicated an improvement in the number of Hispanic students who were not reading at a proficient level in the area of reading on the FCAT by 15% (Florida Department of Education, 2012). By 2011, the percentage of non-proficient Hispanic students in reading in the target school district decreased to 36% (Florida Department of Education, 2012). As a consequence of student achievement, the target school district was recognized as academically high performing by the Florida Department of Education (2012). Respondents to the teacher survey perceived this specific district recognition, with a combined significant and extremely significant rating of 85%, in terms of educational value and efforts to achieve equity and access to excellence.

These improvements and positive trends were also acknowledged by respondents in the results of the Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence for Teachers. Teachers in the target school district perceived school district leadership decisions, events, and challenges as collectively meeting the needs of students and, to a large extent, preparing students for college and beyond. The school district leadership decision to focus on the future to prepare students for careers and colleges, 2010-2011, yielded a combined extremely significant and significant ratings of 67%. A total of 82% of respondents recognized as significant or extremely significant that school district leadership actions led to the community college/school district partnership to be identified as No. 1 in the nation, 2009.

Results from the survey also revealed that 66% of respondents perceived SAT scores reach all-time high with 64% test takers, 2010 as significant or higher. In

*Freeman et al. v. Pitts et al. (*1992), a seventh factor, quality of education, was added to the original six factors determined in the case of *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia* (1968), as required by school districts to meet unitary status. In her study, Dehlinger (2008) reported that the courts outlined such quality of education issues to include: "representation of minorities in advanced classes" (p. 3). Advanced Placement participation and examination pass rates in the target school district were indicative of the school district's efforts to enhance student college preparedness. The school district has broadened the pool of AP test takers to 11,000 students. Approximately 79% of respondents to the survey identified this decision as either significant or higher in terms of educational value in achieving equity and access to excellence.

The College Board released The AP Achievement School District Honor Roll in March of 2011 to give credit to school districts that had expanded their pool of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses for college credit (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011a, p. 1). The target school district was recognized as one of seven school districts in Florida for accomplishments in the areas of expanding student access and improving student performance (*The Sanford Herald*, 2011).

The report also revealed that in addition to broadening AP opportunities to students, efforts on the part of school district leaders and teachers in the target school district had improved the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher (on a 5-point scale) (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011a). The leading subgroup in the

target school district, with the highest percentage of students tested and scoring a 3 or higher on an AP test, was Asian with an average of 85% tested and 59% scoring a 3 or higher (Florida Department of Education, 2012a). Next were white AP test takers averaging 46% tested and 56% scoring a 3 or higher, followed by Hispanic AP test takers with 38% tested and 50% scoring a 3 or higher (Florida Department of Education, 2012a). AP data among black students showed an average of 19% tested and 39% scoring a 3 or higher (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Conclusions

The research conducted in this study has shown that there are second-order change leadership practices that have occurred in the target school district, as evidenced by findings from the modified teacher perceptions survey, interviews, and student assessment data results. Teachers have grown in their understanding of the aspects of school district leadership decisions, events, and challenges as evidenced by results and comments obtained from the survey and teacher interviews. The interview portion of this study revealed that teachers are connected with their school district community and thus in their respected roles are changing, adapting, and questioning what is occurring in their practice of teaching.

Results from the survey of teachers and interviews revealed that a majority of the responding teachers perceived that the school district had made strides in achieving student equity and access to excellence in the areas of college readiness. Respondents were supportive of school district leadership efforts to (a) enhance student opportunities

for diverse learners, (b) broaden the pool of students taking advanced placement courses, (c) encourage parental support and student academic interventions, (d) provide professional development opportunities for educators, and (e) close the achievement gap that exists among varying ethnic and socioeconomic groups of students.

The quantitative analysis of student assessment data validated findings from the survey of teachers but also offered discussion for continued improvement. Analysis of the student achievement data supported the perceptions offered by respondents that the leadership in the target school district had indeed made strides in providing equity and access to excellence for all students as revealed in discussion of FCAT data in the areas of reading and mathematics. Discussion on the percentage of student AP test takers and subgroup test scores revealed that 79% of teachers perceived expanding the percentage of AP test takers as holding important educational value in achievement equity and access to excellence. The target school district did demonstrate growth in access to Advanced Placement exams. The AP student achievement data presented areas where growth can be celebrated but also provided input for areas where additional growth and achievement maybe needed (Florida Department of Education, 2012a).

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Executive leaders and senior level cabinet members of large school districts are faced with considerable challenges. Among these challenges are: increasing student achievement scores; ensuring that all students regardless of family socioeconomic income, race, language, or ethnicity have access to a rigorous, high-performing education

curriculum; hiring developing teachers who are equipped with the skills and knowledge of pedagogy to infusion of high quality effective instruction in the classroom; and the materials and tools necessary to prepare students beyond high school and college (Orr et al., 2006). Given the challenges, mandates, and public demands for higher standards, expectations and results faced by executive leaders of large school districts, this study provided insight into how school district leaders engage the challenges faced and acquire success in doing so.

Childress et al. (2009) identified six core themes as necessary to set a standard of excellence and equity and suggested that school district leaders in large school districts could benefit from them. The following implications and recommendations for practice are offered using these six core themes to indicate the extent to which the school district has progressed in its pursuit of equity and access to excellence and to offer recommendations for what remains to be accomplished in this quest.

First, Childress et al. (2009) acknowledged that school district leaders should set a standard of excellence and equity by first creating common and rigorous standards. In 2003, the target school district began development of its Strategic Plan for Continuous Improvement to Ensure School district Wide Excellence and Equity (SCPS, 2011b). Executive leaders in the target school district established a vision in the Strategic Plan that the school district "will be the premier school district in the State of Florida and will be recognized nationally for high standards and academic performance," (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 1).

Examples of such school district leadership second-order change decisions and actions reflecting this were evident in the results obtained from the survey of teacher perceptions. Among the survey evidence pointing to the target school district's having created common and rigorous standards in pursuit of equity and access to excellence were the following items and associated combined significant and extremely significant findings: established International Baccalaureate program at Seminole High School (75%), school district designated academically high performing (85%), and focus on the future to prepare students for careers and colleges, 2010-2011 (67%). Respondents to the equity and access to excellence survey also acknowledged the important decision of the target school district to move toward developing and requiring end of course exams. Additionally, the target school district event, graduation rate reaches all-time high, 2009, which earned a combined significant and extremely significant rating of (85%), was perceived by teachers as notable and was the result of school district efforts to ensure common and rigorous standards. Interviewee 2 referenced the vital importance for school district leaders, building level administrators, and classroom teachers to "Set high expectations."

Second, Childress et al. (2009) cited the need for school and school district leaders to ensure that there was an appropriate curriculum alignment from Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 for successful student development. The target school district's strategic plan reaffirmed the school district's commitment to providing all students with a rigorous curriculum and "a high quality educational program that includes or extends

beyond the Sunshine State Standards and the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS)," (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 2). One of the primary strategies of the target school district, according to its Strategic Plan, was to "align instruction to the NGSSS using research-based instructional strategies to support thinking, teamwork, and technology (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 4). In reference to the second theme offered by Childress et al. (2009), Interviewee 5 associated what she termed "positive changes in student performance and achievement" with teachers developing classroom lessons aligned to high standards and a rigorous curriculum.

School district leaders have ensured the existence of appropriate curriculum alignment. This was apparent as indicated by the perceptions of survey respondents. Examples of this alignment were found in the combined significant and extremely significant support noted for reading becomes the centerpiece in high schools, 2005 (65%); Triple 'A' experience embedded in the school culture (64%); Three Ts, teamwork, thinking, technology embedded into culture (39%); and k-12 focus launched 2006-07 (19%). In referencing teacher access to technology, parent-teacher collaboration, and instructional planning, Interviewee 2 acknowledged that teacher "access to Performance Matters and now Skyward allows them to readily pull up data on students in order to plan appropriately and effectively."

The third theme cited by Childress et al. (2009) and supported by Fullan (2002) and Little (1990) acknowledged the need for school district and school leaders to provide access to teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders to work collaboratively

in achieving school district goals. In its 10 guiding principles, the target school district's Strategic Plan stated that it "will involve and collaboratively work with all stakeholders including parents, students, teachers, administrators, staff, the professional associations representing employees, local governments, business, and the community" (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 2). According to its Strategic Plan, the target school district intended to accomplish this through the following actions:

1. Maintain and support the Business Advisory Board.
2. Provide opportunities for public participation in various decision making processes.
3. Maintain and support the Dividends school volunteer program.
4. Maintain and support parent/teacher organizations, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), and the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA).
5. Maintain and support efforts to educate/lobby legislative leaders.
6. Maintain and support the role of the School Advisory Councils. (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 2)

The importance for school district leaders to collaborate with community stakeholders and involve them in achieving school district goals was also reflected in the results of the survey of teacher perceptions. The school district offered the following examples of community involvement: community college/school district partnership identified as #1 in the nation, 2009 (82% combined significant and extremely significant rating), established principal forum (30%), 2004, and the decision of school district leaders resulting in Central Florida Public School Board Coalition established, 2004 (6%). Though these activities were somewhat removed from the classroom, and many surveyed teachers expressed no knowledge of them, they represent collaborative efforts in the school district. Improving the extent to which teachers are aware of and involved

in collaborative community ventures would be a reasonable future goal for the school district. Teachers also recommended that leaders in the target school district design and implement "performance plans that include a role for teachers, school support programs, students, and their parents." That would represent a collaborative effort encouraging community involvement. Interviewee 7 encouraged school district leaders to include classroom teachers in the decision making process when designing and implementing content specific programs.

Interviewees acknowledged the importance and challenges of enhancing collaborative efforts between the school community, students, and parents. According to interviewees, the most prevalent challenge associated with student performance and achievement was with regard to parental involvement and home environment. Additionally, Interviewee 5 expressed that a language barrier and the inability of parents whose primary language was not English, as plausible reasons for why some students may not receive much needed home support with their school work. Similarly in addressing the challenges associated with a student's home life, Interviewee 7 perceived economic hardships as a detriment to student achievement. She asserted, "Kids have so much more to worry about than leaders today realize. No power [electricity] at home, not enough food, these are concerns for students in my school."

A fourth theme recognized by Childress et al. (2009) was that school district and school leaders must set high expectations for themselves and for teachers. Childress et al. also cited that all persons involved in student learning should be collectively accountable.

The seventh guiding principle of the target school district's Strategic Plan to Ensure School District Wide Excellence and Equity affirmed that all members of the school community shall "work together as a team to accomplish its mission by being collectively committed, jointly supportive, and mutually accountable" (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 2). Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that the most successful schools were those that implemented professional learning communities and teachers took collective, not just individual, responsibility for student learning.

Evidence that school district leaders had set high expectations and demanded collective accountability was indicated in both survey results and interviews. Examples included survey results of combined significant and significant ratings for: All middle schools earn A's in 2006 (70%) and graduation rate reaches all-time high, 2009 (85%). Although nearly half of respondents to the survey indicated no knowledge of item 20, school district "A" each year of accountability, this particular example represents evidence of collaborative efforts in the school district to set high expectations. Interviewee 5 acknowledged what she called "positive changes" in student performance and achievement. Additionally, also reflective of this theme, the following open-ended responses to the survey were offered: "Hold parents accountable for their child's attendance and actions" and "Intervention strategies that include a team approach to meeting with parents for issues of poor attendance and/or academic achievement."

Fifth, Childress et al. (2009) argued that school district and school leaders and teachers must be committed to breaking the links between race and class and academic

achievement. To accomplish this, the target school district identified in its Strategic Plan a performance objective to decrease the disparity in performance of adequate yearly progress (AYP) subgroups and reduce the number of schools in Differentiated Accountability (DA) (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 5).

Additional evidence acknowledging the breaking of links between race and class and academic achievement, as offered by Childress et al. (2009), and specific to the combined significant and extremely significant results of the survey of teacher perceptions, included the following decisions and actions: Summer transition program for incoming 9th graders implemented, 2009 (64%), designed to provide additional academic support to at risk students, school rezoning (67%), and school district leadership action resulting in Unitary status achieved March 21, 2006 (24%).

Interviewee 3 shared, "all students are created equal" and also expressed that as such "all students should be prepared to go to college." She also advocated the need for school district leaders to explore creating vocational programs and developing multiple diploma tracks as a means to prepare students who may not enter college directly after high school, for an opportunity to compete in the work force. One of the most recent examples of school district leadership decisions and actions to break the link between race and class and academic achievement was the event, Advanced Placement exams reach 11,000 test takers, 2010 which garnered a combined significant and extremely significant perception of 79% in measuring school district efforts toward achieving equity and access to excellence. AP student achievement data as did one survey respondent

indicated that the work in this area was not yet complete and further recommended that school district leaders continue to "close the achievement gap among black students, Hispanic students, students from low income families, and students with disabilities." Additionally, Interviewee 6 also qualified this concern in her statement, "I do believe that the district is helping close the achievement gap but we are not there yet." Interviewee 2 echoed similar sentiments, in her statement, "The district has made strides and efforts to close the achievement gaps." She encouraged additional support in the following areas: Continuous teacher professional trainings, access to educational funding, and developing a progress tracking system to easily identify struggling and at-risk learners. Interviewee 7 perceived the efforts of school district leaders to close the achievement gap as desirable, but also expressed concern that high teacher turnover rates may be a challenge in the pursuit for equity and access to excellence.

The sixth and final recommendation offered by Childress et al. (2009) proclaimed that when school districts reach their goal of providing rigorous and equitable access to education, regardless of race, ethnicity, or family income, the school district as a whole must acknowledge that setting high expectations and demanding excellence and equity matters. The target school district identified two priorities in its Strategic Plan: Excellence and Equity. According to the Strategic Plan, the first priority, excellence, stipulated "High standards and expectations for student performance, quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, and a professional high quality workforce" (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p.3). Interviewee 6 acknowledged, "A teacher who provides high level

questioning with charts and rubrics creates a friendly guide for a child to follow to be successful." The second priority, equity, asserted "High standards of excellence for all student sub-groups, diversity in school district leadership, school student enrollment, and instructional support/staffing, and finally, higher average test scores combined with a tighter range of scores and decreased variance in scores for all sub-groups" (Seminole County Public Schools, 2011b, p. 3). The Strategic Plan was voted on and later adopted by the school board of the target school district. The school district identified the following as its core beliefs:

1. A quality education is the fundamental right of every child.
2. Every student will have the opportunity to succeed.
3. Clear school district priorities are essential to improving student achievement.
4. The school district will celebrate its success, but also continuously identify areas in need of improvement. (SCPS, 2011b, p. 1)

The final core theme offered by Childress et al. (2009) cited the critical need for the school district as a whole to acknowledge that setting high expectations and demanding excellence and equity matters was reflected in decisions, actions, and events that have taken place in the target school district. One example, acknowledged in the results of the survey of teacher perceptions was, school district designated academically high performing. Approximately 85% of survey respondents perceived this particular school district leadership event as indicative of progressive efforts toward achieving equity and access to excellence.

It is clear that further monitoring and supportive work is needed to ensure that excellence in practice is occurring across the entire school district, in every school, and in

every classroom. Interviewee 5 stated, "I feel that there is much more to do." If educators truly believe that all students can learn, they must not accept, nor should they tolerate, any variation in practice that leads to variation in student success. Information collected from survey respondents and interviewees acknowledged the important efforts made by the target school district in pursuit of equity and access to excellence, but also expressed areas of concern, and provided critical feedback on assessing and solving current issues and trends facing the education community today and the students that they serve.

Researchers of leadership effectiveness, Waters and Marzano (2006), have found that "there is a positive relationship between district-level leadership and student achievement" (p. 20). This was also acknowledged by interviewees. Interviewees noted school district leadership impact on such areas as: The subject matter, curriculum development and alignment, professional development training for teachers, enhancing technology avenues for parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to collaborate, report, and monitor student academic progress, and other implications. Studies and findings by Waters et al. (2003) have consistently reported that leadership was a defining characteristic of successful schools. The most successful schools, as offered by Waters et al. 2003, were those that had bold leaders with bold ideas who offered a new set of lens on assessing and solving concerns of critical importance to student achievement and access to equity and excellence.

Second-order change leadership requires the partnership of individuals and groups of stakeholders to develop new skills and learn new approaches to solving problems and attaining positive results. This concept holds true for students. According to Interviewee 3, "students need to learn skills that will help them become independent successful adults." Interviewee 7 acknowledged the importance of ensuring that curriculum material is engaging and relevant to student experiences. Sustained improvement and continuously embedding of second-order leadership in the culture of education as a whole requires the full support of teachers, administrators, parents, and the community at-large. Stakeholders must first recognize that there is a need for improvement and agree that regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability, the success of every child is a shared responsibility and that all involved parties are mutually and collectively accountable.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research in examining the impact of school district efforts to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students should include a more detailed and narrowed scope of examination. Although this research study revealed educationally important findings from a holistic perspective in a single school district, future studies should assess individual school populations of diverse learners.
2. Future research should take into account school district efforts to ensure equity by examining student discipline data, such as number of referrals, and

related discipline infractions and consequences for subgroups, e.g., ethnicity, ESE, and free and reduced-price lunch.

3. Future research in this subject area should be validated and measured based on student achievement assessment results in assessing school district, school, and individual student improvement.
4. Another avenue for future research to broaden and support claims found in this study would be to assess student achievement beyond high school. Future studies should examine what percentage of subgroup populations have entered college or a trade school, and have graduated from a college/university or career training institution.
5. Future research should also examine to what extent school boards decisions and actions impact equity and access to excellence for students.

Summary

This study has added to the body of knowledge on how to achieve equity and access to excellence and by doing so enhance learning opportunities for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. This study has also provided school district leaders in the target school district with an assessment of school district efforts to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, student disability, and socioeconomic status. Educators at all levels of the profession are responsible for preparing students to become well-rounded citizens in a global and competitive market. For this to take place, all educators must join the

challenge of equity and access to excellence for all students in pursuit of closing the achievement gap.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY OF EQUITY AND ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHERS

Section I

Directions: Please check the appropriate box that best describes you for questions 1 through 5 and fill in the blank for question 6.

1. Were you consistently employed with Seminole County Public Schools from 2003-2011?

- ☐ Yes – Please continue with the survey
- ☐ No – Thank you.

2. Ethnicity

- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Multi-racial
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Other

3. Gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

4. Current position

- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Dean
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ School district Instructional Administrator
- ☐ School district Operational Administrator

5. Select the grade range that most represents the grades served in your current position.

- ☐ Pk-2
- ☐ Pk-5
- ☐ 6-8
- ☐ 6-12
- ☐ 9-12
- ☐ Pk-12
- ☐ N/A.

6. Highest Degree Earned
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Education Specialist Degree
- ☐ Doctoral Degree

7. What year were you first appointed as a teacher in this school district? _____

8. Percent of students who have free/reduced lunch at my school
- ☐ Below 40%
- ☐ 40-49%
- ☐ 50-59%
- ☐ 60-69%
- ☐ 70% or more

Section II

Directions: For each item, check how significant each item was in contributing to the achievement of equity and access to excellence. 4 = extremely significant, 3 = significant, 2 = insignificant, 1 = extremely insignificant and 0 = no knowledge.

		Extremely significant 4	significant 3	insignificant 2	Extremely insignificant 1	no knowledge 0
9.	Superintendent leadership transition in 2003 (Dr. Hagerty to Dr. Vogel)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	"Triple A" experience embedded in the school culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	Reading becomes the centerpiece in high schools, 2005	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	Florida Center for Reading Research High School Project	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	Highest salary increases ever/schedules restructured 2005-06	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	Established Principal Forum, 2004	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15.	Central Florida Public School Board Coalition established, 2004	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	K-12 Focus launched 2006-07 school system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	School rezoning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18.	History making goals established, 2007	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	Launched virtual school, 2008-2009	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	Succession planning in process, 2008-2009	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.	Summer transition program for incoming 9th graders implemented, 2009	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.	Established Crooms Academy for Technology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.	Three "T"s, teamwork, thinking, technology embedded into culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.	Established International Baccalaureate program at Seminole High School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25.	Focus on the Future to prepare students for careers and colleges, 2010-2011	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26.	Strategic Plan 2.0 with new history making goals under construction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27.	Unitary status achieved March 21, 2006	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28.	All middle schools earn A's in 2006	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29.	School district designated Academically high performing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30.	School district "A" each year of accountability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31.	Graduation rate reaches all-time high, 2009	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32.	Advanced Placement exams reach 11,000 test takers, 2010	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33.	Community College/School School district partnership identified as #1 in the nation, 2009	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34.	SAT scores reach all-time high with 64% test takers, 2010	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section III

Directions: please provide any additional information for questions 33 through 36 that will assist the researcher in understanding the school district's journey towards equity and access to excellence.

35. Please list any significant events, decisions or programs that you perceive to be significant in achieving equity and access to excellence for all students which were not included in Section II.

36. From 2003 through 2011 what challenges do you believe the school district encountered related to achieving social justice of equity and access to excellence for all students?

37. What other actions or strategies would you recommend for any school district to take who wants to provide equity and access to excellence for all students?

Section IV.

If you would like to participate in a confidential follow-up interview please provide your name and contact information.

Name:
Email:
Best telephone number to reach you:
Best time to call:
Best day to call:

Thank you for your participation in this survey

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FOR SURVEY

Dear Educator:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important study about the leadership your school district took to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. You are among approximately 1300 teachers invited to provide input. You will be asked to take a survey. The purpose of this survey is to determine the perception of teachers on the school district's efforts to provide equity and access to excellence for all students. Participants must have been employed with Seminole County Public Schools consecutively from 2003 to 2011. You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. The study is entitled, Teachers Perceptions' of Actions to Achieve Equity and Access to Excellence in a Large School district.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Whether or not you take part, is up to you. You may select to participate now or at a later period, or change your mind while in the process of participating in the study. There is no consequence for your acceptance or rejection to participate in the study. The survey will be anonymous. Your identity will not be known to the researcher unless you have a desire to be interviewed at a later period. If you desire an interview, you will have an opportunity to participate in the interview component of the study. Individual participant responses will not be shared with the school district. The school district will be provided a summative analysis of all participant responses combined.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits to participating in this study. There is a one month window in which to complete the online survey in order for your input to be included in the study. The survey should take approximately 10-30 minutes to complete. Please type and access the following website to take the survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ucfedu

If you have any questions in regards to this study please do not hesitate to contact me at sidney_moss@knights.ucf.edu. My faculty advisor, Dr. Rosemarye Taylor, may be contacted by phone at (407) 823-1469 or by email at rosemarye.taylor@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the UCF Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Central Florida, Office of Research and Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The phone numbers are (407) 823-2901 or (407) 882-2276.

By going to the survey link, you are consenting to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without consequence. If you choose to withdraw your consent, please contact me using the provided email address. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your time and effort are appreciated.

Best Regards,

Sidney Moss, Jr., Principal Investigator
Doctoral Candidate, University of Central Florida
954-288-2764

APPENDIX C
LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

May 9, 2012

Dear….

I am a dean at Teague Middle School and a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida in the Executive Leadership ED.D. program in the College of Education. Recently, Dr. Bill Vogel, reached out to Dr. Taylor for assistance in objectively assessing the contributions and efforts that the school district has made in providing access and equity for all students in the Seminole community. I have been working very closely with my advisor, Dr. Taylor, in formulating a survey on teacher perceptions of decisions, actions, and events similar to the one administrators responded to in late 2011.

The survey has been approved by Dr. Anna-Marie Cote. It is my sincere hope that this study will add to the body of knowledge on how to achieve equity and access to excellence and by doing so enhance learning opportunities for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.

I appreciate the fact that this time of the school year is very demanding and that you are charged with completing many tasks. I would kindly ask that you please distribute the attached informed consent forms to the teachers at your school and encourage their participation. All they need to do is go to the link on the informed consent letter. The survey should take approximately 10-30 minutes to complete. If you would like to preview the survey you may do so by visiting the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ucfedu

If I could be of any assistance or should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Mr. Sidney Moss, Jr.
Dean of Students
Seminole County Public Schools
Teague Middle School

APPENDIX D
AUTHOR'S PERMISSION TO MODIFY SURVEY

FROM: Name: Sidney Moss, Jr. DATE: January 16, 2012

Address: 905 Lake Lily Drive
Apt. C359
Maitland, FL 32751

TO: Name: Paul Wilhite

Address: 1901 Choctaw Trail
Maitland, FL 32751

I am preparing for publication:

(1) an original work entitled: Teachers' Perceptions of Actions to Achieve Equity and Access to Excellence in a Large School District
(2) as part of a work entitled: Survey of Actions to Achieve Equity and Access to Excellence
edited by Sidney Moss, Jr.
(3) as part of a research proposal published by the University of Central Florida, College of Education, 4000 Central Florida Blvd Orlando, FL 32816

I request your permission to include the following in the work referred to above, in all subsequent editions of the work and in all derivative works based on the work, in any and all media of expression now known or later developed and in all languages, to be published the University of Central Florida

Survey of Equity and Access to Excellence Developed

I will include the words: "Reproduced by permission of Paul Wilhite."

Please would you therefore confirm the owner of the publishing rights to be quoted as granting permission? Please indicate your agreement by signing and returning the enclosed copy of this form. In signing, you warrant that you are the sole owner of the rights granted and that your material does not infringe upon the copyright or other rights of anyone. If you do not control these rights, I would appreciate you letting me know to whom I should apply.

We hereby grant permission for the use of the material requested above.

Publishing Rights Holder Paul Wilhite

Date 5-4-12 Signed P Wilhite

APPENDIX E
SCHOOL DISTRICT PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

May 10, 2012

Mr. Sidney Moss
905 Lake Lily Drive
Apt. C359
Maitland, FL 32751

Dear Mr. Moss,

I am in receipt of the proposal and supplemental information that you submitted for permission to conduct research in the Seminole County Public Schools. After review of these documents, it has been determined that you are granted permission to conduct the study described in these documents under the conditions described herein.

The school principal has the authority to decide if he/she wishes to participate in your study. Therefore, your first order of business is to contact the principals of the 16 schools listed in your research packet and explain your project and seek permission to conduct the research. You are expected to make appointments in advance to accommodate the administration and/or staff for research time.

Please forward a summary of your project to my office upon completion.
Good Luck!

Sincerely,

Anna-Marie Cote, Ed.D.
Deputy Superintendent
Instructional Excellence and Equity

AMC/jr

APPENDIX F
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

University of Central Florida

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Sidney Moss Jr. and Co-PI: Rosemarye T. Taylor

Date: April 25, 2012

Dear Researcher:

On 4/25/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

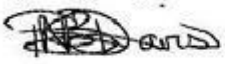
Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE EQUITY AND ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE IN A LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Investigator:	Sidney Moss Jr.
IRB Number:	SBE-12-08338
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis on 04/25/2012 11:49:59 AM EDT



IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX G
INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Research Questions and Follow-up Interview Questions

Research Questions	Follow-up Interview Questions
1. What are the school district second-order change decisions that are known or perceived by teachers to have led to progress in achieving equity and access to excellence in a large school district?	Do you personally think that school district leadership decisions directly impact student achievement in the classroom? In your professional opinion and given your tenure in the school district from 2003 to 2011, what areas or groups of students have historically not benefited significantly from a quality education? What specific decisions made by school district leaders' do you feel have widened opportunities for these students and what if any were their impact on achieving equity and access to excellence?
2. Between 2003 and 2011 to what extent were the significant events known or perceived by teachers to have contributed to achievement of equity and access to excellence for pre-kindergarten-12 grade students?	Have you noticed or observed changes in student performance/achievement or student and teacher access to educational resources in your tenure with the school district? What do you attribute those changes to?
3. What were the perceived challenges by teachers in creating equity and access to excellence and to what extent were these perceived challenges for all students addressed between 2003 and 2011 in the target school district as determined by teacher perception?	In your professionally opinion, what challenges do you feel impact schools and student performance the most? Do you feel that school district leaders' have made significant efforts in addressing these challenges?
4. What are teachers' perceived recommendations for further improvement with regard to achieving excellence and equity for all students?	Do you feel that the school district has made significant efforts in closing the achievement gap? What recommendations would you suggest to school district leaders' that may further improve equity and access to excellence to all students that may not have been indicated in the survey?

APPENDIX H
INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS

Dear Educator:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important study about your school district's journey took to achieve equity and access to excellence for all students. The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of the school district's efforts to provide equity and access to excellence for all students. Participants must have been employed with Seminole County Public Schools consecutively from 2003 to 2011. You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. The study is entitled, Teachers Perceptions' of Actions to Achieve Equity and Access to Excellence in a Large School district.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Whether or not you take part, is up to you. You may select to participate now or at a later period, or change your mind while in the process of participating in the study. There is no consequence for your acceptance or rejection to participate in the study.

The interview is confidential and your identity will be known only to the researcher. The interview will be recorded but only for the purpose of insuring that the researcher is accurate in reporting the information resulting from the interviews. The interview data and findings will be reported in aggregate, not individually. The interview is expected to last about 15-20 minutes.

If you have any questions in regards to this study please do not hesitate to contact me at sidney_moss@knights.ucf.edu. My faculty advisor, Dr. Rosemarye Taylor, may be contacted by phone at (407) 823-1469 or by email at rosemarye.taylor@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the UCF Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Central Florida, Office of Research and Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The phone numbers are (407) 823-2901 or (407) 882-2276.

Best Regards,

Sidney Moss, Jr., Principal Investigator
Doctoral Candidate, University of Central Florida
954-288-2764
905 Lake Lily Drive
Apt. C359
Maitland, FL 32751

APPENDIX I
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW QUESTION 1

Do you personally think that school district leadership decisions directly impact student achievement in the classroom? In your professional opinion and given your tenure in the district from 2003 to 2011, what groups of students have historically not benefited significantly from a quality education? What specific decisions made by school district leaders' do you feel have widened opportunities for these students and what if, any, were their impact on achieving equity and access to excellence?

Interviewee 1

"Yes, I do think that district leadership decisions impact student achievement in the classroom."

"Poverty level and who have undiagnosed learning disabilities."

Interviewee 2

"It is my tentative assumption that school district leaders indirectly impact student achievement in the classroom. Teachers directly impact student achievement. African-American, Economical disadvantaged, Hispanic, and student with disabilities historically have not benefited significantly from a quality education. This information is revealed in the schools individualized 'school improvement plan' and the schools accountability reports."

"District decisions that have had an impact on achieving equity and access to excellence are Instructional leadership: Employing highly qualified teachers, fostering an environment in which the faculty and staff are role models and are a representation of the student body."

"Schools should continue to implement professional learning communities that allows for collaboration and sharing of best practices, which will directly impact student achievement."

"Instructional focus: Professional development Training on effective teaching – Differentiated Instructions challenge the multiple intelligences. Kagan. Cooperative learning groups. Marzano."

"Academic Interventionist Specialist on campus who works directly with At-risk students on a daily basis. This will provide the students with the additional support that they may need."

"Provide funding for the Lead to Read or after school/ morning tutorial which are standard specific. In addition, transportation must be provided as well."

"Safe & orderly learning environment"

"Security officers, deans, faculty, and staff conducting monitoring duty"

"Displayed classroom rules and student's expectation"

"Daily routines which enhance the student's familiarity"

"Student Expectation: Set high expectations "Goals, objective, mission statement - Marzano."

"Employ motivated teachers who express mutually respect for every student."

"Offer cultural sensitivity training. Ruby Payne."

Interviewee 3

"The decisions the district leadership makes impact the subject matter the teachers must teach students."

"Students who have not benefited from a quality education are those who are not committed to school or the idea of learning."

"Struggling students who have no desire to attend college but would rather seek a vocational career also suffer because they are required to take classes that have no relevance to their future."

"I feel the subject matter we are required to teach is not beneficial to the special students that I teach or many in the general population. My students already have behavioral problems and many are behind academically because of these problems, their lack of commitment and interest or their intellectual abilities. They are required to take courses that will are not beneficial or needed for their future occupation or life."

"Many students do not want to attend college, need to go to college and no matter what 'NO Child Left Behind' has to say have the abilities to attend college. Many students need to learn skills that will help them become independent successful adults."

Interviewee 4

"Depends on the decision. I believe that some personnel at the district level still do have children at the heart of their decisions, but sadly, I feel that many have lost the sense of the day-to-day practical applications that reach students where they most need it. In my opinion, there is a lot more politics going on than we realize or perhaps care to admit."

"In this geographic area, I feel that the demographic being under-served is second generation Hispanics: Students who neither place in a supporting ESOL program, nor do they speak English fluently. They are under-reached because they are second generation speakers meaning that they weren't born here but were raised here. However their parents maintain their heritage language. The district does not know how to properly place them or meet their needs. This includes teacher training."

"Our ESOL Department does offer extensive teacher training for those content area teachers that have regular contact with ESOL students in the program. However, this does not cover all teachers. Also, this assumes that the 'trained' teachers will put into practice what they have learned but it cannot be monitored."

Interviewee 5

"I personally think that district leadership decisions are related to student achievement. Many decisions made by the district level affect students' achievement, particularly economic disadvantage students. Also, not taken in consideration a diverse cultural factor."

"The important role that school leaders play in school effectiveness can offer valuable insight in how school leaders actually can make a difference."

"The areas or groups of students that have not benefited significantly from a quality education I believe that it is greatly those that are impacted by low economic disadvantaged, residential location and by language - these are black and Hispanic groups. They more frequently lack assistance at home because it is common for the parents to not understand the work that is in English. Students from disadvantaged families' academic experience and the lack of resources impact these groups."

Interviewee 6

"I believe that all students benefit from a quality education. Education has changed 100% in the last few years. According to Robert Marzano, the framework for effective teaching lies in the teacher recognizing the individual strengths and weaknesses in each child. Logical planning by creating learning goals and tracking student progress is the

key as well as celebrating student progress is the key to success. To be a fully effective educator, I believe that we need to teach the whole child."

"Historically we teach all social economic groups but with all the new changes I am not sure that they are all benefiting."

Interviewee 7

"Yes, leadership decisions directly impact student achievement."

"In my opinion, the economically disadvantaged students have suffered the most when it comes to educational success."

"The choice of programs to use in the classroom has been to the detriment of these students due to the lack of experiences outside of school they are afforded."

Interviewee 8

"Most assuredly, district leadership decisions do directly impact student achievement in the classroom."

"Although, I am most professionally familiar with ESE E/BD students, it can be argued, that they have historically not benefited significantly from a quality education. That being said, I do not believe that any subgroup of students has benefited from district leadership decisions. In my humble professional opinion, I believe that any benefits to the students of the district, if any, were experienced in spite of unfunded legislative mandates, failure to stem the erosion of local control, emphasis on and expansion of standardized testing, required remedial classes, narrowing of curricula, erosion of teachers' academic freedom with scripted lessons, etc."

INTERVIEW QUESTION 2

Have you noticed or observed changes in student performance/achievement or student and teacher access to educational resources in your tenure with the district? What do you attribute those changes to?

Interviewee 1

"Yes."

"Child motivation, immediate and positive feedback by the classroom teacher, tangible rewards, quick reinforcements, and immediate verbal feedback."

Interviewee 2

"Teachers have more access to student's data which will assist them with planning their lessons and it will allow them to gain a glimpse into the whole child. Teachers access to Performance Matters and now Skyward allows them to readily pull up data on students in order to plan appropriately and effectively. It also serves as a great tool for parent assess. It enhances the collaboration amongst the parents and the schools, which will correlate to student achievement."

Interviewee 3

"I find many of my students are not as successful in class because they are not able to keep up with the work. I am required to keep up with the algebra curriculum even though it moves at too fast a pace for my students and does not allow me to individualize."

"There are more resources available than ever before because of the internet."

Interviewee 4

"Yes, more positive changes have occurred by utilizing technology in the classroom in schools where it has been provided. In addition, practice materials purchased for the specific purpose of improving reading comprehension was successful in FCAT scores."

Interviewee 5

"Yes, I have noticed changes and positive changes in student performance and achievement. These changes are due to professional development trainings teachers are participating. Second, developing lessons that are align to high standards. Third and not least, the most significant gains in student achievement will likely be realized when students receive instruction from good teachers over consecutive years - teachers' content knowledge."

Interviewee 6

"Yes, education has changed."

"Student performance and achievement is truly effective when a child can monitor their own progress."

"A teacher who provides high level questioning with charts and rubrics creates a friendly guide for a child to follow to be successful."

"Changes have occurred in recent years with teacher access to educational resources and money including politics which makes it difficult for this theory to work."

Interviewee 7

"I have noticed a change in student performance due to the limiting of teacher choice in materials. Our hands are tied to specific materials I attribute to a 'one-size-fits-all' mentality on the part of district leaders. These limits are becoming a serious issue in dealing with students who do not have the same life experiences as others."

Interviewee 8

"From what I can see, student performance and achievement has been static, even considering the suspect method of measuring it."

"Student and teacher access to educational resources have increased as the market has grown. Follow the money."

INTERVIEW QUESTION 3

In your professional opinion, what challenges do you feel impact schools and student performance the most? Do you feel that school district leaders' have made significant efforts in addressing these challenges?

Interviewee 1

"There is no one particular challenge."

"Some students miss that home support."

"Like ESOL, the more tools on your belt the better you are."

"Teachers just want support from their administrators. It doesn't have to be money. Verbal, not monetary."

Interviewee 2

"The challenges that impact schools and student performance the most is adequate training for teachers, time and funding."

"There are a variety of innovative and creative activities for teachers to utilize in their classroom, however continuous training would be a must to support veteran teachers and those who struggle with technology."

"The classrooms are not keeping up with the technological homes in which most of the students reside."

Interviewee 3

"That all students are created equal and that all students should be prepared to go to college."

"We have made vocational training a dirty word and many students drop out because they are not able to meet the academic challenges given to them."

Interviewee 4

"The number one challenge for students is parental involvement and home environment. In my 7 years with the district, I have noticed that students bring their family drama into the classrooms with them. Many of them have personal obstacles to overcome that stem from family issues. I am of the opinion that parents should be the first and primary teacher, but many parents and students that I have serviced feel that education should be the local school's responsibility. They adopt a 'hands-off' mentality either resorting to threatening the student if he or she doesn't perform to the schools standards or taking a complete opposite approach, not caring at all what goes on with their child from 9am to 4pm"

Interviewee 5

"We have to work more to have schools with better student perceptions of the teaching climate. We know our students; we teach them based on their individual needs, but how we are going to improve all students' achievement while reducing the academic achievement disparity. Many leaders are ignoring that not always cooperative learning works, that not always putting chair in a circle works."

"Students are feeling more pressure as well as teachers on the process of teaching and learning. The accelerated changes educators are facing are implemented without involving a whole school community and not understanding the student academic motivation and academic performance over time."

Interviewee 6

"The challenges our schools and students face the most today are: Lack of parent involvement, poverty and apathy."

"I work at a Title I school. Parents mean well and they want to help but most families are one parent homes and just surviving to put food on the table."

"By allowing us to become a Title I school we are able to meet federal requirements that allow us extra funds to help our students."

Interviewee 7

"I feel there are several challenges facing the students in my school."

"First and foremost, teacher turnover." Two years ago we had over 30 new teachers on our campus, many with limited to no experience. Last year the number of 'new to our school' employees topped 35."

"Experienced teachers are leaving, why?"

"Studies show that it takes 3 to 5 years for teachers to perfect techniques, year after year of new teachers never lets the best practices come through."

"Another challenge is student engagement with materials that are uninteresting. Students can't relate to them. The stories are so old that students must be taught a history lesson in order to relate or overused texts titles in the reading program that students have already read or had read to them in previous years."

"The inability to select material that I use in the classroom, rather that stories that are selected for me tramples on my professionalism in knowing what will work with my students."

Interviewee 8

"The major challenge facing schools and student performance is the effects of poverty on members of our public school communities."

"District leaders are due some credit toward ameliorating the effects of poverty through the magnet school policies enacted in the northern reaches of the district, but should be faulted for their failure to resist having students, schools, and districts graded based on standardized tests that. As a result, that data is used to erode local control over education policy."

INTERVIEW QUESTION 4

Do you feel that the school district has made significant efforts in closing the achievement gap? What recommendations would you suggest to school district leaders' that may further improve equity and access to excellence to all students that may not have been indicated in the survey?

Interviewee 1

"They do all they can."

"Kids can't be left behind. They are in the world of technology."

"Title 1 money is drying up."

Interviewee 2

"The district has made strides and efforts to close the achievement gaps; however additional support in the following area will enhance equity and access to excellence."

"Take the teachers on a bus tour so that they can become familiar with their students' community. They will have a better understanding of the whole child."

"Continue to sponsor the teacher- mentoring programs that focus on classroom management/discipline. This is important because students cannot comprehend the instructional materials if they are not in a suitable learning environment."

"Sustain funding to enhance the students learning environment."

"Promote the creation of a "hot list" for students-so that teachers can know their targeted students."

Interviewee 3

"No."

"Too much time is spent on level one student's who may not have the abilities to reach level 2 or 3 and they are dropping out because we expect more than they are able to achieve. Level 2 or 3 students might have the abilities to move ahead if given the extra attention we give the level one student's."

"Have another diploma track. One for college bound, one for those students focusing more on vocational trade upon graduation, and one for special diploma. There are some individuals with lower IQ's and we should not frustrate them by teaching subjects they can never understand or use in life."

Interviewee 4

"I believe that the district and individual schools as well as select principals and many teachers have bent over backwards to do more than enough documentation, accommodations, differentiated learning, etc., that the leaders have become the ones to do all the 'work' rather than the students. While I don't mean that teachers aren't required to try and meet student needs, I do believe there is such a thing as 'good old fashioned hard work,' which many of our young people aren't taught to do these days. So by teachers carrying the brunt of the 'thinking work,' students are left off the hook to allow adults to do the thinking for them."

Interviewee 5

"I feel that there is much more to do."

"My recommendations are to: Provide more orientation to the minority groups -black and Hispanic students. Students with a task goal orientation will feel motivated by a desire to increase their knowledge on a subject."

"Students need to feel a sense of competence. Schools should provide more programs that contribute to students' motivation."

"Finally, there should be 'fair' expanded ways to measure excellence."

Interviewee 6

"Yes, I do believe that the district is helping to close the achievement gap but we are not there yet."

"But teacher instruction is moving in that direction."

"We are now more data driven."

"We are tracking our students better and the addition of Reading Coaches and Math Coaches with intensive classes is helping."

Interviewee 7

"I'm sure the district does want to close the achievement gap."

"There are several things the leaders must keep in mind. First, kids have so much more to worry about than leaders today realize. No power [electricity] at home, not enough food, these are concerns for students in my school. Students have a hard time understanding why it is important to analyze why some ancient Indian wrote an article when they face so many real troubles in their lives."

"We are not a business, if students were blueberry muffins and mealy bugs were in the flour, we'd send it back. We can't send back the ingredients we receive; we have to figure out how to make it work: 350 degrees for 30 minutes isn't the answer to the perfect student."

"Finally, don't tell teachers how to do the job; we went to college, earned the degree, and you hired us to do the job. Let us do it. Trust us to be professional."

Interviewee 8

"As mentioned previously, district leaders are due some credit toward ameliorating the effects of poverty through magnet school policies in the northern reaches of the district."

"I would recommend, and have repeatedly recommended, that district leaders become more proactive and vocal in their support of candidates to statewide offices who value the best interests of the members of district public school communities over their political self interests and the interests of a particular political party."

APPENDIX J
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Figure 2: Leadership responsibilities and practice, p. 15–16 from *School district leadership that works: The effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement.*

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