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LITERACY INSTRUCTION, PERSONNEL, AND GOVERNANCE IN STATE-DESIGNATED HIGHEST AND LOWEST PERFORMING SCHOOLS

by

Deborah L. Earley

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of

The College of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

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LITERACY INSTRUCTION, PERSONNEL, AND GOVERNANCE IN STATE-DESIGNATED HIGHEST AND LOWEST PERFORMING SCHOOLS

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Jane B. Matanzo, Department of Teacher Education, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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ABSTRACT

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The A+ Plan for Education (A+ Plan), the basis of Florida’s school accountability system, was instituted in 1999. Public schools are graded from highest (A) to lowest (F) based on student performance on the statewide assessment, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). This study investigated the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures between Florida public schools graded A and F.

Twenty-six randomly selected schools from 15 school districts agreed to participate. Three groups of participants (N = 136) were associated with the participating schools: 1) Grades 3 – 10 classroom teachers who taught reading, writing, and/or language arts during the 2001-02 school year; 2) the principal for each school; and 3) the District Director of Curriculum or equivalent position. Teacher participants (n = 107) responded to the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey. This survey collected data concerning the frequency of use of instructional practices related to literacy in six

T-tests were employed to compare the Composite mean scores for the A and F school teacher participants (α = .05). Results revealed no significant differences in the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices between A and F schools. Responses to open-ended questions reported narrowing of curriculum to skills tested by the FCAT and principal expectations to teach to the test.

Principal participants (n = 17) and district-level participants (n = 12) completed surveys concerning personnel and school governance practices. Descriptive analyses revealed that 50% of F schools employed Title I literacy teachers compared to 8% of A schools. All principals used informal classroom observation and student achievement on FCAT to evaluate literacy personnel performance. Collaboration among district staff, principals, and teachers concerning school governance decisions was reported.

Findings of this study imply that factors other than the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices are affecting a school's grade. Also, high-stakes assessment is impacting curriculum and instruction at A and F schools.

Recommendations are made for future research.
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In loving memory of Grandma Bray
Chapter One

Introduction

The Florida State Legislature enacted the Bush/Brogan A+ Plan for Education (A+ Plan) in 1999. The A+ Plan consists of three main parts: 1) addressing accountability and improving student learning, 2) raising standards and improving training for educators, and 3) improving school safety and reducing truancy (Florida Department of Education, 2001a). The passage of this legislation has led to widespread controversy throughout the state. Teacher unions are opposed to the prospects of Opportunity Scholarships given to parents, enabling some students to leave the public schools and attend private schools. The official position of the National Education Association (2002) states:

The National Education Association [NEA] believes that federally or state-mandated parental option or choice plans compromise the Association’s commitment to free, equitable, universal, and quality public education for every student. Therefore, the Association opposes such federally or state-mandated choice or parental option plans.

The American Federation of Teachers’ (2002a) official position on the issue states, “The AFT supports parents’ right to send their children to private or religious schools but opposes the use of public funds to do so.”
Part of the controversy centers on qualification for an Opportunity Scholarship, which is based on the public school’s grade. The grade is designated by the Florida Department of Education and is based on student performance on a state-wide standardized test. In response, The Florida Education Association (FEA) recommended that the 2002 Florida Legislature “analyze on a regular basis the systems for assessment and accountability and expand the use of varied assessment tools to avoid over-reliance on a single standardized test” (Florida Education Association, 2002).

Court battles concerning the provision for Opportunity Scholarships began the day after the A+ Plan was signed into law. The plaintiffs (the FEA, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Florida Parent-Teacher Association, League of Women Voters and given families and teachers) filed a suit challenging the constitutionality of the law. A Tallahassee judge ruled that the law violated the Florida State Constitution by allowing public funds to be spent on private schools. In October 2000, the 1st District Court of Appeals reversed the decision and ruled that the A+ Plan is constitutional (John Ellis "Jeb" Bush et al. v. Ruth D. Holmes et al. 2000). Finally, in April 2001, the Florida Supreme Court denied an appeal to review the Appeals Court’s decision; thus, the Appeals decision was validated (Associated Press, 2001).

Considerable media attention has been paid to the Opportunity Scholarship Program. Yet, few studies have been published concerning this program and the school grading policy. A study by Greene (2001) focused on the validity of using Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores in grading public schools. The study found the FCAT to be a valid measure of student achievement in both reading and math.
It also found that schools earning an F grade from the Florida Department of Education showed an increase in FCAT scores almost twice as large as those schools earning a grade of C or better. Through a statistical analysis of average FCAT scores, Greene found that “the lower the grade that the school received from the state, the greater the improvement it made the following year” (p. 6). Therefore, he concluded that the presence of Opportunity Scholarships was a motivation for schools to improve student achievement on the FCAT.

While the major aspects of the original legislation remain in place, some parts have changed since 1999. The state testing program has been expanded to include grades three through ten, rather than grades four, five, eight, and ten. Funding for K-12 Education, 2000-01, increased by 7.8 percent, including $60 million to reward improving schools and high-performing schools (Florida Department of Education, 2001a).

Other changes to the A+ Plan involve the state assessment program, or Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The FCAT answer format consists of multiple choice and written long answers. Multiple-choice answers are graded by machine and people grade the long-answers. All answers counted toward individual student scores, which also comprise the majority of the criteria for grading each school. In February 2001, the Florida Department of Education declared that only the multiple-choice questions of the reading or math tests would count toward the school grades and the tenth grade graduation test. The longer written answers would be scored at a later date for individual student reports (Postal and Horvitz, 2001a). Three weeks later, the Florida Education Commissioner stated that the long answers should be counted towards school grades and graduation requirements (Postal and Horvitz, 2001b). He revised his statement
the next day, noting that long-answers would count toward the tenth grade FCAT graduation test, but not toward the school grades (Postal, 2001).

Much of the controversy over the A+ Plan hinges on the practice of grading the schools. These grades are based primarily on student achievement data from FCAT scores (Florida Department of Education, 2001b). Students are eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship if the public school is graded F for two years during any four-year period.

Problem

A policy is in place in Florida that grades public school performance based primarily on student achievement, as measured by FCAT scores. If a school is graded F for two years in a four-year period, the parents may opt for an Opportunity Scholarship to attend a private school, or choose another public school graded a C or better. In the first year, 1999-2000, two schools in Florida had students eligible for Opportunity Scholarships. Seventy-eight parents removed their children from these schools, with 58 choosing private schools. Since the grading system began, several other schools were graded F for only one year, thus escaping the eligibility status for Opportunity Scholarships. Across Florida in 1999, 76 schools were graded F. In 2000, four schools were graded F, and no schools were graded F in 2001. In 2002, the number of F schools increased to 68, 10 of these having students eligible for Opportunity Scholarships (Florida Office of School Improvement, 2002).

The volatile fluctuation of the number of F schools between 1999 and 2002 poses two possibilities. One possibility is that the schools improved student performance on
FCAT. thus improving the school grade. In this case, what literacy instructional practices
were being implemented and did they differ from A schools? Another possibility is that
the Florida Department of Education school grading policy changed, thus affecting the
school grades. The problem presented is to investigate variables related to these two
possibilities.

Significance of Problem

Schools graded F submitted reports to the Florida Department of Education
outlining intervention strategies to improve student achievement. These strategies focus
on a variety of general areas, including instructional practices, curriculum, school safety,
district interventions, and community involvement (Florida Office of School
Improvement, 2002). However, many of these reports do not provide details of teaching
behaviors, personnel, or governance procedures employed by these schools. Additionally,
current published research does not focus on literacy instructional practices, personnel,
and governance at these Florida schools. This proposed study will provide information
concerning literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures at
Florida schools graded F as well as those graded A, and it will determine if there is any
difference in these variables between the two samples.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of the school grading policy
of the A+ Plan on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures
in Florida Public Schools.
Research Questions

1. What, if any, is the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on literacy instructional practices and materials in Florida Public Schools?

2. What, if any, is the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on personnel in Florida Public Schools?

3. What, if any, is the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on governance procedures in Florida Public Schools?

4. What, if any, changes have occurred in the Florida Department of Education public school grading policy since its inception in 1999?

**Null Hypothesis One.** There is no difference in literacy instruction and materials at schools designated a grade of A and schools graded F (or D if there are no designated F schools)

**Null Hypothesis Two.** There is no difference in personnel at schools designated a grade of A and schools graded F (or D if there are no designated F schools).

**Null Hypothesis Three.** There is no difference in governance procedures at schools designated a grade of A and schools graded F (or D if there are no designated F schools).

**Null Hypothesis Four.** There has been no change in the Florida Department of Education public school grading policy since its inception in 1999

**Definitions**

*Literacy instructional practices* are defined as teaching behaviors, activities, and materials utilized when teaching reading and writing.
Personnel is defined as persons hired to teach reading and writing at the school level, persons hired as resource positions for those teaching reading and writing, such as paraprofessionals, positions at the district level that function as literacy resources for schools, and consultants for curriculum and staff development.

Governance procedures are defined as policies and procedures utilized at the district-level and building-level to manage school actions such as budgeting and administering curriculum and instruction.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is the statewide assessment for reading, writing, and math that is aligned with the standardized state curriculum, the Florida Sunshine State Standards (Florida Office of School Improvement, 2002).

A Plan for Education (A-Plan) is the common name used when referring to the Florida education statutes (Chapters 228 – 246) governing accountability, student achievement, statewide assessment, and state standards.

Opportunity Scholarships are warrants, or vouchers, issued to parents that may be utilized toward private school tuition. Students attending a public school graded F two out of any four-year period are eligible to receive Opportunity Scholarships.

Literacy, Personnel, and Governance have related sub-terms that may benefit from a more delineated explanation. Therefore, Appendix A presents a glossary of such terms.

Delimitations

The results of this study may be generalized to other Florida public schools graded by the Florida Department of Education. Results may be used to show whether or
not there is a significant difference between schools graded A and those graded F in the areas of literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures.

Limitations

The nature of a survey study presented limitations. For example, the researcher assumed that information provided by participants was true and accurate since they self-reported. Non-response bias also was created when eligible participants chose not to respond to the survey. However, follow-up mailings were employed to provide opportunity for a high return percentage on surveys and limit the effects of non-response bias. Additionally, originally designed surveys were piloted to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study.

Another limitation to this study was the political nature of the school grading policy. Of the 27 districts randomly selected, five denied the researcher access to the schools in their districts. Four of these five districts cited the protection of the principals and teachers at the schools graded F as these principals and teachers had been through much scrutiny by the State Department of Education and school community. Media attention on these schools also heightened the situation. Even in districts where the researcher was granted access to schools, 14 principals at schools graded F declined to participate in the study. Reasons for their non-participation varied. Some principals cited an overwhelming amount of paperwork generated by the state and district in response to the school grade and subsequent intervention plans. Other principals reported that teachers were overwhelmed with professional development on learning to use new reading curricula being implemented at the schools.
The political nature of the school grading policy and negative attention to schools graded F combined to bias the original random sample. Random sampling techniques were used to select nine percent (40 A schools and 40 F schools) of the total population of A and F schools in 2002. District permission to conduct the study was secured. All schools in the random sample were contacted to request permission to mail the surveys. Sixteen A schools and 10 F schools agreed to participate. In an attempt to increase the F school sample size, a second random sample \((n = 14)\) was drawn from the remaining 2002 F school population. Ten of these newly selected F schools were located in districts where the research request had already been denied. The remaining four F schools in this second random sample declined to participate in the study. The end result was that 10 of the original randomly selected F schools participated in this study.

Summary

The A+ Plan was enacted by the Florida legislature in 1999. This legislation guides state education policies regarding school accountability. The Florida Department of Education designates a grade of A, B, C, D, or F annually to each public school. The grade is based on student performance on the FCAT, the statewide standardized assessment. If a school is graded an F two years of any four-year period, the students are eligible to receive an Opportunity Scholarship.

From 1999-2002, the number of Florida schools graded F fluctuated from 76 to 0 to 68. Two-thirds of the school grading criteria is based on student performance on reading and writing assessments. The problem presented for this study is to investigate possible variables affecting the volatile fluctuation in the number of schools graded F.
One possibility is that literacy instructional practices have influenced student performance on the FCAT Reading test; therefore, the school grade improved. A second possibility is that external pressures from the state to increase student achievement on the FCAT, and, in turn, the school’s grade, influenced literacy instructional practices, personnel, and school governance. To date, published research regarding the A+ Plan grading policy, literacy instructional practices, and school governance is scarce. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of the school grading policy on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures in Florida public schools by examining these three variables at state-designated highest and lowest performing schools.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature for this study focused on four main topics: standards and accountability, high-stakes assessment, the A+ Plan for Education, and literacy instruction. A literature review in these four topics served two functions. First, the subject matter provided context to the purpose of this study. Second, the literature review provided a research base for the content validity of the original surveys designed for this study.

Standards and Accountability

Florida’s A+ Plan for Education is a policy centered on state standards and accountability for school and student performance. Other states have implemented similar policies. The purpose of this section is to present a review of the literature on standards and accountability. This review includes four topics: federal policy, state-wide accountability programs, state standards, and the impact of accountability on schools and teachers.

Federal Policy

For decades, the federal government has played a role in educational standards and accountability programs in the United States. Federal legislation has been enacted that influenced the formation and development of state standards and accountability
measurements. Federal policy can be explained through a description of contemporary federal policy and objectives of current federal legislation.

**Contemporary federal policy.** Some researchers have noted that the contemporary accountability trend began in the 1980s (Atkinson, 2002, McGill-Franzen, 2000) This beginning can be marked by the release of “A Nation At Risk”, an influential report on the negative state of American schools (Atkinson, 2002). Conducted by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), the report initiated two waves of policy. The first policy initiative raised academic standards. The second policy focused on expanding assessments and school restructuring efforts (Valencia & Wixson, 2000).

Legislatively, throughout the 1980s, federal involvement in K-12 public education was decentralized through block grants to the states (McGill-Franzen, 2000). Decentralization led to state policies for standards and accountability for schools to meet these standards.

The “accountability movement gained national momentum during the 1990’s” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 292) As the decade began, state-led education reform was gaining momentum as a result of two key events: the 1989 Education Summit and the National Governors’ Association adoption of National Education Goals. At that time, President George H W Bush also adopted the National Education Goals (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

However, the catalyst for state standards and accountability policies was the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Signed into law on March 31, 1994, this federal legislation awarded grants to states and districts to support the development and implementation of standards-based education reforms. It sustained development of comprehensive reform plans for adopting high standards and aligning assessments and
accountability. These state and local plans were supported through grant funds (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

In relation to instruction, policies in the 1990s focused on developing teacher knowledge and increasing teacher control of curriculum and instruction. Professional development was viewed as important for increasing teacher control. Knowledge enabled empowerment. A variety of policies increased teacher control, including site-based management, alternative forms of school governance, and varying organizational structures, such as team teaching (McGill-Franzen, 2000). A 1996 study by Smylie, Lazarus, and Brownlee-Couyres (as cited in McGill-Franzen, 2000) found a relationship between gains in reading achievement and types of teacher participation in school governance. Schools with high-participation councils fostered teachers studying not only management, but also curricular and instructional issues. Reading achievement scores at these schools improved over a four-year period. The opposite result occurred with low participation school councils where teachers were not as involved. Thus, reading achievement consistently increased at schools with a high amount of teacher input on school management, curriculum, and instruction.

Objectives of federal policy. Standards for state performance in education were defined in the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994. This legislation mandated that all states and districts receiving Title I funds must issue annual school, district, and state report cards. By 2001, all 50 states had some form of a reporting system in place. Forty of the 50 states were preparing formal school report cards, which included student performance on state assessments. However, only 28 of the 50 states’ performance standards had been approved by the U.S. Department of Education (Goertz, Duffy, &
LeFloh. 2001). It is evident that states are in the process of aligning accountability programs with the objectives set forth in the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994.

*State-wide Accountability Programs*

As mentioned, all 50 states have some form of a reporting system to provide information to the federal government concerning state performance in relation to education goals. In order to collect this information, states have developed state-wide accountability programs for districts and public schools. The type of accountability system employed varies by state.

*National facts.* Since the 1990s, state systems have focused on student outcomes and performance on state assessments. Goertz et al. (2001) conducted a study to describe state assessment and accountability systems. The authors also explained the extent to which the policies met the objectives of the federal policy. They performed a 50-state survey of state assessment and accountability systems in place during the 1999-2000 school year, analyzed secondary sources, and conducted semi-structured interviews with state directors of assessment. Findings were reported by drafting profiles of each state’s policies and practices.

The findings of this study showed that 48 states used a state assessment as the main indicator of school performance. Some states collected additional measures of non-cognitive performance such as attendance and drop-out rates. Two states, Iowa and Nebraska, required the local districts to test students with an assessment of the districts’ choice (Goertz et al., 2001).

The state systems assessed many subjects across most grade levels. Forty-eight states tested reading and math. Thirty-one states tested writing. Twenty-nine states tested
social studies, and 34 states tested science. A majority of the state assessments began in third grade. Eighth grade was the most popular grade level to test with 46 states assessing at this level. Fourth grade was the second most popular grade level. 37 state assessments were addressed this grade. In all, 32 states tested grades three through ten. By 2008, 28 states will require high school students to pass a state assessment for graduation (Goertz et al., 2001).

State standards and accountability policies addressed additional issues. For example, all states and districts that receive Title I funds must issue annual school, district, and state report cards. Goertz et al. (2001) found that all 50 states had a reporting system in place by the 1999-2000 school year. Forty states prepared school report cards, which included student performance on state assessments. Four of these states, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, and Texas, had state assessment and accountability systems in place prior to the enactment of the federal legislation. By the beginning of 2001, the U.S. Department of Education had approved the performance standards established in 28 states. Hence, accountability has come to be defined as the reporting of school performance in relation to state goals.

While preparing annual report cards for schools, low performing schools are identified by state accountability systems. Most states provide support for the low-performing schools. Assistance can be provided in at least four ways. First, support can be given in school improvement or corrective action planning. Second, financial assistance can be provided. Third, expert assistance can be provided for planning and instruction. This method includes the use of distinguished teachers to work with teachers.
at low-performing schools. Finally, the state may provide professional development for teachers and administrators (Goertz et al., 2001).

*Types of accountability systems.* State accountability systems can be categorized into three types. The first type, public reporting, requires districts to report the results of statewide assessments. Schools or districts are not ranked or rated. Low-performing schools are not identified. In 2001, this type of system was used by 13 states. The second type is a locally-defined accountability system. This system emphasizes local standards and planning. It utilizes strategic plans and school improvement plans as a vehicle for documenting accountability. State-defined accountability is the third type of system. In this structure, the state sets the performance goals for schools or districts. The state also provides rewards for meeting or exceeding the state goals or sanctions for not meeting the goals (Goertz et al. 2001)

Thirty-three states implemented a state-defined accountability system by the 1999-2000 school year. Of these, 20 states used criterion-referenced tests, six states used norm-referenced tests, and seven states used a combination of both assessments as measures for accountability reporting. Variation existed in the performance goals among these 33 states. However, the state-defined systems used one of three approaches to measure school progress. For example, states could set an absolute target, or schools could demonstrate relative growth based on past performance. A third approach was to measure the achievement gap and determine if schools have reduced the percentage of students scoring in the lowest levels. Regardless of approach utilized to measure school progress, all 33 state-defined accountability systems identified low-performing schools.
Additional provisions and assistance were offered to these schools from either the state and/or district (Goertz et al., 2001).

State Standards

State standards contribute to state accountability systems. Many of these systems rely on state-wide assessment programs to determine district and school performance. Therefore, state standards have been developed with the intention of coinciding with state-wide assessments. The alignment of state standards and state assessments is a necessity for a valid accountability program. However, research reports concerning state standards are mixed.

Finn, Petrilli, & Vanourek (1998) conducted a study to evaluate the worth of state academic standards. Experts in five areas of curriculum, English, history, geography, math, and science, developed and applied criteria to 28 states' standards. The authors concluded that most of the states had weak academic standards. Many were vague and lacked specificity, which created difficulty when attaching high-stakes assessments to the standards. The authors noted that a few states' standards were too specific. A majority of the state standards emphasized skills and minimized knowledge. The authors argued that both knowledge and skills are necessary and support each other. Additionally, many standards prescribed a particular teaching philosophy instead of clarifying expectations and “trusting schools and teachers to decide how best to meet them” (p. 10). Rather, the authors defined standards as “statements clarifying what students should know and be able to do at various points in their academic career” (p. 12).

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (2002b) also conducted a study concerning state standards. This report rated standards based on AFT’s common core
criteria. The first criterion was that the standard defines in every grade, or grade cluster, the common content and skills students need to learn in each core subject. The second criterion was that the standards must be "detailed, explicit, and firmly rooted in the content" of the subject (Judging State Standards Reforms, Criterion 2). The third criterion was that particular content for English, math, science, and social studies is present. The final criterion was that the standards attend to both skills and content. The authors concluded that the overall quality of state standards was improving. Twenty-two states were found to have clear, specific standards that were grounded in content. Additionally, 26 states described the level of mastery students must demonstrate in order to meet the state standards.

Findings from these two studies concerning Florida were contradictory. Finn et al. (1998) rated Florida very poorly. It received an overall grade of D+, with English graded a D, history a C, geography a C, math a D, and science an F. On the other hand, the AFT study (2002b) rated Florida's standards in English, math, and science as clear, specific, and grounded in content across all three school levels. Only the social studies standards for middle school were rated as vague, with elementary and high school social studies rated as clear and specific. Even though there are different report publication dates, both reports were rating the standards in place between 1998 and 1999.

Impact of Accountability on Schools and Teachers

Goertz et al. (2001) considered several issues concerning state accountability programs and their impact on schools and teachers. First, norm-referenced assessments used to measure student achievement on state standards provided concern for the validity of the assessment policy. Criterion-referenced assessments based on the state standards
provide a more valid measure of accountability. In their study, six states were solely using norm-referenced tests, 20 were using criterion-referenced tests, and seven were using a combination of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. A second concern raised by Goertz et al. (2001) is the political viability of using high-stakes assessments for the promotion or retention of students. Their study found eight states with policies to end social promotion. A third issue found in this study revolved around consistency in deciding which students to include in the statewide assessment. States differed in which students they tested and under what conditions they were tested.

Researchers have shown that perceptions of accountability policies differed between state and local officials. Atkinson (2002) conducted a case study in one North Carolina county to examine the motivation for and influence of a high-stakes assessment plan. Overall, local and state level officials disagreed on most issues related to the motivation and purpose of North Carolina’s ABC’s Plan. Perceptions at the local level included

- A belief that the ABC’s Plan provided greater local control and was intended to hold teachers accountable through test scores,
- A mistaken identification of the state legislature as the program developer, instead of correctly identifying the North Carolina State Department of Education,
- A belief that local input was limited and did not have much impact on the overall plan,
- A view that publications from state officials concerning the Plan were not very informative, and only dealt with rubrics and scoring procedures.
• A desire to de-emphasize the end-of-grade testing,

• Unanimous agreement that "test-taking practice had become standard routine in their schools" (p. 298);

• A questioning of the likelihood of improved test scores for students who were minority and of low socioeconomic status.

Perceptions at the state level included

• A belief that the Plan’s purpose is to redirect instruction to the basics and provide local control over how to teach the basics,

• A belief that the Plan holds districts accountable for test results.

• A view that accountability must be measurable, so must use end-of-grade test scores;

• A view of accountability as a "matter of fact" (p. 297), a requirement similar to those in the business world;

• An admission of being more concerned with testing than instruction,

• A view of testing as "the cornerstone" of the state’s reform (p. 297);

• A view of test-taking practice as acceptable and directly related to improving test scores.

Specifically to Florida, George (2001) interviewed 25 central office staff and 50 principals in public schools. After data analysis, he identified 10 strategies school and district leaders use to react to standards and accountability measures. First, leaders set urgent goals. Second, they engaged school personnel by building a sense of community. They shared decision-making and involved school personnel in the school improvement plan. Third, they used school achievement data to formulate goals. Fourth, professional
development was strengthened, especially in the areas of Sunshine State Standards, the
A+ Plan, and higher-order thinking skills. Fifth, the curriculum was aligned with
assessments. Sixth, time for academics was increased. Seventh, instructional materials
were chosen that would support the state standards. Eighth, leaders built interdisciplinary
teams, especially at middle schools, to promote collaboration among teachers. Ninth, the
state assessment was promoted at the school level. Tenth, they redefined school
leadership as instructional leadership. Principals became more concerned with student
achievement and its relationship to curriculum and instruction, including methods for
training, supporting, and motivating teachers. Additionally, 50 percent of principals in
this study reported teacher morale at an all-time low and stress at an all-time high.

High-stakes Assessment

State accountability programs often focus on student performance on a
standardized assessment. Policy decisions are based on test performance, creating an
atmosphere for high-stakes assessment. The purpose of this section is to define high-
stakes assessment and review the literature concerning its impact on students, teachers,
and literacy instructional practices.

Definition

Several individuals and organizations use the term, high-stakes assessment, across
the United States. For the purpose of this study, a consensus definition is provided. The
International Reading Association (2002) defines high-stakes assessment as using one
test to make important decisions about students, teachers, and schools. The consequences
for high or low performance on the test are substantial. Likewise, the American
Educational Research Association (2002) defines high-stakes assessment as the use of achievement test results that carry serious consequences for students and educators. Thus, two main characteristics of high-stakes assessment are the consequence of performance on the assessment and the practice of basing policy decisions on that performance.

**Impact of High-stakes Assessment**

High-stakes assessments have substantial consequences attached to performance on a single test. Consequently, such assessment programs impact the teaching and learning processes. Studies have been conducted that examine the impact of high-stakes assessment programs on students, teachers, and schools. However, research findings are inconclusive about the impact of high-stakes assessment.

A study by Mehrens (1998) cited insufficient evidence for drawing any cause-effect conclusions concerning the impact of high-stakes assessment on teaching and learning. After conducting a meta-analysis of research on the topic of assessment, Mehrens drew several conclusions. First, a variety of purposes and expectations existed in respect to regarding assessment. High-stakes assessments also have the potential for both positive and negative consequences. A third conclusion was that high-stakes assessments probably did impact curriculum and instruction. Additionally, it did increase teacher stress and decreased teacher morale.

However, Mehrens (1998) found a lack of quantity and quality of evidence in the research. The evidence that did exist was inadequate for drawing any cause-effect conclusions about the consequences of assessment. Still, the public and press were more likely to use inadequate test results to blame teachers than to use adequate results to
praise them. Nonetheless, Mehrens asserted that assessment can be useful to students and teachers for evaluation of student achievement.

Another study confirmed a relationship between state-mandated testing and teacher behaviors; however, the nature of the relationship was complicated (Cimbricz, 2002). After a review of studies on state-mandated testing and its influence on teachers' beliefs and actions from 1992 to 2002, the author found most studies to be theoretical in nature. Cimbricz summarized the findings of a handful of qualitative and quantitative research. Initially, drawbacks to state-mandated testing were reported. Curriculum and instruction were narrowed to the concepts covered by the test. Anxiety, fear, shame, confusion, anger, and mistrust were fostered as teachers perceived themselves as powerless. Instructional time was lost to test preparation and administration. A final drawback concerned the validity of using assessments that accurately measure student learning.

Cimbricz (2002) found that some of the studies reported overstated and limited influence of state-mandated testing. For example, teachers' perceptions were found to be mixed, with the testing serving as one of many influences over curriculum and instruction. Some teachers reported feeling pressure for high-level performance on assessments; but, they made no significant change to their overall instruction. Changes were made in alignment of subjects with those covered in the test, however, no change was made in instructional practices. Additionally, the state assessment influenced what teachers taught, but not how they taught.

A third study enhanced Cimbricz's findings. Firestone & Mayrowetz (2000) conducted case studies in Maryland, Maine, England, and Wales in order to understand
more fully the effects of high-stakes assessments on instructional practice. Using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations at the middle school level, the researchers established several illustrative findings. The stakes were not always perceived as “equally high.” The pressure teachers felt to respond to the test came from more than just formal stakes. The external pressure was more effective in changing the content taught and less effective in changing instructional strategies.

**Effects on Literacy Instructional Practices**

A high-stakes assessment program also can impact literacy instructional practices. Most of these assessment programs focus on reading and, therefore, have an effect on literacy instruction. Three studies describe the effects of high-stakes assessments on literacy instructional practices.

A study by Guthrie, Schafer, & Von Secker (2000) attempted to characterize improving schools and their reading programs. Focusing on grades three and five, the researchers collected data through teacher questionnaires (n=545) over a two-year period. They found that reading programs with a high impact on standardized assessments used an abundance of books and resources and placed little emphasis on a basal reading program, comprehension strategy instruction, writing techniques, and social interaction. In the intermediate grades, teachers placed more emphasis on integration, books and resources, collaboration, and writing. Reading instruction with these emphases produced a positive change in student achievement in reading, writing, and science.

Another study looked at teachers’ beliefs concerning the accountability policy in North Carolina and the policy’s impact on their instructional practices (Jones, Jones, & Hardin, 1999). The researchers surveyed 236 elementary teachers in five districts across
North Carolina. Several findings were reported. As for instruction, teachers spent a majority of the day teaching reading, writing, and math. They estimated that the amount of time spent teaching these subjects increased since the state’s accountability policy began. Eighty percent of the teachers claimed that students spent at least a fifth of total instructional time practicing for the end-of-grade test. Teachers also reported that the policy had a negative impact on their students. Over half felt that their students felt more anxiety and 48.5 percent felt that the policy negatively impacted the students’ “love of learning.” As for instruction, two-thirds of the teachers reported that they changed their teaching practices since the inception of the state policy. Overall, 76 percent reported feeling more stress since the state policy was implemented.

A third study analyzed the impact of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) on instructional practices (Almasi, Aflerbach, Guthrie, & Schaefer, 1995). This qualitative study analyzed data collected from schools with at-risk populations that were initiating instructional changes. As a result, the MSPAP “did have a direct influence on the types of instructional changes taking place in all five schools” (p. 12). While the changes were not identical, they did include some level of congruence between the test and curriculum, the pace of change implementation, and the degree to which faculty experienced the change. Students had more opportunities to write and more choices in reading and writing. Writing was integrated across the curriculum. Each site used literature-based instruction and instruction in reading strategies. The authors concluded that the MSPAP had created positive effects on classroom practices.
The A+ Plan for Education defines Florida's state accountability policy for K-12 public schools. It provides the means by which the state designates and grades schools throughout the state. The purpose of this section is to present current information regarding the A+ Plan including an overview of the legislation, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, the school grading policy, and the Opportunity Scholarship program.

Overview of the Legislation in Florida


The first component of the A+ Plan addresses accountability and student learning. The law requires that all students in grades three through ten take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The FCAT for these students covers reading and mathematics. A writing component also is taken in grades four, eight, and ten. The results of student performance on the FCAT are shared with parents through written reports. This data on student achievement is used as the basis for grading the public schools as an accountability measure. Additionally, the A+ Plan ends the practice of social promotion. Students must meet basic reading, writing, and math standards to be promoted to the next grade. To assist with improving student learning, state public school funding was increased by $1.4 billion, the largest K-12 increase ever in Florida.
(MyFlorida.com, 2002). Statewide assessment, reporting of student achievement data, and ending social promotion constitute Florida’s school accountability program.

The second component of the A+ Plan addresses standards and teacher training. Standards in the legislation deal with school performance assessment and parental choice. All public schools in the state receive a grade from the Department of Education, ranging from A to F. The criteria for the school grade rely mostly on student achievement scores on the FCAT. The school grade is used to determine extra funding and student eligibility for Opportunity Scholarships. Standards for teacher training also are addressed with emphasis on higher standards for teacher certification and merit pay (MyFlorida.com, 2002).

The third component of the A+ Plan deals with school safety. Funding for school safety was increased by $20 million (MyFlorida.com, 2002). This money may be used by school districts to fund school resource officers, security equipment, after school programs, or alternative schools for disruptive students. The funds are designed for flexibility in planning at the local level (My Florida.com, 2002).

*Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)*

The A+ Plan details specific uses for the state assessment program, or Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Pursuant to Section 229.57(3)(b)7, F.S., the FCAT is administered annually to eligible public school students in grades three through ten (Academic Excellence Council, 1999). FCAT reading and mathematics scores are reported on a scale from 100 to 500, with achievement levels ranging from Level 1 to Level 5. The minimum score for each level of achievement varies for grade and subject. For example, through 2003, a score for a third grader in mathematics between 294 and
346 will result in Level 3 achievement. However, for an eighth grader, the scores for Level 3 in mathematics range from 310 to 347. Additionally, tenth graders must pass the FCAT (score Level 3, 4 or 5) in reading and mathematics in order to graduate high school (Florida Department of Education, 2002b). The writing test is administered in grades four, eight, and ten with scores ranging from one (lowest) to six (highest). Thus, the FCAT is utilized as a measurement of student achievement in reading, mathematics, and writing.

A variety of responses are required for the FCAT. The reading and math FCAT answer format consists of multiple choice and written long-answers. Multiple-choice answers are graded by machine and long-answers are graded by people using a rubric. The FCAT writing test requires students to write in response to a prompt. A science test with long and short answers will be introduced to selected grade levels in 2003 (Florida Department of Education, 2001c).

The content of the FCAT is based on the Sunshine State Standards, the academic standards adopted by the Florida State Board of Education. The FCAT Reading test focuses on standards relating to decoding and comprehension skills. The FCAT Math focuses on standards relating to computation, mathematical operations, and application of operations to real-world situations. FCAT Writing prompts require either a narrative, expository, or persuasive essay response (Florida Department of Education, 2001).

School Grading Policy

School grades are based primarily on student achievement data from FCAT scores (Florida Department of Education, 2001b). Annually, each public school's grade is made public. Changes were made to the grading policy for the 2001-2002 school year. A point
system was implemented, with schools earning "one point for each percentage of students who score high on the FCAT and/or make annual learning gains" (Grading Florida Public Schools 2001-2002, 2002). The student sample from which school grades were based consisted of general education, speech impaired, and gifted students who were enrolled in the same school in October and February of the current school year. Students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) with more than two years in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program also were considered in the school grade (Grading Florida Public Schools 2001-2002, 2002).

School grades are based on a point scale ranging from less than 280 to more than 410 (see Appendix B for a breakdown of points for each grade) Schools earn points in six areas. First, one point is earned for each percent of students scoring Levels 3, 4 or 5 in FCAT reading. Second, a point is earned for each percent of students scoring Levels 3, 4 or 5 in FCAT math. Third, the average of students scoring 3 and above on the writing test and those scoring 3.5 and above is determined. One point is earned for each percent of students in this combined area (Grading Florida Public Schools 2001-2002, 2002).

The next method for earning points deals with individual student learning gains. Students may demonstrate a learning gain in one of three ways: increase from one achievement level to the next, maintain a score within a high achievement level (3, 4, or 5), or demonstrate more than one year's growth within achievement Level 1 or 2. The school earns one point for each percent of students who demonstrate a learning gain in reading and one point for each percent of students with a gain in math. The final area in which a school earns points is from reading gains of students in the lowest 25 percent of
the school. One point is earned for each percent of students in this group who make learning gains from the previous year (Grading Florida Public Schools 2001-2002, 2002).

Once the points are tallied for each school, a formula is applied to determine the school grade. The formula entails adding the points earned in the six areas and determining the percentage of eligible students tested. To earn an A, a school must test at least 95 percent of the eligible students, earn a minimum of 410 points, and meet adequate progress expectations of the lowest 25 percent in reading. Adequate progress for this group means that at least 50 percent of the students in the group make a learning gain in reading. For all other school grades, at least 90 percent of students must be tested and the number of total points varies for each grade. Any school graded an A, B, or C has demonstrated learning gains in reading for at least half of the students in the lowest 25 percent of Levels 1, 2, and 3 at the respective school (Grading Florida Public Schools 2001-2002, 2002).

The grading policy has had several effects on expectations for the K-12 public schools in Florida. All D or F schools are targeted for intervention. The local school district must develop a two-year plan for assistance and intervention, and the Florida State Department of Education works collaboratively with the district in this effort (McCloskey, 2002). Furthermore, schools graded an A and those improving at least one grade from the previous year are eligible for public recognition and financial rewards. Schools graded an A and those improving at least two grades from the previous year may be granted deregulated status as long as the performance level of the school is maintained. With this status, public schools may be exempt from Florida School Code Statutes except those regarding health, safety, welfare, and civil rights. A waiver also
may be requested from teacher certification rules in order to implement innovative programs. Deregulated schools also may be given greater autonomy over the school budget (Florida Department of Education, 2002b).

Opportunity Scholarship Program

Due to the A+ Plan, the Florida State Department of Education grades public school performance based primarily on student achievement, as measured by FCAT scores. If a school is graded an “F” for two years in a four-year period, the parents may opt for an Opportunity Scholarship to attend a private school or choose another public school graded a “C” or better. In the first year, 1999-2000, two schools in Florida had students eligible for Opportunity Scholarships. Seventy-eight parents removed their children from these schools, with 58 choosing private schools. Since the grading system began, several other schools were graded an “F” for only one year which did not qualify their students for Opportunity Scholarships. Across the state in 1999, 76 schools were graded “F”. In 2000, four schools were graded “F”, and no schools were graded “F” in 2001. In 2002, 68 schools were graded F. 10 of these for the second time in a four-year period (Office of School Improvement, 2002). Since the program’s inception, students from 12 Florida schools have been eligible for Opportunity Scholarships.

Even though the number of students actually participating in the Opportunity Scholarship Program is relatively small compared to total students enrolled in the state, the policy guidelines are well established. Once the school meets the criteria for participation in the Opportunity Scholarship Program, parents notify the Florida Department of Education if they choose to accept the scholarship. If the parent chooses a participating private school, he/she is responsible for transportation; but, if he/she
chooses a public school, the district must provide transportation. Additional requirements apply to private school choices. For example, the state issues warrants, or payments, to the parent, but, they are mailed to the private school. To use the warrant, it must be endorsed to the private school. Scholarship students attending private schools also must take the FCAT. The school district is responsible for providing locations and times for the test administration (Opportunity Scholarship Program, 2002).

**Literacy Instruction**

The purpose of this section is to review the literature regarding literacy instruction that is relevant to the research questions of this study. Findings are discussed in terms of approaches to literacy instruction, best practices at both the elementary and secondary levels, and professional development for literacy instruction.

**Approaches to Literacy Instruction**

Literacy instruction consists of many facets. Instructional philosophies often oppose each other. For example, one may teach isolated skills through direct instruction, or, one may use life experiences and hands-on activities with a constructivist approach. A teacher may choose to determine activities for students or allow students to select their own activities. A teacher also could opt to balance these many approaches in order to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners in his or her class(’es). Research findings reported in this section support the latter.

**Common Beliefs Among Experts.** A ten-year study by Flippo (1998) found several points of agreement among reading experts concerning effective and ineffective methods for teaching reading. To facilitate learning to read, teachers should make reading
functional. It should be fun and authentic, with time and opportunity to read real narrative and expository books. Students also should have the opportunity to write creatively and purposely. Teachers should encourage learning strategies and how to paraphrase and summarize. Instruction in reading should provide multiple, repeated demonstrations of how to read. Separating reading from writing also should be avoided. The classroom environment should include a variety of printed material and literature, and the atmosphere should encourage students to talk about and share the different kinds of reading they do in various ways with other students (p. 35-36).

The experts also agreed unanimously on three points that would make learning to read difficult. The experts agreed. First, they agreed that teaching letters and words one at a time, especially learning a new letter or word before moving on to another, makes learning to read difficult. Second, teachers whose prime objective is word-perfect reading make learning to read difficult. The third unanimous agreement was to detect and correct inappropriate eye movements. In addition, near total agreement was reached on two points that make learning to read difficult: using workbooks everyday, and always asking numerous comprehension questions after students read (Flippo, 1998, p. 31).

Other agreements on how to make reading difficult emerged from this study. Teachers could aim for early mastery of skills and discourage guessing, or, they could encourage the avoidance of errors. Teachers also could ensure that phonic skills were learned and applied. Additionally, they could make sure students understood the importance of reading and the seriousness of falling behind. A final agreement on how to make learning to read difficult was to improve spelling and written expression and insist on the best possible spoken English during reading instruction (Flippo, 1998, p.31.).
Flippo does not advocate that her findings be used as a "To Do List". The findings, however, do represent a variety of methods on which reading experts agree that either will facilitate or hinder the reading process. These findings support the notion that many instructional techniques enhance the teaching of literacy skills.

A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction. Balanced instruction involves using a variety of instructional strategies and materials in order to teach literacy. Teachers using a balanced approach do not adhere to a single teaching technique. Rather, they balance approaches from whole language to explicit instruction (Combs, 1997; Langer, 1999; National Council of Teachers of English, 2002; Pressley, Yokoi, Rankin, Wharton-McDonald, & Mistretta-Hampston, 1997; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999).

Balanced literacy instruction is advocated in several studies. For example, Pressley et al. (1997) conducted a study of exemplary primary teachers and found that those teachers did not stick with a single model of instruction. Rather, they balanced approaches from whole language and explicit instruction. The authors concluded that "teachers-to-be should learn that excellent literacy instruction is a balance of diverse instructional philosophies and practices" (p. 10). Another study found that more accomplished teachers of at-risk students used a balanced approach to reading instruction, especially for word identification (Taylor et al., 1999). The National Reading Panel (NRP) also recommended a balanced approach to reading instruction. Its summary report states:

Teachers must understand that systematic phonics instruction is only one component—albeit a necessary component—of a total reading program; systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction in
phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension strategies to create a complete reading program. (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000, p.11)

The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) website provides a description of a balanced literacy program. It includes reading and thinking aloud by both teachers and students. A variety of activities are used. These include shared reading, partner reading, readers' theater, independent reading and writing, reading log, writers' notebook, strategy instruction, demonstrations, focused lessons, mini-lessons, authors' chair, conferences, newsboard, literature study, reading journals, drama, music, and artistic responses. Social action projects also are used in a balanced literacy program such as interrogating, questioning, and critically talking about books. Additionally, a balanced literacy program teaches inquiry skills such as browsing, notetaking, webs, timelines, and inquiry journals (NCTE, 2002).

Best Practices for Literacy Instruction

It has been established that research supports a balanced approach to literacy instruction. Several points of agreement exist among reading experts from diverse philosophical positions. Additionally, studies have found that exemplary teachers often do not rely on a single approach to literacy instruction. For this reason, best practices for literacy instruction will be described according to a given area of instruction, focusing on a balanced approach.

Elementary decoding instruction. Research findings cover several effective instructional practices for decoding skills. Taylor et al. (1999) found that most accomplished teachers coached students on how to apply phonics and word recognition
strategies to “real reading” (p. 46). The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA, 2002) found systematic word recognition instruction common in K-3 classrooms. Phonics skills are one aspect of decoding instruction. In kindergarten and first grade, students should learn letter-name knowledge, phonemic awareness, and oral renditions of poems, songs, and rhymes (CIERA, 2002). However, teachers should remain flexible with phonics instruction, allowing for adaptations to individual student needs (NICHD, 2000). By third grade, instruction should include consistent letter-sound relationships, high frequency words, vocabulary, and spelling (CIERA, 2002; Pressley et al., 1997).

Several other practices are important for decoding instruction at the elementary level. Teachers need to provide explicit strategy instruction (Allington & Johnston, 2001). Fluency must be built through the use of repeated readings. Reading accuracy and speed can be charted. It also is helpful to tape students reading aloud and have them listen to the tape (Taylor, 1999). Studies have found guided and independent reading as effective instructional strategies. Students should be given opportunities to listen to and examine books. Teachers should provide daily guided, shared, and independent reading (Allington & Johnston, 2001; CIERA, 2002; NICHD, 2000; Pressley et al., 1997).

A study of effective elementary teachers by Pressley et al. (1997) listed findings concerning decoding teaching behaviors. These effective teachers used daily silent reading, oral reading, guided practice, and explicit teaching of vocabulary at least weekly. They used choral reading and explicit teaching of phonics and/or word attack skills more frequently that once a week.
**Elementary comprehension instruction.** Researchers discuss important comprehension skills to be taught. Teachers should provide instruction in strategies that include predicting, inferencing, clarifying misunderstandings, and summarizing.

Instruction pertaining to narrative text should include the major parts of a story, sequence of events, and story maps. Students also should answer teacher-generated questions and/or use self-questioning. Instruction pertaining to expository text should cover the use of structural organizers, headings in chapters, and hierarchical summaries. Effective activities during comprehension instruction include guided reading and writing, repeated readings of text, conversations about texts, teacher read-alouds with follow-up discussions, and reciprocal teaching (CIERA, 2002, Taylor, 1992). Comprehension instruction that teaches a combination of techniques, or strategies, has been found to be most effective (NICHHD, 2000).

Critical thinking is an important factor in comprehension instruction. Pressley et al. (1997) found that effective elementary literacy teachers used direct teaching and modeling to teach “a long list of comprehension and critical-thinking strategies” (p. 8). Students should participate in meaningful problem solving. Effective comprehension instruction emphasizes critical thinking (Allington & Johnston, 2001).

A study by Pressley et al. (1997) identified specific comprehension instructional practices exhibited by effective elementary teachers. Teachers taught and modeled comprehension skills such as summarizing, locating the main idea and details, inferencing, mental imagining, clarifying, relating text content to prior knowledge, and thinking critically at least weekly. Other weekly activities included brainstorming, oral questioning following a reading, response journals, essay writing, story maps.
illustrations, and the use of word webs, story maps, pictures, and videos. On a more than weekly basis, teachers provided written questions following a reading.

*Elementary writing instruction.* Effective instruction requires students to write extensively. Students need to write for a variety of purposes. They can write messages, write in their own journals, or write stories (CIERA, 2002). Furthermore, research on effective elementary teachers found that they provided explicit instruction in the writing process and mechanics. These teachers required writing related to material read and writing single or consecutive paragraphs at least weekly. Students also were required to use the writing process (plan, draft, revise), write creatively, write on a topic of their choice, and write for the purpose of explaining. These teachers modeled how to respond to literature, taught writing mechanics such as punctuation, capitalization, and grammar, and shared their own writing by reading it aloud to students. Spelling instruction also was provided at least weekly. On a more than weekly basis, effective elementary literacy teachers required students to write research reports. They also conducted revision conferences with students, or had classmates conference with each other (Pressley et al., 1997).

*Elementary classroom environment.* Many factors influence a literacy classroom environment. Effective elementary environments for literacy instruction use many types of instructional groupings. A variety of materials and assessments also contribute to the classroom environment.

Research reinforces the notion that an effective literacy environment provides many types of instructional groupings. One study found that exemplary fourth grade teachers used diverse instructional groupings. It also found collaborative learning to be
common in these classrooms (Allington & Johnston, 2001). A study by Taylor et al. (1999) found that time spent in small group instruction was the most powerful classroom level variable. "The students in the most effective schools averaged 60 minutes a day of small, ability-grouped instruction" (p. 44). However, teachers used systematic assessment to keep these group memberships flexible. Overall, the most effective schools spent an average of 134 minutes on reading instruction daily, while, least effective schools spent 113 minutes daily. As for students with reading difficulties, CIERA (2002) recommends intensive one-on-one or small group instructional groupings.

Use of a variety of materials and assessments is an effective practice for literacy instruction. Teachers should use an array of texts for instruction. Students should read trade books, classics, and expository texts. Texts also should recognize diverse backgrounds (CIERA, 2002; Pressley et al., 1997). For assessment, teachers should use reading and writing portfolios to monitor student performance. Some effective teachers also use commercial and standardized tests (Pressley et al., 1997).

Research has found integrating reading and writing throughout the curriculum to be an effective instructional practice. Exemplary elementary teachers integrate reading, writing, and other subjects. This integration of language arts and content area instruction may be accomplished through the use of thematic units (Allington & Johnston, 2001; Pressley et al., 1997).

Several studies have established that accomplished literacy teachers used classroom routines and procedures, additionally affecting the classroom environment. Allington and Johnston (2001) found that exemplary teachers were organized and implemented classroom routines. Taylor et al. (1999) also found that most accomplished
teachers had well established classroom routines and procedures. They were experts at classroom management. Yet, at the same time, effective teachers have been found to support risk-taking and curiosity in students. Students were allowed to choose what they read and wrote (Pressley et al., 1997).

Overall, many factors create the classroom environment. The findings from one study of successful elementary teachers generate an image of the effective literary classroom environment. On a weekly basis, teachers used whole-class instruction, cooperative grouping, teacher and student-led small groups, and one-to-one instruction. Literature-based instruction was implemented with students being allowed to self-select reading materials. Teachers also used learning centers and library collections. Materials used more than weekly included basal readers, computers, tests, and games involving reading skills. Activities offered more than weekly included student tutoring, student-teacher conferencing, and the reading of plays, poems, and essays (Pressley et al., 1997).

Secondary comprehension instruction. Comprehending text is important at the secondary level (Conley, 1995). Students not only read in English classes, but also in content classes. They often read informational text in order to learn new content. Therefore, effective secondary comprehension instruction focuses on content-area reading and necessary comprehension skills.

Curriculum becomes more complex at the middle school level. Hence, reading comprehension is very important. Readers must use their prior knowledge to gain meaning from texts (Conley, 1995). All reading strategies can be embedded in content-area instruction. Reading becomes a tool for gathering information. As a result, “secondary reading instruction focuses on reading to learn” (National Association of...
Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2001, paragraph 6). The NRP also found that teaching comprehension strategies in the content areas to be effective (NICHD, 2000).

Conley (1995) describes several instructional strategies for content-area reading. A comprehension guide helps students understand and gain new information being presented. Students also can be taught the different ways questions and answers may be related when reading text. A third instructional strategy is a prediction guide. This guide requires students to think about ideas and perceptions before reading the text. Afterwards, they rethink and compare their original ideas with the text read. In addition, graphic organizers may be used to organize discussions or provide a framework for content read (p. 86-88).

Secondary students need to learn and apply numerous comprehension skills. Due to more complicated curricula, students must learn to read texts with specialized vocabulary, charts, tables, maps, and graphs. They must be taught to scan material before reading and use text features, such as titles and bold or italic lettering cues. More traditional comprehension skills still are required at the secondary level including predicting, recalling background knowledge, determining genre, looking for story elements, such as characters, problems, solutions, and setting; summarizing the main idea; making text-to-text and text-to-self connections; monitoring one's own understandings; recording reactions; and making semantic webs, outlines, and charts (NASSP, 2001).

Specific to the high school level, Vacca and Williams (1995) recommend that literacy teachers encourage active responses to reading. Teachers should model comprehension strategies and encourage students to make connections with the text.
Students should read fiction and non-fiction literature. They also should respond to readings through response journals or discussions with peers.

Combs (1997) has written extensively about literacy instruction in the middle grades. She provides several instructional activities for teachers to implement with middle school students. She suggests that secondary teachers conduct read-alouds. Teachers also should encourage independent reading. Middle schoolers should sustain reading for 30 to 45 minutes a session. Students should make connections to previous chapters and engage in literary discussions to enhance and reinforce their comprehension.

Other instructional strategies enhance reading comprehension at the secondary level. For example, a whole class literature study presents the teacher as facilitator and a model of comprehension strategies. The teacher either reads a book aloud as students read their own copy or students read silently to themselves. The class period begins with a whole group opening or mini-lesson and continues with whole class work time for literature logs or projects. Small group work time follows, and a whole group sharing and concluding session ends the reading period (Combs, 1997; Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, Moore, 2000).

Book Clubs provide a balance between teacher-led and student-led instruction. The teacher’s role is to select the text to be read and facilitate whole-group discussions. The students, subsequently, lead small group discussions about the text. They guide the discussions based on their interests. The structure for the reading period consists of three parts: teacher-led whole group, student-led work time, and teacher-led whole group (Combs, 1997).
Literature Circles differ from Book Clubs. This instructional strategy is used to foster student independence. Students form small groups by choosing the same book. They discuss the book as they are reading in small heterogeneous groups. Students also determine the pace of reading by selecting the amount of chapters to be read in a given amount of time. The structure of Literature Circles is similar to Book Clubs. The teacher’s role includes instruction on literary elements and strategies, informal conferencing with student-groups, and facilitating whole class discussions (Brabham & Villaume, 2000; Combs, 1997).

Literacy teachers in the middle grades also may implement Readers’ Workshop. This strategy provides a consistent block of time for reading on a daily basis. Students learn to make appropriate personal reading choices that foster personal motivation. Readers’ Workshop is well organized. Consistency is the key, with the teacher facilitating students through whole-group mini-lessons, individual work time, small group work time, and whole-group closure. Students have the opportunity to teach each other which encourages a literacy environment that fosters interaction, collaboration, and risk-taking. Additionally, students personally respond to literature through literature logs, conferences, and group sharing (Combs, 1997; Cunningham & Allington, 1999).

Combs (1997) also discusses two traditional approaches to literacy instruction. First, a basal reading series is a “set of sequential instructional materials organized around a hierarchy of reading and language arts skills and strategies” (p. 329). It dominates reading instruction in the United States. Basal series are comprehensive and include a range of materials. In recent years, changes have been made to include more authentic literature, fewer controls on vocabulary, less isolation of strategy and skill
instruction, and more integration of language arts. When using a basal series, the teacher must decide on appropriate activities and instructional goals. They should not rely solely on the Teachers' Edition for decision-making.

The second traditional instructional practice is word study. With this approach, the teacher initially should focus on the recognition and understanding of words, and then move to expanding vocabulary with related words. Daily instruction should be provided for both word identification and spelling. A planned program presents a weekly study of words by a pattern that is integrated into daily reading and writing instruction. A planned weekly program includes a list of 10 to 15 pattern words that are developmentally appropriate (Combs, 1997).

Secondary writing instruction. Researchers contend that writing needs to be infused throughout the curriculum at the secondary level. Reading and writing activities should be provided throughout the day and be built into content-area classes. It is important that students read and write in the content areas in order to emphasize literacy throughout the curriculum (Strauss, 2000, Vacca & Williams, 1995).

Combs (1997) provides several instructional activities for writing in the middle grades. Informally, writing should be used across the curriculum. Students should use writing as a tool for learning. This may be accomplished by having students list, brainstorm, create annotated drawings and charts, write descriptions or explanations, record events in learning logs, and create a Venn diagram or story map. Students also should use graphic organizers, graphs, and note taking throughout the curriculum.

For formal instruction, teachers may implement Writers' Workshop. This instructional strategy provides a predictable time for writing daily. The purpose is for
students to use the writing process to develop formal pieces of writing. They write for a sustained period of time of at least 40 to 60 minutes a day. This sustained time is structured into three parts. First, a whole group session for minilessons or shared writing lasts 10 to 15 minutes. A work-time session consisting of individual writing time, conferencing, or peer editing is next. Another whole group session concludes Writers’ Workshop. During this final 10 to 15 minutes, students either share writings or plan future pieces (Combs, 1997; Cunningham & Allington, 1999).

**Secondary classroom environment.** The classroom environment encompasses many facets. Teaching behaviors influence learning and so does the environment in which that learning occurs. Three factors to examine in the secondary literary classroom environment are the use of a whole language philosophy, curricular issues, and instructional groupings.

Vacca and Williams (1995) promote an essential belief that whole language should be used at the secondary level. They assert that “connectedness is essential to learning and knowing” (p. 102). Learning is a social activity. Therefore, an effective classroom environment is one that encourages risk-taking and social contexts for learning. Students should feel supported in the literacy classroom.

Many curricular issues affect the classroom and school environment. Strauss (2000) studied effective middle school literacy programs in Florida. Based on the findings of this study, she made recommendations concerning middle school curricula. She advocated that schools should consider student needs and developmental tasks as a foundation for curricular decisions. In addition, team teaching should be utilized in order to plan interdisciplinary units. Teachers should be organized into teams that teach the
same group or groups of students. A common planning time should be provided to allow
teams to share information about students and establish professional communication.

Combs (1997) also recommends the use of integrated units. This technique
involves selecting appropriate subject matter for a topic and infusing skills. Subjects
should be linked naturally. Narrative and expository texts need to be balanced because
each requires different reading skills. The school year also can be organized around a
theme.

Classroom literacy environments additionally are affected by methods of
grouping students. At the secondary level, small group or one-on-one instruction usually
characterizes remedial reading programs. These programs are taught by a reading
specialist and focus on phonics and comprehension skills (Conley, 1995). A study by
Strauss (2000) found effective middle school reading programs provided special attention
to struggling readers through a separate class. These students worked with trained reading
specialists.

Instructional groupings also should provide time for academic and recreational
independent reading. To create a classroom environment for independent reading,
teachers should supply a variety of materials and allow students to select their own
materials to read. A consistent schedule should be followed. Teachers also should create
places within the classroom for independent reading (Combs, 1997).

Professional Development for Literacy Instruction

Many studies addressed effective literacy instruction and professional
development. Findings have shown that both principals and teachers need to be involved
with literacy professional development. Effective schools have improved classroom
literacy instruction through building-level training (Taylor et al., 1999). Professional
development for literacy instruction encompasses many of the literacy areas discussed
previously and produces positive consequences for schools and learners.

Professional development is a broad area for discussion. For the purposes of this
study, it is categorized into three purposeful areas. First, teachers and administrators have
used professional development for instructional analysis. Training sessions may focus on
methods for analyzing literacy instruction, student achievement, and assessments. A
second topic for professional development is goal setting. This type of training session
may instruct teachers and administrators on how to set goals for both student
improvement and instruction (CIERA, 2002). The third topic for professional
development is to impart effective instructional practices. Teachers can learn how to
promote critical thinking skills and integrate reading and writing across the curriculum
(NASSP, 2001). Hence, professional development for literacy instruction should focus on
pre-, during-, and post-teaching behaviors.

Researchers also have found that professional development produced positive
consequences for schools and learners. Based on findings concerning effective middle
school literacy programs, Strauss (2000) made two recommendations for professional
development that facilitate the emphasis of literacy throughout the curriculum. Teachers
should be trained in the evaluation of student writing, and schools should have trained
reading specialists on staff. Additionally, professional development provided an
opportunity to participate in on-going communities in which teachers deliberately tried to
understand successes and problems (CIERA, 2002). Systematic professional development
also allowed teachers to transmit new knowledge to the classroom and increased student learning (NASSP, 2001)

**Summary**

This literature review on four main topics provided context to the purpose of this study and content validity for the original surveys designed by the researcher. First, standards and accountability is a topic related to the purpose of this study. The Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 mandates annual school, district, and state report cards in order to receive Title I funds. By 2001, all 50 states had a reporting system in place. Forty-eight states use a state assessment as the main indicator of school performance (Goertz et al., 2001). Some of these assessments are based on state standards. However, research concerning state standards are mixed. When rating the quality of state standards, some authors found them acceptable while others did not (Finn et al., 1998; AFT, 2002).

The second main topic, high-stakes assessment, relates to state accountability programs. Most of these programs report school progress based on student performance on a single assessment. Research findings are inconclusive about the impact of high-stakes assessment on teaching and learning. A meta-analysis by Mehrens (1998) found a lack of quantity and quality of evidence in published research. Another meta-analysis of studies published between 1992-2002 found most to be theoretical in nature. However, the few quantitative studies available found drawbacks to high-stakes assessments, including the narrowing of curriculum, loss of instructional time, and feelings of anxiety and shame (Cimbricz, 2002).
The A+ Plan is the foundation for Florida's accountability system for public schools. The school grading policy is based on student performance on the FCAT, the statewide assessment. The FCAT Reading and Math tests are administered annually to students in grades 3 to 10. FCAT Writing is administered in grades 4, 8, and 10. The content of the assessment is based on Florida state academic standards, the Sunshine State Standards, and includes reading, mathematics, and writing (Florida Department of Education, 2001c).

Literacy instruction is the overriding topic in this literature review because its subject matter provided context to the purpose of this study and content validity for the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey that was developed for this study. Several studies found that effective teachers used a variety of instructional techniques to teach reading and writing. Many authors advocate this balanced approach to literacy instruction (Combs, 1997, Langer, 1999, National Council of Teachers of English, 2002, Pressley, Yokoi, Rankin, Wharton-McDonald, & Mistretta-Hampston, 1997, Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999). Several effective literacy instructional practices were also presented in this literature review.
Chapter Three

Methods

This chapter describes the methods employed in this study. Information regarding subject sampling and demographics is presented. The procedures for the research design and instrumentation are explained. Additionally, the statistical techniques planned for data analysis are described.

Subjects

Teachers and principals working at a school originally graded A or F in 2002 comprised the school sample for this study. The Director or Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum for each school district represented in the sample also was surveyed. A total of 348 participants were mailed surveys for this study.

Sampling

A random sample was drawn from all Florida schools originally graded an A or F in 2002. This decision was made because a random sample of about 10% of the population provides for adequate confidence when making inferences to the population (Alrek & Settle, 1985). The total number for each sample was 40, totaling 80 schools for the entire random sample. This number was approximately nine percent of the population of A (n = 851) and F (n = 68) schools for the 2001-2002 school year.
since their original 2001-02 grade was F. Data from participants at these two schools were included with data from participants at F schools because they originally were graded an F and still represented a state-designated low performing school.

Table 1
Number of Schools by Level and Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were three categories of participants for this study. The first category was classroom teachers. Teacher participants were general education classroom teachers who taught reading, writing, and/or language arts in grades 3 to 10 at the participating schools during the 2001-02 school year. A total of 307 Literacy Instructional Practices Surveys were mailed to eligible teachers at participating schools originally graded A or F. A total of 107 or 35% of the teachers returned surveys.

Principals at participating schools comprised the second category of study participants. A total of 26 School Governance Surveys were mailed to eligible principals. Seventeen surveys at a 65% response rate were returned. The third category of participants consisted of district curriculum administrators where these schools were located. A District Governance Survey was faxed to the District Director of Curriculum
or equivalent position for each of the 15 school districts represented by the study sample. Twelve participants at a 75% response rate in this category returned surveys.

**Procedures**

Participants were determined by drawing a random sample of A schools (n = 40) and a random sample of F schools (n = 40). Next, corresponding district approvals for school participation (n = 27) were sought by faxing a request letter to each district’s Superintendent (see Appendix C). Either the Superintendent approved the study by signing the letter, or, the researcher was directed to the district’s research review committee. In these cases, the district research application was completed and submitted to the designated district committee. In the districts where permission for research was granted, each principal was contacted to obtain his or her approval for participation in the study.

If the principal agreed to participate, he or she named a school contact to assist with survey distribution. The researcher telephoned each school contact to determine the number of eligible teacher participants. Each participant’s survey was coded. Survey distribution directions, a master survey code tracking list, and participant surveys with return envelopes were mailed to each school contact. Confidentiality procedures and the risk/benefit ratio were explained to each participant through a cover letter attached to each survey (see Appendix D). Different surveys were used for teachers and for principals (see Appendices E and F). After a 10 day no-response period, follow-up surveys were mailed or faxed to the school contact for participants who had not returned the initial survey.
After initial mailings to participating schools, the District Director of Curriculum or equivalent district-level participant for each corresponding school district was determined. Each district-level participant was faxed the third survey, the District Governance Survey (Appendix G). Follow-up phone calls were conducted for district-level participants who did not return the survey within 10 days. Beginning one month from the initial mailing date for each type of survey, data from all three surveys were coded and/or tallied.

Instrumentation

Three original surveys were designed, piloted, and implemented for this study. The surveys were 1) Literacy Instructional Practices (Appendix E), 2) School Governance Survey (Appendix F), and 3) District Governance Survey (Appendix G). Each survey’s content was based on established research in literacy instructional practices, personnel, and school governance procedures.

Initial Instrument Design

Each survey was designed with the intent to collect data relevant to this study’s purpose. Other design considerations included readability, ease of use, and clarity of directions and items. The researcher decided to solicit from the teachers the frequency of literacy instructional practices in order to determine if and how frequently the practices occurred at A and F schools. Open-ended items concerning professional development and test preparation were included to provide contextual data to the accountability and high-stakes assessment policies implemented by the A+ Plan.
To collect data concerning personnel and governance, the researcher decided to solicit the types of literacy instructional personnel and school governance practices from principals and district-level participants. The majority of items on the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey were based on a frequency scale. Seven open-ended questions allowed for the gathering of qualitative data as well. One example of an open-ended question asked, “What did your principal expect you to do to prepare for FCAT Reading?”

The School Governance Survey and District Governance Survey consisted of multiple-response and open-ended questions. One example of a multiple-response item required participants to indicate the methods used to evaluate literacy teacher performance. Participants were to indicate all responses that applied to their school or district, respectively. An open-ended item example asked, “How did you encourage communication and reflective dialogue regarding literacy instruction amongst the staff?”

Pilot Study for Original Instruments

Two surveys were piloted to address validity and reliability. The Literacy Instructional Practices Survey was piloted with 17 participants. Pilot participants were classroom teachers responsible for reading and/or language arts instruction in Florida public schools. They were not a part of the randomly selected A or F school population. They represented both elementary and secondary school levels and various school districts. The School Governance Survey was piloted with 17 principals also representing elementary and secondary levels and various school districts. The District Governance Survey was not piloted because the majority of items were identical to the School Governance Survey. It only varied in the directions, such as the type of participant.
required to complete the survey, and demographic items, such as school setting versus
district size. The Literacy Instructional Practice and School Governance surveys were
refined based on the pilot results before distribution to the study sample.

_Literacy Instructional Practices Survey._ The original Literacy Instructional
Practices Survey contained seven composite measures: Instructional Groupings (IG),
Materials (M), Decoding Teaching Practices (DTP), Comprehension Teaching Practices
(CTP), Writing Teaching Practices (WTP), Classroom Activities (CA), and Professional
Behaviors (PB). Cronbach Alpha reliability analyses were conducted on the pilot data.
Based on these analyses, refinements were made that improved the instrument's
reliability while, at the same time, retained its content validity. The refinement decisions
are described in the following paragraph.

For the IG Composite, items relating to student-led small group instruction and
criteria other than ability for grouping students were deleted. Item 3, concerning one-to-
one instruction, was changed to an open-ended question and retained for validity
purposes. The end result was a Cronbach Alpha of .72 for this section. For the M
Composite, Item 18 regarding district test preparation materials was deleted, resulting in
a Cronbach Alpha of .67. For the DTP Composite (Cronbach Alpha = .69), Item 27 was
rewritten for clarity instead of being deleted. It originally stated “Vocabulary”, but was
rewritten to state “systematic instruction in vocabulary development, including word
meanings”. The intention of this decision was to create greater variance among
participant responses while retaining the content validity concerning decoding teaching
practices. The CTP Composite did not require any deletions or refinement (Cronbach
Alpha = .85).
For the WTP Composite (Cronbach Alpha = 69), the decision was made to keep all original items for validity purposes. Two items concerning News Boards and interactive writing were deleted from the CA Composite, resulting in a Cronbach Alpha of 72. The PB Composite had a very low Cronbach Alpha (.25) due to little variance in the data. The decision was made to delete this entire composite. In its place, two open-ended questions were created to solicit data concerning professional development.

The end result of these changes was an instrument with 86 items and six composites. All composites had a Cronbach Alpha of at least 67. Further item deletions in the M, DTP, and WTP Composites would have resulted in Cronbach Alpha values greater than the commonly accepted .70. However, such deletions would have negatively affected the content validity of the instrument. Thus, the final version of the survey aimed to balance the instrument’s reliability and validity.

_School Governance and District Governance Surveys_ Analysis of pilot data on the School Governance Survey resulted in no deletions of items. The instrument consisted of 25 items. Thirteen items were multiple-choice and four were open-ended questions. The other eight items solicited demographic information such as gender and district size. Three items were rewritten for clarity based on feedback from pilot participants. One example of revision is the addition of “Specialist” to the degree options. Reliability analysis on the only composite, Decision-Making Collaboration, yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .71.
Statistical Techniques

The statistical techniques employed depended upon the research question, data collected by the instrument, and actual sample size. Descriptive analyses including percentages and measures of central tendency were conducted on data from all three surveys and are noted in succeeding sections. T-tests and Chi-square analyses to determine significant differences between group means were planned for data collected by the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey and the School Governance Survey. For all surveys, demographic data for participants were coded and tallied.

Literacy Instructional Practices Survey

Frequency data for the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey were coded and tallied. Responses were coded 1 (daily), 2 (monthly), 3 (weekly), and 4 (never). Any item not answered was assigned a missing case value of 0. For each composite, item codes were summed to determine a composite score. If more than 20% of items were missing in a composite, a missing case value of 0 was assigned for the composite score.

Each Literacy Instructional Practice Survey response was recorded in an SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Student version 10.0.5 for Windows) data table. In addition, each composite score was recorded in an SPSS data table. Frequency distributions for each item and each composite score were determined. T-tests were employed to analyze differences in mean composite scores between participants from A schools and participants from F schools. Significance levels for all t-tests were set at .05 to provide a 95% confidence interval.
School Governance Survey

Item responses for the School Governance Survey were tallied and frequency distributions for each item were determined. Chi-square analyses were planned for items collecting data concerning personnel and governance procedures. A t-test was planned to analyze differences in the mean Decision-Making Collaboration Composite scores between participants at A schools and F schools. However, these inferential statistical analyses were not conducted due to a very small sample size \( (n < 30) \). Permission to participate was granted by only 16 principals at A schools and 10 principals at F schools.

District Governance Survey

The District Governance Survey responses also were tallied for frequency distributions. Descriptive analyses of data collected by this instrument served to convey school governance as reported by a district-level administrator. This additional descriptive information added context to data collected by the School Governance Survey by providing data on the same survey items from a different administrative perspective.

Summary

This chapter reported the methods used to implement this study. Random sampling was used to select Florida schools graded A and F in 2002. Possible participants for the study were determined after the schools were randomly selected. All participants were associated with either an A or F school. There were three participant groups: 1) grade 3 - 10 teachers who taught reading, writing, and/or language arts during the 2001-02 school year \( (n = 107) \); 2) principals \( (n = 17) \); and 3) District Directors of Curriculum
or equivalent positions for the district in which the randomly selected school was located (n = 12).

Procedures and instrumentation also were explained in this chapter. Permission to conduct research was obtained from districts and principals for all participating schools. A school contact distributed the surveys to eligible participants in order to provide participant anonymity and track a response rate. Follow-up phone calls and mailings were used in an attempt to increase participant response rates and decrease non-response bias. The surveys, Literacy Instructional Practices, School Governance, and District Governance, were piloted using Cronbach Alpha reliability analyses before distribution to the study sample.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were planned for data collected by the survey instruments. Descriptive analyses included frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. Planned inferential analyses included an independent t-test and Chi-square analysis.
Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and school governance. To accomplish this purpose, data was collected from a random sample of teachers, principals, and district-level curriculum administrators through the design, development, and implementation of surveys. Teacher participants provided information concerning literacy instructional practices. Principal and district-level participants provided information concerning personnel and school governance.

Results of the study are presented in three sections. Descriptive analyses including frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency are reported for data concerning participant demographics, literacy instructional practices, personnel, and school governance. Inferential analyses in the form of t-tests were conducted on data concerning the frequency of literacy instructional practices at state-designated high (graded A) and low (graded F) performing schools. Additionally, a document analysis was conducted to determine if changes were made in the school grading policy by the Florida Department of Education since the policy's inception in 1999.
Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on four types of data: participant demographics, literacy instructional practices, personnel, and school governance. All data was collected by the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey, School Governance Survey, or District Governance Survey. In each of the four types of data, results are presented for frequency rates, percentage of responses, and measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode, and standard deviation).

Participant Demographics

There were three groups of participants in this study: teachers at A and F schools, principals at A and F schools, and relative district directors of curriculum or the equivalent positions (district-level participant). Teacher participants and principal participants were associated with either a state-designated highest (A) or lowest (F) performing school. District participants were associated with the school district in which the randomly selected schools were located. District participants were not sub-divided into high and low performing groups because the district offices were not given a performance status by the Florida Department of Education. However, district participants each had an A and/or F school(s) in his or her district. This section presents a descriptive analysis of participant demographics.

Teacher participants. The total sample for this study consisted of 107 classroom teachers responsible for reading, writing, and/or language arts instruction. A total of 307 surveys were mailed to eligible randomly selected teacher participants. There was a 35% response rate for the total teacher sample.
Eighty-five percent of the participants were female with 15% of participants being male. The percentage between elementary and secondary levels was almost even, 51% of participants taught at the elementary level and 49% at the secondary level. The majority of total participants (57%) held a Bachelor's Degree. Sixty-four percent of the teacher respondents taught reading, writing, and language arts during the 2001-02 school year. The other teachers were responsible for either one or two of those subjects. Of the total teacher sample, 50% identified his or her school as suburban setting, 25% as rural, and 25% as urban.

The total sample consisted of teachers from two groups of schools. One group (n = 72) taught at state-designated high performing (A) schools. A total of 175 surveys were mailed to teachers in this group. The response rate was 41%. The majority (90%) of teacher participants in the A group was female and was located at suburban schools (75%). Fifty-four percent of A school teachers taught at the elementary level and 46% at the secondary level. However, the participants at the secondary level were mostly from middle schools (94%). Elementary and secondary teacher participants both averaged 15 years teaching experience. Fifty-four percent of the participants in this group held a Bachelor's Degree. Another 42% held a Masters Degree. Table 2 presents a breakdown of demographic data for both elementary and secondary teachers in the A school group.
Table 2  
Teacher Participants at A Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>% of Participants</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second group of teacher participants taught at state-designated low (F) performing schools (n = 35) A total of 132 surveys were mailed to this group of teachers. The response rate (27%) was smaller than the A school group of teachers. The same procedures were followed for mailings to both groups. However, more follow-up calls
were made to school contacts at F schools due to a lower response rate. One school contact reported that she was so overwhelmed at work that she had neglected to distribute the surveys in a timely fashion. The deadline for returning surveys was extended for that school. Two other school contacts distributed the surveys as directed for the initial and follow-up mailings. No surveys were returned from eligible participants at those schools. Another school contact was faxed a third copy of the survey to distribute to eligible participants who lost their other two copies. These factors contributed to the overall low response rate for participants in the F school group.

The majority (73%) of teacher participants in the F school group were female and located in a rural school setting (67%). Forty-six percent of the participants taught at the elementary level. They averaged 12 years experience. All of the secondary participants taught at the high school level. They averaged 13.44 years experience. Sixty-four percent held a Bachelor's degree and 33% held a Master's. Table 3 presents demographic data for both elementary and secondary teacher participants in the F school group.
Table 3
Teacher Participants at F Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal Participants. A total of 17 principals responded to the School Governance Survey (65% response rate). Approximately three-fourths (76%) of these participants were located at an A school. The majority of all principal participants were female (76%) and at the elementary level (59%). All principal participants held a graduate degree, with 82% holding a Masters Degree. Fifty-three percent of the principal participants reported to be in a suburban setting. They averaged 7.25 years experience as a principal. Ninety-four percent of principal participants reported that a majority of reading and writing teachers taught in-field during the 2001-02 school year. The average days per school year required for teachers was 196.

District Participants. A total of 12 district-level participants or 75% responded to the District Governance Survey. These participants were either the District Director of Curriculum or the Associate Superintendent of Curriculum of the school districts in which the randomly selected schools were located. Fifty-eight percent of participants were male. Fifty-five percent of district respondents reported to be in a mid-size school district (26-100 schools). All of the district-level participants reported that a majority of reading and writing teachers taught in-field during the 2001-02 school year.

Literacy Instructional Practices

Teacher participants responded to the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey. The content included in this survey was determined through a review of available research on effective literacy instructional practices. Seventy-one items listed literacy instructional practices. Participants selected a frequency scale response that best reflected their practices during the 2001-02 school year. Responses were coded 1 (daily), 2 (weekly), 3 (monthly), and 4 (never) with the lower number representing the more frequent behavior.
Items without responses were coded as a missing case. Items 71 - 78 were open-ended questions. Quantitative and qualitative descriptive results for this survey are presented in the next three sub-sections.

**Frequency of Instructional Practices.** The majority (83%) of items on the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey collected data regarding the frequency of teaching practices in a literacy classroom. A summary of measures of central tendency relative to Items 1 through 71 is presented in Appendix H. Responses to selected survey items that relate to the FCAT or research-supported effective practices were individually analyzed to add context for the purpose of this study. Percentages of teachers’ responses to these selected items are presented in this section. Overall, responses between the two groups were similar in frequency of use.

The Instructional Grouping (IG) Composite consisted of Items 1 - 5 and solicited the frequency of use of a variety of instructional groupings. Table 4 presents the percentage of teacher participant responses to Items 1, 2, and 4. Results showed a large majority of A (89%) and F (86%) participants reported to use whole group instruction on a daily basis. That percentage decreases to 38% and 40% respectively in regards to daily use of teacher-led small group instruction. About half of teacher participants in both groups used cooperative groups on a weekly basis.
Table 4
Percentage of Teacher Participant Responses For IG Composite Items 1, 2, and 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Group Instruction</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-led Small Group</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Groups</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

The Materials (M) Composite consisted of Items 6 - 16 and collected data concerning the frequency of use of materials that are related to reading and writing curricula. Table 5 presents results for Items 7, 13, and 14. Sixty-four percent of A school participants and 65% of F school participants responded that children's or adolescents' literature was used on a daily basis. The percentage of responses for daily use of basal readers and/or texts (A = 64% and F = 53%) was less than the percentage for daily use of literature. Most participants used Florida Department of Education FCAT preparation materials (A = 41% and F = 54%) on a weekly basis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s or Adolescents’ Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basal Readers and/or Texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Department of Education FCAT Preparation Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number
The Decoding Teaching Practices (DTP) Composite consisted of Items 17 – 25 and measured the frequency of decoding teaching practices. Table 6 presents results for Items 19 and 20, which related to phonics instruction. A majority (A = 53% and F = 66%) of participants reported to never teach phonics as a separate subject. Rather, 46% of A school teacher participants and 46% of F school teacher participants reported to teach phonics in the context of reading or writing on a daily basis.

Table 6
Percentage of Teacher Participant Responses For DTP Composite Items 19 and 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics as a Separate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics in the Context of</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading or Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number
The Comprehension Teaching Practices (CTP) Composite contains Items 26 – 36. A variety of comprehension and critical thinking skills are covered in this composite. One example is problem solving (Table 7). Seventy-three percent of A school teacher participants and 83% of F school teacher participants reported that they provided systematic instruction in solving problem situations creatively at least weekly.

Table 7
Percentage of Teacher Participant Responses For CTP Composite Item 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving Problem</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number.

The Writing Teaching Practices (WTP) Composite consisted of Items 37 – 46 which collected data regarding the frequency of these practices. Table 8 presents the reported frequency percentages for Items 40, 42, and 46. A majority of teacher participants (A = 80% and F = 70%) required students to write for sustained periods of time at least on a weekly basis. Prewriting strategies were taught less frequently. Seventy-six percent of A school teachers and 63% of F school teachers taught prewriting strategies on at least a weekly basis. Forty-four percent of A school teachers and 33% of
F school teachers indicated the use of the FCAT scoring rubric on a monthly basis.

Eighteen percent of F school teacher participants reported they never used the FCAT Writing Scoring Rubric on student writing assignments.

Table 8  
Percentage of Teacher Participant Responses For WTP Composite Items 40, 42, and 46

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required Students to Spend Time with Sustained Writing (i.e. journals)</td>
<td>43 A</td>
<td>41 F</td>
<td>37 A</td>
<td>29 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught Prewriting Strategies</td>
<td>31 A</td>
<td>20 A</td>
<td>45 A</td>
<td>49 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used 6-Point FCAT Writing Scoring Rubric on Student Writing Assignments</td>
<td>10 A</td>
<td>18 A</td>
<td>34 A</td>
<td>34 F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number
The Classroom Activities (CA) Composite contained the most items, numbers 47 - 71. The items solicited data concerning the frequency of reading and writing activities that occurred in the classroom during the 2001-02 school year. Thirteen items dealt with reading activities and 12 items concerned writing activities. Tables 9 and 10 summarize responses for highlighted CA Composite Items. Results are reported in the following paragraphs.

Forty-two percent of A school teacher participants and 49% of F school participants required students to discuss texts they had read on a daily basis. A majority of teacher participants at A schools (63%) and F schools (55%) required students to read in the content areas on a daily basis. Teachers at F schools provided opportunities for students to write original material more frequently than their counterparts at A schools. At F schools, 65% of teachers reported to provide opportunities for students to write original material on a weekly basis whereas 25% of teachers at A schools reported the same frequency.
Table 9
Percentage of Teacher Participant Responses For CA Composite Items 47, 52, and 60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Discussions</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about Texts They Read</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading in the Content</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to Write</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

The majority of participants at A schools required students write to FCAT practice prompts on a monthly basis. A smaller percentage of participants at F schools reported monthly practice with FCAT prompts (refer to Table10 for breakdown of percentages).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students Wrote to a Narrative Prompt (FCAT Practice)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Wrote to a Persuasive Prompt (FCAT Practice)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Wrote to an Expository Prompt (FCAT Practice)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 11 summarizes the mean scores from the highlighted Literacy Instructional Practices Survey Composite Items presented in the previous pages. Means are reported for A and F school teacher participants. The frequency scale for responses ranged from 1 (daily) to 4 (never).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th></th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IG Composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTP Composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTP Composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTP Composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA Composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive analysis of mean composite scores for both the A and F groups of teacher participants was conducted. Table 12 summarizes measures of central tendencies for the six composites in both groups of teacher participants. Measures of central tendencies for both groups were close in values. The A school and F school group means for each composite were within 1.6 points of each other. The medians of both groups in each composite were within 2 points of each other. In both groups, multiple modes existed in four composites.

Table 12  
Summary of Composites for Participants at A and F Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IG</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>27*</td>
<td>23*</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTP</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>15*</td>
<td>16*</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTP</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTP</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>19*</td>
<td>21*</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Multiple modes existed, smallest value shown
Effects of State-Accountability System on Curriculum. Item 72 on the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey was designed to solicit data regarding the effects of the FCAT/high-stakes assessment system on curriculum. Participants who had taught in Florida at least five years were asked if the curriculum has changed since the inception of FCAT. If it had, they were asked to explain how it changed. In total, 50 teacher participants answered this question.

Respondents who answered this question reported that their curriculum had changed since the inception of FCAT. Changes were noted in both state-designated A and F schools. Only two participants indicated no change in curriculum. All other responses described changes in the scope of curriculum and materials and changes in expectations placed teachers concerning instructional practices.

Forty percent of responses indicated a narrowing scope of curriculum and materials, regardless of state-designated A or F status. More focus had been placed on basic skills. Less focus was given to content to be learned in social studies, science, and the arts. Examples of comments from teacher participants at A and F schools include:

- Instead of being able to do activities to encourage a love of reading, our activities are narrow and limited to what has become known as “dreaded” FCAT assignments.

- Curriculum has increased in quantity and quality. Passages are longer—expectations are greater. Research-based programs are implemented.

- Before, we taught what we thought a child needed to know to function in our work, now we teach a test!

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Yes. We gear way too much of our instruction towards these tests. Unfortunately, it takes away SIGNIFICANTLY the time for other important subjects—like SCIENCE and SOCIAL STUDIES...where students have a natural curiosity/thirst for knowledge!! What happened to having time for experiments/learning about cultures, etc?

Sixty-two percent of teacher participants indicated that expectations concerning their instructional practices have changed. Many responses described expectations of having to teach to the test, focusing on FCAT expectations. Some indicated an alignment of curriculum and instruction to the Sunshine State Standards. The following quotes from teacher responses illustrate this finding:

- I teach the FCAT only!
- Teach more to the test only - learn to play the test game.
- Test-prep is the whole focus.
- Everything we do is focused on FCAT. Yet we lack many of the basics for the students to do well on the test due to reasons beyond our control.
- Teaching-to-the-test is expected!
- The FCAT drives all instruction - pressure is tremendous for students, parents and teachers. Pressure to maintain A school status - the “bar” being raised instead of looking at growth of each student.

FCAT Preparation. Survey Items 77 and 78 asked teacher participants about their principal’s expectations for FCAT preparation. Responses from teachers in both A and F school groups were similar and represented a variety of approaches to test preparation.
Patterns did emerge in participant responses concerning expectations for FCAT Reading and FCAT Writing preparation.

Three patterns appeared throughout responses concerning FCAT Reading preparation. Fifty-four percent of teacher respondents reported that their principals expected them to focus on the skills tested by the statewide assessment. Fifty-five percent of respondents reported that they were expected to teach test taking strategies. Three responses related to literacy instructional practices when teachers indicated that they extended or provided an uninterrupted block of time for reading instruction.

Three additional patterns emerged from teacher responses for FCAT Writing preparation. Teachers (60%) mostly reported that their principals expected them to use FCAT practice prompts. Fifty-four percent of respondents reported that they were expected to teach the writing process. Some teachers reported an expectation to teach a formula for a successful FCAT Writing response, such as a five paragraph expository prompt or a three-part narrative response.

*Personnel*

The School Governance Survey and District Governance Survey collected data concerning school-based literacy personnel. The original research design proposed to conduct inferential statistical analyses on this data. Due to a small sample size $(n < 30)$, only descriptive statistics are presented.

*Types of Personnel.* All principal participants reported the use of full-time classroom teachers to teach reading and writing during the 2001-02 school year. Two principals reported the use of a full-time reading specialist and one reported the use of a full-time writing specialist. Forty-one percent of the principal participants reported
having a remedial reading teacher that was not funded through Title I. Table 13
summarizes the frequencies and percentages of all responses from principal participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Type</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I, Separate From Classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial Reading, Separate From Title I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Writing Specialist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Reading Specialist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District-level participants were asked to report the types of literacy teachers employed at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The most frequent types of teachers at all three levels were the full-time classroom teacher and the remedial reading teacher. Title I reading teachers most frequently were employed at the elementary and middle school levels (refer to Table 14).
### Table 14
**Types of Literacy Teachers**
**District-level Participant Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I, Separate From Classroom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial Reading, Separate From Title I</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Writing Specialist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Reading Specialist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methods to Evaluate Personnel.** All principal participants used informal classroom observation and student achievement on FCAT as methods to evaluate literacy teachers during the 2001-02 school year. Most principals (76%) used the Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS), a standardized formal observation instrument, and examination of teachers’ lesson plans and other instructional materials as methods to evaluate teacher performance. Three methods were used by few principals: evaluation by students (12%), peer review (18%), and a teacher portfolio of Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (29%). Table 15 presents frequencies and percentages of principal responses concerning methods used to evaluate literacy personnel.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th></th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Classroom Observation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation by Students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPMS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Surveys</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement on FCAT</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam plans and materials</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Portfolio</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All district-level participants reported the use of informal observation as a method to evaluate literacy personnel performance during the 2001-02 school year. No district-level participants reported the use of evaluation by students or peer review. A summary of frequencies and percentages for all methods of evaluation are presented in Table 16.

Table 16
Methods to Evaluate Literacy Personnel Performance
District-level Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Classroom Observation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation by Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPMS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Surveys</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement on FCAT</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam plans and materials</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Portfolio</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85
School Governance

Principal and district-level participants responded to survey items regarding school governance procedures. The School Governance Survey and the District Governance Survey were used to collect this information. The 11 items discussed in this section were worded the same on both instruments. This decision was made in order to gather information from both levels of school administration concerning school governance procedures. Inferential statistics were planned for these items. However, due to a low school participation rate (n = 17), only descriptive statistics can be reported, as noted earlier. Data is presented for two areas: school governance practices and decision-making collaboration. All results reported for the principal participants and the district-level participants reflect practices used during the 2001-02 school year.

School Governance Practices: Six survey items collected information on a variety of school management issues such as development of school vision and mission statements and management of the school’s budget. Tables 17 - 22 summarize survey responses from principal participants regarding school governance practices. The results are reported singularly for A and F school groups as well as for the total principal participant sample.

In the total sample, 94% of principals reported that school-based staff and/or the principal developed their school’s vision and mission statements. At a majority (59%) of the schools, professional development for reading and writing instruction was offered on a monthly basis. Fifty-nine percent of the principal participants visited classrooms during reading or writing activities on a weekly basis. Sixty-five percent reported to group
teachers for planning teams by grade level. Furthermore, the majority of principal
participants indicated collaboration among district-level staff, principals, and teachers
when managing individual school budgets (95%) and making personnel decisions (84%).

Table 17
Personnel who Developed School Vision and Mission Statements
Principal Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based Staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Staff</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-based Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 18
Offerings for Literacy Professional Development
Principal Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-weekly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Semester</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 19
Literacy Classroom Visitations by Principal
Principal Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88
Table 20
Types of Groupings for Teacher Planning Teams
Principal Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouped By</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical Family (i.e. K-5 or 6-8)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Area</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21
Management of Individual School Budgets
Principal Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managed By</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Staff and Principal in Collaboration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Only (Complete Autonomy)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Teachers in Collaboration</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants were allowed to choose all applicable responses to this item.
Table 22
Decisions About School Personnel
Principal Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions Made By</th>
<th>A School Group</th>
<th>F School Group</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Staff Only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Staff and Principal in Collaboration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Only (Complete Autonomy)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Teachers in Collaboration</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants were allowed to choose all applicable responses to this item

Survey responses from district-level participants regarding school governance practices also were tallied for frequency rates. All district-level participants reported that principals and teachers developed the school vision and mission statements. Fifty percent of participants indicated that literacy professional development was offered either weekly or bi-weekly. A majority (78%) reported collaboration between district and school staff when managing the individual school budget. Sixty percent of the district-level participants reported collaboration between district and school staff concerning personnel decisions. A discrepancy emerged between district-level and principal participant responses in regards to principal autonomy in personnel decisions. Only 16% of principal
responses indicated complete autonomy while 40% of district-level responses reported
complete autonomy for principals. Further analysis revealed, however, that of the
principal and district-level participants who were located in the same district, 50% agreed
on the level of principal autonomy in personnel decisions. Tables 23 - 26 present results
from district-level participant responses concerning school governance practices.

Table 23
Personnel who Developed School Vision and Mission Statements
District-level Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-based Staff</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Staff</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-based Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24
Offerings for Literacy Professional Development
District-level Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Offerings</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-weekly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Semester</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25
Management of Individual School Budget
District-level Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managed By</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Staff and Principal in Collaboration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Only (Complete Autonomy)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Teachers in Collaboration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants were allowed to choose all applicable responses to this item
### Table 26
Decisions About School Personnel
District-level Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions Made By</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Staff Only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Staff and Principals in Collaboration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Only (Complete Autonomy)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Teachers Collaborated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants were allowed to choose all applicable responses to this item.

*Decision-Making Collaboration Composite.* A majority of district-level and principal participants reported collaboration among district-level staff, principals, and teachers when making school governance decisions. Six survey items solicited this information. Responses to Items 8 and 9 (see Appendices F and G) indicated the degree of collaboration when making purchasing decisions about reading and writing curriculum and/or materials. Responses to Items 11 and 12 indicated the degree of collaboration when making decisions regarding curriculum and instruction for reading and writing. Responses to Item 13 described the degree of collaboration when selecting professional development training for literacy instruction. Responses were coded from 1 to 5, with the larger number indicating the greater the degree of collaboration. Table 27 summarizes the
Decision-Making Collaboration Composite results for principal participants. Table 28 summarizes results for district-level participants.

Table 27
Decision-Making Collaboration Composite Principal Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions About</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Curriculum and/or Materials</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Curriculum and/or Materials</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Literacy Professional</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>22.48</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20*</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Multiple modes existed The smallest value is shown.
Table 28
Decision-Making Collaboration Composite
District-Level Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions About</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Curriculum and/or Materials</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Curriculum and/or Materials</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Literacy Professional</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>28.73</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Encouragement of Communication and Reflective Dialogue Among Teachers.*

Survey Item 14 on the School Governance Survey asked principals how they encouraged communication and reflective dialogue regarding literacy instruction among teachers. Thirteen responses indicated the use of regularly scheduled faculty or department meetings as a vehicle to generate communication among teachers. One principal reported the development of a literacy council to set goals and strategies for the school's literacy program. Another principal encouraged teachers to meet on a weekly basis with the literacy resource teacher. In general, principal participants relied on weekly or monthly meetings as the sole means for communication.
Recognition of Successful Literacy Teachers. Survey Item 15 on the School Governance Survey asked principals how they offered formal recognition to successful literacy teachers. The responses varied. Two principals wrote acknowledgements in weekly newsletters or bulletins. Four principals reported on praising teachers during faculty meetings. Six principals issued special recognition certificates or awards. Three principal participants reported offering no formal recognition of successful literacy teachers.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

Due to a small sample size for principals (n = 17) and district-level participants (n = 12), inferential statistical analysis was conducted only on data from teacher participants (n = 107). An Independent Samples t-test was conducted on group mean composite scores from the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey. One group consisted of participants from A schools (state-designated high performing schools). The second group consisted of participants from F schools (state-designated low performing schools). Participant responses to items in each composite were summed to create a composite score. An Independent Samples t-test was employed to compare the two groups’ mean scores. For each t-test, a null hypothesis was assumed, implying that there was no significant difference between the two group means. An a priori alpha level of .05 was set for all reported t-tests. Additionally, for each reported t-test, the significance level for the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances was greater than .10, signifying the legitimate use for a conventional t-test (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). Results from the six Independent
Samples t-tests are discussed in this section. Results are presented for two categories: instructional practices and classroom environment.

**Instructional Practices**

The Decoding Teaching Practices (DTP), Comprehension Teaching Practices (CTP), and Writing Teaching Practices (WTP) Composites addressed instructional practices. The DTP Composite consisted of nine survey items soliciting responses concerning decoding instructional practices (see Items 17 to 25 in Appendix E). The CTP Composite consisted of 11 items concerning comprehension instructional practices (see Items 26 to 36 in Appendix E). The WTP Composite contained 10 items dealing with writing instructional practices (see Items 37 to 46 in Appendix E) All item responses were based on a frequency scale from 1 (daily) to 4 (never) Therefore a lower mean score indicated a more frequent occurrence of that instructional practice T-tests yielded no significant differences in instructional practices between the two groups Tables 29 - 31 provide a detailed description of group statistics for each composite Table 32 summarizes the results of the three t-tests.

**Table 29**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schools</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17.84</td>
<td>5.551</td>
<td>6640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Schools</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18.94</td>
<td>6.3051</td>
<td>10813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 30
CTP Composite Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schools</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>18.61</td>
<td>5.3492</td>
<td>6348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Schools</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20.18</td>
<td>6.0074</td>
<td>1.0303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 31
WTP Composite Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schools</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21.26</td>
<td>4.9913</td>
<td>5924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Schools</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22.42</td>
<td>5.8258</td>
<td>1.0141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 32
Summary of T-Test Results: Instructional Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>2-tailed sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DTP</td>
<td>-0.905</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>$p = .368$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTP</td>
<td>-1.353</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>$p = .179$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTP</td>
<td>-1.042</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>$p = .300$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classroom Environment

Three composites, Instructional Groupings (IG), Materials (M), and Classroom Activities (CA) addressed issues relating to the classroom environment. The IG Composite consisted of five survey items soliciting responses regarding a variety of instructional groupings for literacy instruction (see Items 1 to 5 in Appendix E). The M Composite consisted of 11 items concerning materials used during literacy instruction (see Items 6 to 16 in Appendix E). The CA Composite contained 25 items that described a variety of reading and writing activities that could be implemented in the classroom (see Items 47 to 71 in Appendix E). All item responses were based on a frequency scale from 1 (daily) to 4 (never). A lower mean score indicated a more frequent occurrence of that instructional practice. T-tests yielded no significant differences between the two groups in the frequency of use of instructional groupings, materials, and classroom activities. Tables 33-35 provide a detailed description of group statistics for each of these three composites. Table 36 summarizes the results of these three t-tests.
Table 33
IG Composite Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schools</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>8.7606</td>
<td>2.5661</td>
<td>3045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Schools</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.8286</td>
<td>2.9254</td>
<td>4945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34
M Composite Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schools</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td>4.2360</td>
<td>4992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Schools</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23.59</td>
<td>4.7169</td>
<td>8089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35
CA Composite Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schools</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58.30</td>
<td>9.0051</td>
<td>10841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Schools</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58.91</td>
<td>9.7371</td>
<td>16699</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 36
Summary of T-Test Results: Classroom Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>2-tailed sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IG</td>
<td>-122</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>p &gt; .903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>.997</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>p = .321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>-1.321</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>p = .749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100
One research question of this study concerned seeking information related to any changes in the school grading policy since its inception in 1999. Data was collected through a document analysis of the School Accountability Report Guides for 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002, published by the Florida Department of Education (Florida Department of Education, 2002a). The Florida Department of Education website (http://www.firn.edu/doe) also was used to research school grading policy guidelines and FCAT Reading Achievement Levels. Results of the document analysis revealed slight changes by the Florida Department of Education to the school grading policy from 1999-2001. However, major changes were made to the grading system in 2002.

The school grading policy was established in 1999. Minimum criteria were set by which schools were graded. To earn the grade of C, a school had to produce FCAT Reading, Writing, and Math data at or above the minimum criteria set by the Florida Department of Education (see Table 39 for minimum criteria). To earn an A or B, a school had to meet additional FCAT data criteria (refer to Table 40 for higher performing criteria). To earn a D or F, the school had to produce FCAT data below the minimum criteria. Table 37 summarizes the criteria for each school grade in 1999. Tables 38-40 define substantial improvement, substantial decline, higher performing criteria, and minimum performing criteria.
Table 37
School Grading Criteria, 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A     | Meet B criteria, plus:  
|       | - Percentage of students absent more than 20 days, suspended and dropout rates are below state averages  
|       | - Substantial improvement in FCAT reading and no substantial decline in FCAT Writing and FCAT Math  
|       | - At least 95% of standard curriculum students tested on FCAT  |
| B     | Current year reading, writing, and math FCAT data are at or above higher performing criteria  
|       | - No subgroups, i.e. low socioeconomic status or racial groups, are below minimum criteria  
|       | - At least 90% of standard curriculum students were tested on FCAT  |
| C     | Current year FCAT Reading, Writing, and Math data are at or above minimum criteria  |
| D     | Current year FCAT Reading or Writing or Math data are below minimum criteria  |
| F     | Current year FCAT Reading, Writing, and Math data are below minimum criteria  |

Note: Standard curriculum students are students working toward a standard high school diploma, including those in Speech Impaired, Language Impaired, Gifted, Hospital Homebound, and Limited English Proficiency with more than two years in an ESOL program.

There were two exceptions to the grading criteria. First, if a school tested less than 90% of standard curriculum students, than it could not earn a grade higher than C.

Second, if a school tested less than 80% of standard curriculum students, then it was
graded an I, for incomplete. In this case, the issue of a minimum percentage of students had to be resolved between the Florida Department of Education and the given school(s).

Table 38
Definitions for Grading Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial Improvement</td>
<td>More that a two percentage point increase in students scoring Level 3 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75% or more of students score Level 3 and not more than a two percentage point decline from previous year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial Decline</td>
<td>A five or more percentage point decline in students scoring Level 3 and above in Math or Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For Achievement Level Score ranges refer to Table 41.

Table 39
Minimum Performing Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FCAT Test</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>For elementary, middle, and high schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 60% of students score Level 2 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>For elementary, middle, and high schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 60% of students score Level 2 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 50% of students score Level 3 or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 67% of students score Level 3 or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 75% of students score Level 3 or above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For Achievement Level Score ranges refer to Table 41.
Table 40
Higher Performing Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FCAT Test</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>For elementary, middle, and high schools:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o 50% of students score Level 3 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>For elementary, middle, and high schools:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o 50% of students score Level 3 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o 67% of students score Level 3 or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o 75% of students score Level 3 or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o 80% of students score Level 3 or above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For Achievement Level Score ranges refer to Table 41

Additional changes were made to the grading policy in 2000. The A and B criteria for subgroups to perform above the minimum performance criteria was deleted. Also, for the grade of A, the term “substantial decline” was modified to include both math and reading, instead of writing or math.

Additions also were made to the grading criteria. For the grade of A and B, schools had to maintain or improve FCAT Reading scores of the lowest performing students. This new criteria was calculated by determining the percentage of students scoring in Level 1 (Table 41). For school grades of A, B, C, and D, criteria for meeting “other data” were added. This other data criteria addressed student absenteeism, suspension rates, and high school dropout rates. Schools could not exceed one standard deviation from the state average if they were to be graded a C or better. A modification also was made to the criteria for F. Beginning in 2000, schools could be graded an F if
they met all the criteria for a D but tested less than 90% of eligible students. Eligible students were defined as standard curriculum students enrolled at the same school during both October and February FTE counts.

Most of the school grading criteria remained unchanged from 2000 to 2001. The “other data” criteria were deleted by the legislature because after considering any special circumstances no school failed to meet the criteria the previous year. In addition, the FCAT Reading Achievement Levels remained unchanged from 1999-2001. These levels were used to define minimum and higher performing criteria (Table 41).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>100-274</td>
<td>275-298</td>
<td>299-338</td>
<td>339-385</td>
<td>386-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>100-270</td>
<td>271-309</td>
<td>310-349</td>
<td>350-393</td>
<td>394-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>100-286</td>
<td>287-326</td>
<td>327-354</td>
<td>355-371</td>
<td>372-500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41
FCAT Reading Achievement Levels, 1999-2001


In 2002, the school grading policy changed to a system of earning points in six categories (as explained in Chapter Two of this study). The FCAT Reading Achievement Levels for Grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9 were added to reflect the expansion of testing from Grades 3 through 10. The criteria for Grades 4, 8, and 10 remained unchanged in 2002.
Summary

This chapter presented results of data analyses. Descriptive analyses including frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were reported for data collected from teacher participants \( n = 107 \), principal participants \( n = 17 \), and district participants \( n = 12 \). T-tests were conducted on mean Literacy Instructional Practice Composite scores from teacher participants. Also, a document analysis was conducted to examine changes to the school grading policy since 1999.

Results were reported for all data analyses concerning literacy instructional practices. Independent t-tests \( (\alpha = .05) \) were administered to each of the six Composite scores. Instructional Groupings, Materials, Classroom Activities, Decoding Teaching Practices, Comprehension Teaching Practices, and Writing Teaching Practices. In each case, the null hypothesis was unable to be rejected. There were no significant differences between A schools and F schools in the frequency of literacy instructional practices for the six composites.

Results also were reported for descriptive data analyses concerning personnel at A and F schools. Responses differed concerning the use of Title I literacy teachers. At F schools, 50% of principals reported to use Title I teachers for literacy instruction separate from the regular classroom compared to 8% of principals at A schools. Principals in both groups of schools (100%) reported using informal classroom observation and student achievement of FCAT to evaluate the performance of literacy teachers.

Results of descriptive analyses concerning school governance practices also were described. Fifty-nine percent of principals at A and F schools reported weekly visitations to classrooms during literacy activities. Responses from both principals and district-level
participants indicated the use of collaboration among district staff, principals, and teachers when making decisions regarding school governance for literacy curriculum and instruction.

The document analysis revealed changes to the school grading policy since its inception in 1999. A modification made by the Florida Department of Education from 1999 to 2000 included the deletion of subgroup minimum performance criteria for A and B schools. Minimum and higher performing criteria are based on the FCAT Achievement Levels (1 - 5) and are central in the determination of school grades. The school grade is based, in part, on the percentage of students that score in each of the five FCAT Achievement Levels. These score ranges for minimum and higher performing criteria remained unchanged from 1999 to 2002.
Chapter Five

Discussion

The results of this study present many avenues for discussion. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the study and its major findings. A discussion of conclusions, implications, and limitations follows the study summary. After the discussion, recommendations for future research are presented.

Summary of Study

The Florida A+ Plan for Education defines a school grading policy whereby the state designates the performance of schools ranging from highest (A) to lowest (F). The school grades are based on annual student performance on FCAT Reading, FCAT Writing, and FCAT Math. The number of F schools across Florida declined from 76 in 1999 to 0 in 2001. In 2002, the number increased to 68. The volatile fluctuation in number of F schools between 1999 and 2002 raises a question, which is, "What variables affected the decline and then sudden rise in number of F schools?" One possibility is that the schools improved student performance on FCAT in specific areas such as reading and writing, which resulted in elevating the school grade. Another possibility is that the school grading policy changed, thus affecting school grades.
Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the school grading policy of the Florida A+ Plan for Education on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures in Florida public schools.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study were:

1. What, if any, is the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on literacy instructional practices and materials in Florida Public Schools?

2. What, if any, is the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on personnel in Florida Public Schools?

3. What, if any, is the impact of the school grading policy of the A+ Plan on governance procedures in Florida Public Schools?

4. What, if any, changes have occurred in the Florida Department of Education public school grading policy since its inception in 1999?

Results

Data was collected from three groups of participants: teachers at schools graded A or F (n = 107), principals at schools graded A or F (n = 17), and corresponding District Directors of Curriculum or the equivalent position (n = 12). Teacher participants responded to the Literacy Instructional Practices Survey. Principals responded to the School Governance Survey, and, district-level participants responded to the District Governance Survey. Descriptive analyses of frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were conducted on data from all three surveys. An independent t-test was conducted on composite mean scores from the Literacy Instructional Practices
Survey. A document analysis was conducted to determine if any changes had occurred to the school grading policy since 1999.

Regarding literacy instructional practices, six independent t-tests (α = 0.05) were conducted to test a null hypothesis. In each case, the null was unable to be rejected (95% confidence interval). The six composite scores tested were Instructional Groupings, Materials, Classroom Activities, Decoding Teaching Practices, Comprehension Teaching Practices, and Writing Teaching Practices. Thus, inferential analyses found no significant difference between the frequency of literacy teaching practices at A and F schools.

The School Governance and District Governance Surveys collected data concerning personnel. Due to a small sample size, only descriptive analyses were conducted on personnel data. All principal participants and 97% of district-level participants reported the use of full-time classroom teachers for literacy instruction. In addition, 50% of F schools employed Title I teachers separate from the classroom compared to 8% of A schools. One hundred percent of principal participants, at both A and F schools, reported using informal classroom observation and student achievement on the FCAT as methods to evaluate literacy personnel performance.

The School Governance and District Governance Surveys also collected data regarding school governance procedures. Fifty-nine percent of all principal participants reported weekly visitations to literacy classrooms. Ninety-five percent also reported collaboration among district staff, principals, and teachers concerning the management of individual school budgets. In general, participant responses indicated collaboration between district and school staffs regarding governance decisions for literacy curriculum and instruction. Only 16% of principal participants indicated complete autonomy over
personnel decisions while 40% of district-level participants reported complete principal autonomy for personnel decisions.

The document analysis revealed changes by the Florida Department of Education to the school grading policy since its inception in 1999. Modifications from 1999 to 2000 included the deletion of subgroup minimum performance criteria for A and B schools. Maintaining or improving FCAT Reading scores of the lowest 25% of students was added to the criteria for A and B schools. Another addition for schools graded A, B, C, and D was criteria for meeting “other school data” such as absenteeism and high school drop out rates. School grades from 1999-2001 were based on meeting performance criteria defined as percentages of students achieving Level 2 or higher on FCAT Reading, Writing, and Math.

In subsequent years, other changes to the school grading policy occurred. In 2001, most of the school grading criteria remained unchanged. Only “other school data” was deleted from the school grading criteria for all grades. In 2002, the method for determining the school’s grade changed from a straight percentage of students performing at targeted performance levels to a formula that also accounted for individual student learning gains from one school year to the next.

The score ranges for FCAT Reading Achievement Levels remained unchanged from 1999-2002. This means that the minimum and higher performance criteria (Tables 39 and 40), which is the foundation for determining school grades, remained the same. These Achievement Levels, ranging from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), were the only constant component of the school grading policy from 1999-2002.
Conclusions and Discussion

The following conclusions answer the four research questions posed in this study. Discussion of the results follows each conclusion.

Literacy Instruction

There was no significant difference in the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices regarding instructional groupings, materials, classroom activities, decoding instruction, comprehension instruction, or writing instruction between schools graded A and schools graded F. Hence, regardless of the state-designated school grade of A or F, teachers were implementing the same literacy instructional practices at similar frequency rates. This conclusion was drawn after conducting an independent t-test on each of these six composite scores.

Measures were taken to increase the power of this study, especially in regards to making any generalizations from the independent t-tests. First, an independent t-test is the most efficient statistical method to test for differences between two group means. Second, using research-based content for the surveys and piloting the surveys addressed content validity. Instrumentation reliability was addressed through a pilot study and the application of Cronbach Alpha Reliability tests.

Another measure to increase the statistical power was to meet the three basic assumptions for a t-test (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). The first assumption is that the means are normally distributed. However, researchers have shown that a violation of the assumption of normality has little practical consequences in using a two-tailed t-test (Glass & Hopkins, 1996, p. 291). The second assumption is that the population variances are equal. This assumption was tested by Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances that
was conducted on each set of composite scores. If the Levene’s significance level is greater than .10, then it is legitimate to use a conventional t-test (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). For this study, all Levene’s significance levels were greater than .10. Hence, conventional t-tests were legitimate for testing the null hypotheses. The third assumption for a t-test is that the means are independent. While the participants in this study were not randomly assigned to A or F schools, these two groups were independent based on the reality of state-designation to either group. If a participant was located at an A school, he or she could not have been at an F school or vice-versa.

All three basic assumptions for a t-test were met in this study, thereby, power was increased to make generalizations when the nulls were unable to be rejected within a 95% confidence interval. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that there were no significant differences in the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices between A and F schools.

**Personnel**

A schools and F schools use similar literacy instructional personnel and methods to evaluate their performance. Full-time classroom teachers were the most commonly employed literacy instructional personnel at A and F schools. All principals used informal classroom observation and student achievement on the FCAT to evaluate literacy instructional personnel.

Due to a small sample size (n < 30), conclusions for this research question are based solely on descriptive analyses. Chi-square analyses were planned for responses on survey items regarding personnel but were not conducted because the A school sample
size was 13 and the F school sample was 4. As a result, no conclusions were drawn regarding significant differences between A and F school personnel.

School Governance

Both A and F school governance practices can be characterized as collaborative between the district and school levels. Overwhelmingly, participants reported that principals and teachers were involved in governance practices regarding the school vision and mission statements, management of the school's individual budget, and decisions concerning personnel. Chi-square analyses on survey items regarding governance practices and a t-test for the Decision-Making Composite were not conducted due to small sample size ($n < 30$). Thus, no conclusions were drawn regarding significant differences between A and F school governance.

School Grading Policy

The school grading policy has been changed by the Florida Department of Education since its inception in 1999. Document analysis revealed changes to criteria for all school grades (A – F) from 1999-2002. While peripheries to the grading criteria were changed, the minimum and higher performing criteria for the school grades remained unchanged.

The number of F schools declined from 76 in 1999 to 4 in 2000 with the criteria for the F grade being modified between 1999 to 2000. In 1999, FCAT data for reading, writing, and math had to be at or above the minimum criteria. In 2000, the criteria were based on FCAT data for reading, writing, and math at or above the minimum criteria for students enrolled in both the October and February FTE at the same school. As mentioned previously, the minimum criteria did not change during this time period. This
modification of the F grade criteria may have contributed to the decline in the number of F schools from 76 in 1999 to 4 in 2000. It was not until the school grading criteria changed in 2002 that the number of F schools increased.

Implications

This study presents implications for practices and research. One implication is that factors other than the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices are affecting a school's grade. This researcher found that teachers at A and F schools are using the same literacy instructional practices on a similar frequency range. Two-thirds of the school grade is determined by student performance on FCAT Reading and Writing. Student performance on FCAT Reading and Writing is influenced by literacy instructional practices. Hence, the question remains, "Why are these schools earning different designations or grades by the state?" Apparently, factors other than the types and frequency of instruction implemented must be affecting outcome differences in terms of the state grading criteria.

Second, findings from this study highlight the impact of high-stakes assessment on curriculum and instruction. All of the A and F school principal participants relied on student achievement on FCAT as a method to evaluate teacher performance. Such a practice is sure to impact curriculum and instruction. If a teacher knows that he or she is being evaluated by student performance on a high-stakes assessment, he or she will adjust teaching practices accordingly. The implication, however, is the nature of the adjustment. Results from this study suggest that the curriculum is narrowing focus solely on reading, writing, and math with FCAT preparation is stressed.
A third implication of this study is that school grades should be viewed in concert with not only the criteria of the grading policy, but also the range of scores for the FCAT Achievement Levels. FCAT student performance data is tracked by the Florida Department of Education as the percentage of students performing at each FCAT Achievement Level (1 – 5). School grades are based on this FCAT student performance data. It is important to keep these FCAT Achievement Levels in mind when considering an individual school's grade over a period of years because the score range for each Achievement Level could change. A question to consider is whether the school grade changed because of an increase or decrease in student performance on FCAT or because of a change to the FCAT Achievement Level score ranges.

Limitations

A limitation to this study was the low response rate (27%) from teachers at F schools. Sample selection bias errors were addressed in the formation of the research design by randomly drawing a 9% sample of all schools graded A and F in 2002. However, not all districts and schools in the sample agreed to participate in the study. Four districts denied the researcher access to any schools. Eight A school principals and six F school principals never responded to the researcher's request for permission to mail the surveys. Seven principals declined to participate without an explanation. Two F schools cited a high teacher turnover rate, therefore, there were no eligible teacher or principal participants. Further inquiry revealed that the other schools in the sample had at least an 83% teacher retention rate. Whatever the reasons, sampling bias error is a possible limitation to this study because those participants who did agree to complete the
surveys could be typically different from those participants who refused (Alreck & Settle, 1985).

A second possible limitation to this study is the sample size. The sample of teachers was large enough \( n = 107 \) to conduct inferential analyses to test the null hypotheses. But the study could have been even stronger if the teacher participant sample was large enough to analyze literacy instructional similarities and differences among A and F elementary school teachers and A and F secondary school teachers. It is possible that a significant difference in the frequency of literacy instructional practices would emerge if the participants were not analyzed as a whole group. The principal and district-level participant group sample sizes also were too small to conduct inferential statistics to test the null hypotheses for personnel and school governance.

A third limitation stems from the use of surveys. The researcher assumed that participants responded honestly and accurately to survey items. Also, some eligible participants chose not to participate, creating non-response bias. Follow-up mailings were implemented to limit the effects of non-response bias and increase the response rate. Another step taken to address limitations was piloting the original surveys to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study.
Recommendations for Future Research

This study investigated literacy instruction, personnel, and governance at A and F schools in Florida. The findings for frequency of literacy instructional practices were significant. Also, findings were reported concerning types of personnel and school governance practices implemented at these schools. The findings and implications of this study lead to possibilities for other studies. Recommendations for future research are as follows.

1. A replication study with a larger sample size should be conducted in order to verify the results of this study.

2. This study analyzed the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices, not the quality of instruction, which would need to be defined and quantitatively measured. Future research should investigate any similarities and differences in the quality of instruction occurring between A and F schools. The quantitative data from such a study should be combined with classroom observations to mitigate the bias of self-reporting.

3. If there are no significant differences in the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices between A and F schools, then what variables are affecting the schools’ grades? Future research should investigate the relationship between school and/or student demographic variables and the school grade. For example, is the socioeconomic status of the student population associated with the school grade? Does the degree of parental involvement differ between A and F schools? Since this study concluded that there was no significant difference in the
frequency of literacy instructional practices between A and F schools. Other possible variables affecting school grades should be investigated.

**Summarization of Study**

This chapter presented a review of the study and discussions concerning conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the school grading policy on literacy instruction, personnel, and governance at state-designated highest (A) and lowest (F) schools. Findings from descriptive and inferential analyses supported the conclusions made by the researcher. First, there was no significant difference in the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices at A and F schools. Second, both A and F schools used similar types of literacy personnel and methods to evaluate literacy teachers. However, more F than A schools used remedial reading teachers. Additionally, principals and district-level staff reported collaboration among district staff, principals, and teachers when making decisions about literacy curriculum and instruction and managing the individual school budget.

Limitations to the study included small principal and district-level participant sample sizes and non-response bias due to a low F school response rate. However, a legitimate t-test was conducted for mean literacy survey composite scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the types and frequency of literacy instructional practices between A and F schools.

Implications from this study concern literacy instruction, high-stakes assessment, and the Florida school grading policy. It appears that other factors, beside the type and
frequency of literacy instructional practices are influencing public schools’ grades. Since the grade is based primarily on student performance on FCAT, other factors must be affecting the FCAT achievement data. Possibilities include student demographic variables such as socioeconomic status, quality of literacy instruction occurring in the classroom, and school variables such as professional development, instructional leadership, or parental involvement.

High-stakes assessment appears to be affecting curricula and instruction at A and F schools. All principal respondents reported the use of student achievement on FCAT as a method to evaluate literacy teachers’ performance. Teachers reported principal expectations to practice FCAT Reading and Writing questions and test-taking strategies. Teachers also reported narrowing of the curriculum over the last five years.

This study presents implications concerning the Florida school grading policy. The grading policy has changed since its inception in 1999. School grades are assigned annually based on student performance on FCAT. The FCAT Achievement Levels did not change from 1999-2002. The formula for determining the school grade has changed to include improving test scores of the lowest 25% of the student population and maintaining annual learning gains for individual students. These changes in the grading policy may have affected a school’s grade, even if the school did not change literacy instructional practices, personnel, or school governance.

While the findings concerning literacy instruction were significant, this study presents an insight for research possibilities. This researcher has established findings that there were no significant differences in the types and frequency of literacy instruction between A and F schools. Yet, the schools were still designated by the state as two
extremes of school performance by a grading policy that primarily focused on student achievement based on reading and writing high-stakes assessments. These findings must be verified through replication studies. Moreover, other variables affecting student achievement at A and F schools must be investigated.
References


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Cunningham, P. M., & Allington, R. L. (1999) Classrooms that work: They can all read and write (2nd ed.) New York: Longman


Appendix A

Glossary of Terms
Glossary of Terms

This glossary presents the operational definitions of terms used in this study.

- **Basal readers and or texts** referred to commercially prepared books that focused on subject matter content, usually containing short reading passages organized by increasing difficult levels of text.

- **Classroom teacher** referred to full-time general, or "regular", education teacher, i.e. a fifth grade teacher or a seventh grade language arts teacher.

- **Content areas** referred to subject matter specific to a discipline of knowledge, i.e. chemistry or social studies.

- **Elementary level** referred to those schools designated by their districts as elementary schools. Grade levels varied from PK – 5, K – 5, and K – 6.

- **Expository prompts** are a part of FCAT Writing and provide the starting point for a written response that will explain a process or procedure.

- **Florida Educator Accomplished Practices** are minimal teacher competencies established by the Florida Department of Education.

- **FPMS** is the Florida Performance Measurement System. Endorsed by the Florida Department of Education, it serves as a formal evaluative instrument for teacher performance.

- **Narrative prompts** are a part of FCAT Writing and provide the starting point for a written response that tells a story.
- **Prewriting strategies** referred to strategies that assist in organizing ideas before writing an original piece such as semantic webbing, outlining, and brainstorming.

- **Reading specialist** referred to a teacher specially trained in the reading process and diagnosis of reading difficulties who did not function as a classroom teacher. This person could have been part-time or a consultant.

- **Remedial reading teacher** referred to a full-time classroom teacher with the primary responsibility of teaching reading to students who were reading below grade level.

- **Secondary level** referred to those schools designated by their districts as either a middle school or high school. Grade levels varied from 6 - 8, 7 - 9, 9 - 12, 10 - 12, and 7 - 12.

- **Sunshine State Standards** are the academic standards for Florida public schools. The FCAT assessment focuses on these standards.
Appendix B

Florida School Grading Policy 2001-2002
**GRADING FLORIDA PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2001-2002**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CHARLIE CRIST, COMMISSIONER, [www.fln.edu/doe](http://www.fln.edu/doe)**

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**School grades for 2001-02 utilize a point system. Schools are awarded one point for each percent of students who score high on the FCAT and/or make annual learning gains.**

### Scoring High on the FCAT

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is the primary measure of students' achievement of the Sunshine State Standards. Student scores are classified into five achievement levels, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

- Schools earn one point for each percent of students who score in achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 in **reading** and one point for each percent of students who score 3, 4, or 5 in **math**.

- The **writing** exam is scored by at least two readers on a scale of 1 to 6. The percent of students scoring "3" and above is averaged with the percent scoring "3.5" and above to yield the percent meeting minimum and higher standards. Schools earn one point for each percent of students on the combined measure.

### Making Annual Learning Gains

Since FCAT **reading and math** exams are given in grades 3 - 10, it is now possible to monitor how much students learn from one year to the next.

- Schools earn one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in reading and one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in math.
- Students can demonstrate learning gains in any one of three ways:
  1. Improve achievement levels from 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, or 4-5; or
  2. Maintain within the relatively high levels of 3, 4, or 5; or
  3. Demonstrate more than one year’s growth within achievement levels 1 or 2.
- Special attention is given to the reading gains of students in the lowest 25% in levels 1, 2, or 3 in each school. Schools earn one point for each percent of the lowest performing readers who make learning gains from the previous year. It takes at least 50% to make "adequate progress" for this group.

---

**SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>410+</td>
<td>Meet adequate progress of lowest 25% in reading, gains for lowest 25% are within 10 points of gains for all students, test at least 95% of eligible students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>380+</td>
<td>Meet adequate progress of lowest 25% in reading within two years, test at least 90% of eligible students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>320+</td>
<td>Meet adequate progress of lowest 25% in reading within two years, test at least 90% of eligible students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>280+</td>
<td>Test at least 90% of eligible students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fewer than 280</td>
<td>Test at least 90% of eligible students tested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Which students are included in school grade calculations?** As in previous years, only standard curriculum students who were enrolled in the same school in both October and February are included. Speech impaired, gifted, hospital/homebound, and Limited English Proficient students with more than two years in an ESOL program are also included.

**What happens if the lowest 25% of students in the school do not make "adequate progress" in reading?** Schools that aspire to be graded "C" or above, but do not make adequate progress with their lowest 25% in reading, must develop a School Improvement Plan component that addresses this need. If a school, otherwise graded "C" or "B", does not demonstrate adequate progress for two years in a row, the final grade will be reduced by one letter grade.

*The 2002 grading scale above may vary by as much as 5% in order to make a smooth transition from 2001.*
Example Report for 2002

Sunshine Middle School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Meeting High Standards</th>
<th>Reading (Gr. 6, 7, 8)</th>
<th>Math (Gr. 6, 7, 8)</th>
<th>Writing (Gr. 8)</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of Students Making Learning Gains

| Adequate Progress of Lowest 25% in the School? | 50% (Yes) |                |                | 50           |

School Grade Points

Percent Tested = 93%

School Grade

Based on total points, adequate progress, and % of students tested

One-half of total grade based on reading

FCAT Level 3 and above

Average of % scoring "3" and above and % scoring "3.5" and above

3 ways to make gains:
- Improve FCAT Levels
- Maintain Level 3, 4, or 5
- Improve more than one year within Level 1 or 2

1 point for each % meeting high standards in reading, math, and writing

1 point for each % making gains in reading and math

1 point for each % of lowest readers making gains

Percent of eligible students tested

50% or more = "Yes"
49% or less = "No"
Appendix C

District Research Request Letter
Dear Superintendent,

As a doctoral candidate at Florida Atlantic University, I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation, "Literacy Instructional Practices, Personnel, and Governance at State-Designated High and Low Performing Schools." The purpose of this research study is to determine the impact of the school grading policy of the Bush/Brogan A+ Plan for Education on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures in Florida Public Schools. Using statistical software, I drew a random sample of Florida public schools graded A and F for the 2001-02 school year, of which two schools are located in your district. These schools are John Doe Elementary and John Doe High.

In order to determine literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance at these schools, I am seeking input from administrators and teachers. With your permission, I plan to send a survey to the Associate Superintendent of Curriculum or Director of Curriculum for your district, the principal of each selected school, and grade 3 through 10 classroom teachers responsible for reading, writing, and or language arts instruction at each selected school.

The teacher survey consists of 92 items, the majority of which seek to determine the frequency of teaching behaviors, materials, and classroom activities concerning reading and writing. The administration survey consists of 25 items that seek to determine information regarding school personnel and governance procedures. All participants will be under no obligation to participate; their participation will be anonymous and completely voluntary. All responses will be kept confidential and secure. Results of the study will be reported for the sample, not individual participants. Thus, the risk involved with participation in this study will be minimal.

July 18, 2002
Please sign below if you would grant permission for me to send these surveys to the selected employees in your district, then fax your reply to me at 772-466-5008.
Appendix D

Survey Cover Letters
Dear Teacher:

As a doctoral candidate at Florida Atlantic University, I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation, "Literacy Instructional Practices, Personnel, and Governance at State-Designated High and Low Performing Schools". The purpose of this research study is to determine the impact of the school grading policy of the Bush/Brogan A+ Plan for Education on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures in Florida Public Schools. Your school was randomly selected to be included in a statewide sample.

Your participation in this study will require answering questions on the attached survey. The written survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. Once completed, please return the survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. You are under no obligation to participate, your participation is anonymous and completely voluntary. All responses will be kept confidential and secure. Only the principal investigators will see the data, unless required by law. Results of the study will be reported for the sample, not individual participants. Thus, the risk involved with participation in this study is no more than one would experience in regular daily activities.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. As a benefit of participation, please know that you have contributed to a better understanding of literacy instruction and school governance in Florida K-12 public schools. If you have any other questions about the study, please feel free to call me at 772-873-3349.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Earley, M.Ed.
Responsible Project Investigator
Florida Atlantic University
Dear Principal,

As a doctoral candidate at Florida Atlantic University, I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation, "Literacy Instructional Practices, Personnel, and Governance at State-Designated High and Low Performing Schools". The purpose of this research study is to determine the impact of the school grading policy of the Bush/Brogan A+ Plan for Education on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures in Florida Public Schools. Your school was randomly selected to be included in a statewide sample.

Your participation in this study will require answering questions on the attached survey. The written survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. Once completed, please return the survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. You are under no obligation to participate, your participation is anonymous and completely voluntary. All responses will be kept confidential and secure. Only the principal investigators will see the data, unless required by law. Results of the study will be reported for the sample, not individual participants. Thus, the risk involved with participation in this study is no more than one would experience in regular daily activities.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. As a benefit of participation, please know that you have contributed to a better understanding of literacy instruction and school governance in Florida K-12 public schools. If you have any other questions about the study, please feel free to call me at 772-873-3349.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Earley, M.Ed.
Project Investigator
Florida Atlantic University
September 29, 2002

Dear Curriculum Director:

As a doctoral candidate at Florida Atlantic University, I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation, "Literacy Instructional Practices, Personnel, and Governance at State-Designated High and Low Performing Schools". The purpose of this research study is to determine the impact of the school grading policy of the Bush/Brogan A+ Plan for Education on literacy instructional practices, personnel, and governance procedures in Florida Public Schools. Your district was randomly selected to be included in a statewide sample. Your school district has given permission for you to participate. Your name was not included on this correspondence to maintain participant anonymity.

Your participation in this study will require answering questions on the attached survey. The written survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. Once completed, please fax the survey to 772-466-5008. You are under no obligation to participate; your participation is anonymous and completely voluntary. All responses will be kept confidential and secure. Only the project investigator will see the data, unless required by law. Results of the study will be reported for the sample, not individual participants. Thus, the risk involved with participation in this study is no more than one would experience in regular daily activities.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. As a benefit of participation, please know that you have contributed to a better understanding of literacy instruction and school governance in Florida K-12 public schools. If you have any other questions about the study, please feel free to call me at 772-873-3349.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Earley, M.Ed.
Project Investigator
Florida Atlantic University
Fax: 772-466-5008
Email: d_earley@bellsouth.net
Appendix E

Literacy Instructional Practices Survey
This survey is intended for grade three through ten teachers who are responsible for reading or writing instruction. Please answer each item by choosing the response that best reflects your practices in the classroom over the last school year (2001-02).

**INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPINGS:** Items #1-5 are designed to measure the frequency of instructional groupings utilized when teaching reading and writing in your classroom. Select the response that most closely describes frequencies during the last school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Used whole group instruction</th>
<th>0 Never</th>
<th>1 Daily</th>
<th>2 Weekly</th>
<th>3 Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher-led small group instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. One-to-One instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cooperative Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Peer tutoring</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MATERIALS:** Items #6-16 are designed to measure how often you used the following materials when teaching reading and writing in your classroom. Responses should reflect frequencies during the last school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Computers to deliver instruction</th>
<th>0 Never</th>
<th>1 Daily</th>
<th>2 Weekly</th>
<th>3 Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Children’s or adolescents’ literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Poetry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Creative dramatics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Newspapers and/or magazines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Basal readers and/or texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### MATERIALS CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>0 Never</th>
<th>1 Daily</th>
<th>2 Weekly</th>
<th>3 Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Expository (non-fiction) books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Graphic organizers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Workbooks and/or skill sheets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. State FCAT prep materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Teacher-made tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TEACHING PRACTICES

Items #17-25 are designed to measure how often you provided systematic instruction for the following decoding skills. Responses should reflect frequencies during last school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>0 Never</th>
<th>1 Daily</th>
<th>2 Weekly</th>
<th>3 Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. High-frequency words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Word attack skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Phonics as a separate subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Phonics in the context of reading or writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Root words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Prefixes/suffixes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Practicing words out of context (ex: flashcards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Practicing words in context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Systematic instruction in vocabulary development,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including word meanings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Items #26-36 are designed to measure how often you provided systematic instruction for the following **comprehension skills**. Responses should reflect frequencies during **last school year**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. Prediction</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Inferencing</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Summarizing</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Main idea</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Details</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Solving problem-situations creatively</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Sequence of events</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Drawing conclusions</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Structure of different genres of text</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Text-to-text and/or text-to-self connections</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Story elements <em>(i.e. character, setting, problems, etc.)</em></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items #37-46 are designed to measure how often you provided systematic instruction in **writing**. Responses should reflect frequencies during **last school year**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37. Taught spelling from lists of words</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Taught grammar or word structures separately</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Provided writing assignments as an isolated exercise</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Required students to spend time with sustained writing <em>(ex: journals)</em></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Modeled the writing process <em>(plan, draft, revise, etc.)</em></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Taught prewriting strategies <em>(i.e. outlining, webbing)</em></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Checkboxes" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WRITING CONTINUED

43. Provided timed writing performance assessments...

44. Taught writing mechanics (e.g., punctuation, capitalization)...

45. Provided writing assignments in response to class readings or discussions...

46. Used the 6-point FCAT Writing scoring rubric on student writing assignments...

CHECK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: Items #47-71 are designed to measure how often the following reading and writing activities occurred in your classroom. Responses should reflect frequencies during the last school year.

47. Student discussions about texts they have read...

48. Independent reading time...

49. Literature study...

50. Question-generating by students...

51. Teacher demonstration of reading strategies...

52. Reading in the content areas...

53. Author’s Chair...

54. Partner or Buddy reading...

55. One-on-one teacher-student conferences...

56. Reading aloud by students...

57. Choral reading...

58. Reading of student-selected text...

59. Authentic purposes for reading and writing activities...
ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

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OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS: Please respond openly to Items #72-78. The survey is anonymous and all answers will be kept confidential. In addition, answers from all participants in the study will be analyzed for patterns, statistically tabulated, and summarized.

72. If you have taught at least five years in Florida, has your curriculum changed since the inception of FCAT? If yes, how has it changed?
73. Personally, what was the MOST helpful professional development training?

74. Personally, what was the LEAST helpful professional development training?

75. How often did you attend professional training for literacy instruction last year?

76. What percentage of instructional time per week did you spend in one-to-one instruction?

77. What did your principal expect you to do to prepare for FCAT Reading?

78. What did your principal expect you to do to prepare for FCAT Writing?
DEMOGRAPHICS: CIRCLE OR WRITE the response that best reflects your situation during the 2001-02 school year.

79 Gender: male female

80 Years teaching experience: ________

81 Highest degree held: bachelors masters specialist doctorate post-doctorate

82 Teaching responsibility: Grade level(s) taught: 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(83) Subject area(s): reading writing language arts

84 Total number of students to whom I taught reading: ________

85 Total number of students to whom I taught writing: ________

86 School in which you taught: rural suburban urban

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Please return it in the enclosed envelope by ____________. Your input is greatly appreciated.
Appendix F

School Governance Survey
This survey is intended for principals of elementary and secondary schools in Florida. Please answer each item by choosing the response which **best reflects your experiences** over the **last school year** (2001-02).

**PERSONNEL:** Items #1-2 are designed to gather information regarding personnel responsible for teaching reading and writing at your school. Responses should reflect personnel employed during the **last school year**.

**PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY**

1) Select methods you employed to evaluate the performance of teachers of reading and writing.

- [ ] Informal classroom observation
- [ ] Evaluation by students
- [ ] Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS)
- [ ] Parent surveys
- [ ] Student achievement on FCAT
- [ ] Peer review
- [ ] Examine teachers' lesson plans or other instructional materials
- [ ] Teacher portfolio of Educator Accomplished Practices (EAP)

2) Select the types of teachers who taught reading and writing at your school.

- [ ] Full-time classroom teacher
- [ ] Title I reading teacher, separate from classroom
- [ ] Remedial reading teacher, separate from Title I
- [ ] Full-time writing specialist
- [ ] Full-time reading specialist
GOVERNANCE: Items #3-13 are designed to gather information regarding governance procedures at your school. Responses should reflect procedures during the last school year.

3) Select the one response that best describes the people who developed the school vision and mission statements.
   - School-based staff
   - Principal and staff
   - Principal
   - District-level staff

4) Select the one response that best describes how often professional development training for reading and writing instruction was offered during the last school year.
   - Never
   - Weekly
   - Bi-weekly
   - Monthly
   - Once a semester
   - Once a year

5) Select the one response that best describes how often you visited classrooms during reading or writing activities during the last school year.
   - Never
   - Daily
   - Weekly
   - Monthly
   - Yearly

6) For planning teams, teachers were grouped by: (select the one response that best reflects groupings for last school year)
   - Grade level
   - Vertical families (i.e. grades K-5, or 6-8, or 9-12)
   - Content area
For Items #7-13, check all responses that apply. Responses should reflect the last school year (2001-02)

PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

7) Individual school budgets were managed by
   - District staff and Principal in collaboration
   - Principal only (complete autonomy)
   - Principal and teachers in collaboration

8) Purchasing decisions about reading curriculum and/or materials were made by
   - District staff only
   - District staff and Principal in collaboration
   - Principal only
   - Principal and teachers in collaboration
   - Teachers only

9) Purchasing decisions about writing curriculum and/or materials were made by
   - District staff only
   - District staff and Principal in collaboration
   - Principal only
   - Principal and teachers in collaboration
   - Teachers only

10) Decisions about school personnel were made by
    - District staff only
    - District staff and Principal collaborated
    - Principal only (complete autonomy)
    - Principal and Staff collaborated
11) Decisions regarding reading curriculum and instruction were made by

- District staff only
- District staff and Principal in collaboration
- Principal only
- Principal and teachers in collaboration
- Teachers only

12) Decisions regarding writing curriculum and instruction were made by

- District staff only
- District staff and Principal in collaboration
- Principal only
- Principal and teachers in collaboration
- Teachers only

13) Professional development training for literacy instruction was selected by

- District staff only
- District staff and Principal in collaboration
- Principal only
- Principal and teachers in collaboration
- Teachers only

**OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:** Please respond openly to Items #14-17. The survey is anonymous and all answers will be kept confidential. In addition, answers from all participants in the study will be analyzed for patterns and then summarized.

14) How did you encourage communication and reflective dialogue regarding literacy instruction amongst the staff?
15) How did you offer formal recognition to successful teachers of reading and writing?

16) Was merit pay provided for Grade 3-10 teachers based on FCAT scores?

17) How often did the School Accountability Committee meet? Please describe its major involvement with budget, curriculum and instruction, and personnel.

DEMOGRAPHICS: For Items #18-25, CIRCLE OR WRITE the response that best reflects your situation during the 2001-02 school year.

18) Gender: male female

19) Years experience as a principal: _________

20) Highest degree held: bachelors masters specialist doctorate post-doctorate

21) School can be categorized as: rural suburban urban

22) School-level: elementary (K-5) middle (6-8) high (9-12)

23) Days in the required school year for teachers, including planning and professional development: _________

24) Hours in the school day for teachers (to the nearest half hour): _________

25) The majority of full-time reading or writing teachers were: in-field out-of-field

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Please return it in the enclosed envelope by ____________. Your input is greatly appreciated.
Appendix G

District Governance Survey
District Governance Survey

This survey is intended for Associate Superintendent of Curriculum, Director of Curriculum, or the district representative for curriculum in Florida public school districts. Please answer each item by choosing the response which best reflects your district's policies over the last school year (2001-02). Please reflect policies for traditional K-12 public schools only (exclude charter schools, private schools, and home schoolers).

PERSONNEL: Items #1-4 are designed to gather information regarding personnel responsible for teaching reading and writing in your district. Responses should reflect personnel employed during the last school year.

PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

1) Select methods employed in your district to evaluate the performance of teachers of reading and writing.

- Informal classroom observation
- Evaluation by students
- Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS)
- Parent surveys
- Student achievement on FCAT
- Peer review
- Examine teachers' lesson plans or other instructional materials
- Teacher portfolio of Educator Accomplished Practices (EAP)

Select the types of teachers who teach reading and writing in your district at the (check all that apply)

2) elementary level

- Full-time classroom teacher
- Title I reading teacher, separate from classroom
- Remedial reading teacher, separate from Title I
- Full-time writing specialist
- Full-time reading specialist
PERSONNEL CONTINUED

3) middle school level:
- Full-time classroom teacher
- Title I reading teacher, separate from classroom
- Remedial reading teacher, separate from Title I
- Full-time writing specialist
- Full-time reading specialist

4) high school level:
- Full-time classroom teacher
- Title I reading teacher, separate from classroom
- Remedial reading teacher, separate from Title I
- Full-time writing specialist
- Full-time reading specialist

GOVERNANCE: Items #5-13 are designed to gather information regarding governance procedures in your district. Responses should reflect procedures during the last school year.

5) Select the one response that best describes the people who developed school vision and mission statements:
- School-based staff
- Principal and staff
- Principal
- District-level staff
GOVERNANCE CONTINUED

6) Select the one response that best describes how often your district provided professional development training for reading and writing instruction during the last school year.

☐ Never
☐ Weekly
☐ Bi-weekly
☐ Monthly
☐ Once a semester
☐ Once a year

For Items #7-13, check all responses that apply. Responses should reflect the last school year (2001-02).

PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

7) Individual school budgets were managed by

☐ District staff and Principal in collaboration
☐ Principal only (complete autonomy)
☐ Principal and teachers in collaboration

8) Purchasing decisions about reading curriculum and/or materials were made by

☐ District staff only
☐ District staff and Principal in collaboration
☐ Principal only
☐ Principal and teachers in collaboration
☐ Teachers only
9) Purchasing decisions about writing curriculum and/or materials were made by
   ☐ District staff only
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   ☐ Teachers only

10) Decisions about school personnel were made by
    ☐ District staff only
    ☐ District staff and Principal collaborated
    ☐ Principal only (complete autonomy)
    ☐ Principal and Staff collaborated

11) Decisions regarding reading curriculum and instruction were made by
    ☐ District staff only
    ☐ District staff and Principal in collaboration
    ☐ Principal only
    ☐ Principal and teachers in collaboration
    ☐ Teachers only

12) Decisions regarding writing curriculum and instruction were made by
    ☐ District staff only
    ☐ District staff and Principal in collaboration
    ☐ Principal only
    ☐ Principal and teachers in collaboration
    ☐ Teachers only
13) Professional development training for literacy instruction was selected by

- District staff only
- District staff and Principal in collaboration
- Principal only
- Principal and teachers in collaboration
- Teachers only

**OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:** Please respond openly to Items #14-16. All answers for this survey will be kept confidential. In addition, answers from all participants in the study will be analyzed for patterns, statistically tabulated, and summarized.

14) How did you encourage communication and reflective dialogue regarding literacy instruction amongst school administrators?

15) How did your district offer formal recognition to successful teachers of reading and writing?

16) Was merit pay provided for Grade 3-10 teachers based on FCAT scores?
DEMOCRAPHICS: For Items #17-20, CIRCLE OR WRITE the response that best reflects your situation during the 2001-02 school year.

17) Gender: male female

18) School district size: small mid-size large
(1-25 total schools) (26-100 total schools) (more than 100 total schools)

19) Days in the required school year for teachers, including planning and professional development: ________

20) The majority of full-time reading or writing teachers were: in-field out-of-field

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Please fax the completed survey before or by October 15 (772-466-5008). Your input is greatly appreciated.
Appendix H

Measures of Central Tendency

Literacy Instructional Practices Survey Items 1 – 71
### A School Teacher Participant Responses

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*Multiple modes exist. Smallest value shown.*
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