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Carolyn L. Grice

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The Effect of Decreasing Enrollment Patterns in a Title I
School Surrounded by Economic Decline on 5th-Grade
Students' Achievement, Behavior, Parent Involvement, and
Teacher Mobility Rates

By

Carolyn L. Grice

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

In Educational Administration

Omaha, Nebraska

2009

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF DECREASING ENROLLMENT PATTERNS IN A TITLE I
SCHOOL SURROUNDED BY ECONOMIC DECLINE ON 5TH-GRADE
STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT, BEHAVIOR, PARENT INVOLVEMENT, AND
TEACHER MOBILITY RATES

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The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of decreasing enrollment patterns in a Title I school surrounded by economic decline on 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates compared to 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates in a nearby Title I elementary school surrounded by economic improvement and increasing enrollment patterns. Overall, results indicated that 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had statistically significantly higher (a) Reading Total, (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total mean achievement NCE scores compared to 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. Statistically significant pretest-posttest achievement score declines

were also found for 5th-grade students in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. While no statistically significant differences between the groups were observed for the other dependent measure comparisons for grades, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates, the achievement findings alone warrant relocation of all students to the most positive environments and neighborhoods as soon as school and neighborhood conditions are found to be in decline.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

During the past twenty-five years, an urban school district in the Midwest has spent 362 million dollars renovating the majority of its existing schools located within lower socioeconomic and impoverished neighborhoods of the city (Omaha Public Schools Division of Buildings and Grounds, 2008). The urban school district also recently constructed four completely new school buildings within these same areas. Within these renovated and newly constructed schools students learn (Kozol, 2005; Picus, Marion, Calvo and Glenn, 2005) and innovate (NEA 2004; Polakow & Pettigrew, 2006) with parent participation (Bryan 2005; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorin, & Van Voorhis, 2002) and community support (Crew, 2007). However, almost overnight, several of these schools find themselves operating in neighborhoods of serious economic decline (Tolnay, Crowder, & Adelman, 2000; Crowley, 2003, Rankin and Quane, 2000) and demolition of public housing (Varady, Raffel, Sweeny, & Denson, 2005; Jacob, 2004). Because not all families can simply pick up and move to another neighborhood (Baskerville, 2008; Earls, 2000) to avoid these conditions, the students who remain in decreasing enrollment schools will typically be the most economically

vulnerable (Anyon, Sadovnik, & Semel, 2001; Nichols & Gault, 2003), socially and emotionally fragile (Burke, 2002; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004), and educationally challenged (Taylor, 2005). Therefore, it is important that we evaluate and determine the impact of student participation in schools with decreasing enrollment patterns surrounded by economic decline and answer the question: Should students stay in these schools or should students be reassigned to other schools by action of the school district administration?

School Renovation, Construction, and Attendance Policy

School renovation and construction. Until recently, primarily from a lack of research, there was little evidence to indicate that the quality of a school facility impacted academic achievement (Picus, et al., 2005). Most states do not collect data regarding the condition of facilities and student performance. Where facilities are in good condition, there are no indicators of linking those conditions to achievement (Jones, Brener, & Mcmanus, 2003).

Reg Weaver, Past President of the National Education Association (NEA; 2008) recently wrote:

There are no excuses for schools where the textbooks and technology are as old as the parents of some of the children. In the richest country in the world,

there is no excuse for millions of children attending public schools that are rundown. The physical condition of public schools is critical to student achievement and staff morale. Great public schools begin with modern facilities. (p. 1)

According to the NEA, a bill in Congress titled, The America's Better Classroom Act (2008) will provide more than \$25 billion for new school construction and building upgrades. The federal government will provide tax credits to bond holders instead of payments on interest. The school district will only need to focus on paying the principal. This will be a major cost-saving incentive for taxpayers and school districts, across the nation, to improve and upgrade school buildings.

Attendance. The location of a school (McLean, 2003) and the distance from its population center can be a factor in attendance. Attendance patterns are also affected by parents' perceptions of safety even if transportation is provided (Hirsch, Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, & Schnacker, 2004). Schools surrounded by economic decline are almost universally prejudged as being less safe than more economically viable neighborhoods (Storch, Krain, Kovacs, & Barlas, 2002; Haws & Tennille, 2005). Parents of younger children fear bullying by older children (Green, 2007;

Hall, 2005) and parents of upper elementary age students fear the potential of their child being drawn into illegal and dangerous behavior, including drug and alcohol use, by older youth who themselves may have dropped out of school (Kinlock, Battejes, & Gordon, 2007; Plybon & Kliever, 2001).

Student mobility. In a Boston study replicated in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, public housing residents were given vouchers to move to other locations (Katz, Kling, & Liebman, 2001). Those that moved and kept their children in the same neighborhood schools saw no change in test scores because the schools were already below state average in math and reading achievement tests. The results showed that neighborhoods play a role in achievement, safety factors including crime, and youth violence. In the comparison group parents who moved to new neighborhoods that were perceived as more affluent and enrolled their children in the nearby neighborhood schools observed academic achievement (Katz, Kling & Liebman, 2001).

Academic achievement also suffers when students change schools two or more times while enrolled in elementary school (Rumberger, 2003). Because many of these students live in poverty, their academic achievement, impacted by

poor nutrition and inadequate health care, also suffers. Poor nutrition and inadequate health care also predict lower reading scores and possible in-grade retention (Alderman, Behrman, Victor, & Menon, 2001; Browning & Cagney, 2003). In the extreme range of economic disadvantage, parental homelessness is also a contributor to school mobility that negatively impacts children's achievement and school completion rates (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003).

Closing schools. School boards across the country are looking at various options to save money, including consolidating or closing schools with less than ideal enrollments (McLean, 2003). The decision-making process used to consider closing a school needs significant input from the community most affected by the closing. Property value is dependent upon viable neighborhoods and it is thought that schools in the center of their communities or neighborhoods can impact property value depending on the age and condition of the school.

Students choose to not attend school when they feel afraid, isolated, or disconnected from the school in some way (Akerlof & Kranton, 2003). Moreover, if parents do not feel that their school has something to offer their child they will not insure consistent attendance--that is make

sure their child gets to school every day, no matter what (Condron & Roscigno, 2003; Rankin & Quane, 2000).

School districts across the country are working to decrease the student mobility rate (Stover, 2000). For example in Victoria, TX, the school district created the Family Connection program that assists at-risk students through community homework centers located throughout homeless shelters, public housing facilities, and low-rent motels. Tutoring and snacks were provided. Some of the centers have computers. Parent liaisons are available to arrange transportation so that students remain at their original school until the end of the school year (Stover, 2000). The availability of school provided transportation increases the chance that certain families will utilize a district school choice program (Godwin, Leland, Baxter, & Southworth, 2006). Furthermore, the proximity of the school to a child's home is more important to some families than test scores or a diverse student population.

Economic Decline

Many neighborhoods have suffered economic decline over the past several years (Rankin & Quane, 2000). Inner city neighborhoods previously described as a mixture of poor working class families and middle class families are now considered disenfranchised with poor families concentrated

in isolated urban settings. As neighborhoods decline economically the community experiences increased crime, increased teen pregnancy, and increased unemployment (Haley-Lock & Shah, 2007). Neighborhoods in decline by definition are socially isolated. The consequence of social isolation carries over to the schools. Historically, African Americans migrated from the rural south to the industrialized north for three primary reasons: (a) higher wages, (b) greater job choice, and (c) better neighborhoods (Tolnay, Crowder, & Adelman, 2000). Studies of neighborhoods that were previously white, and later became integrated, found that any successes achieved by African Americans moving there were short-lived since the neighborhood eventually reverted back to being segregated by race. Student mobility and academic achievement have been a source of concern for decades (Crowley, 2003).

Federal housing policy does not provide financial resources sufficient for the lowest income families to afford decent housing. Poorer families move more often than middle class families and the reasons for the moves are less than positive in many cases (Ainsworth, 2002). Stressors in family life that cause increased mobility patterns include unsafe housing contributing to poor health conditions, loss of a job, and nearby crime. Poor families

spend more than 30% of their incomes for housing needs (Burkhauser & Sabia, 2007) and often need to work two or three minimum wage jobs to afford even unsafe housing (Secombe, 2002). Research has shown a correlation between housing conditions and school performance (Nichols & Gault, 2003). Social isolation, thought of as the lack of contact or sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society (Rankin & Quane, 2000) has also been linked to living in poor inner city neighborhoods (Rankin & Quane, 2000). Furthermore, data provided from the 2000 Census indicates that children who live in families with incomes in the lowest 20 percent live with only one parent, and nearly half move every year. Within this same demographic over 4 million children were reportedly living with grandparents, and one-fourth of these grandparents have sole primary care responsibilities for the children. These statistics present several challenges for schools in neighborhoods of poverty.

Demolition of public housing. In a comparative study analysis of the Hope VI Project in four urban communities, it was found that the goal of developing public housing for mixed income families was difficult to achieve (Varady, Raffel, Sweeney, & Denson, 2005). Only one of the four study sites intentionally collaborates with the school

district and other government entities such as the city government and housing authority. The Hope VI Project was created to replace public housing that was beyond repair and replace it with less dense developments, thereby reducing concentrations of poverty through mixed income communities. The efforts in one of the communities resulted in creating a community magnet school. A study conducted in Chicago found that living in public housing was directly correlated with increased crime, economic and racial segregation, lower achievement in school, and fewer job opportunities for the residents (Varady, Raffel, Sweeney, & Denson, 2005). These combine to lead to increases in mobility. Housing vouchers were offered to individuals to encourage them to find better and more affordable places to live, and when all families had relocated, the public housing was razed.

Children who are socially and emotionally fragile. In the most challenging of school environments, teachers must remember they have an important role in the lives of their students (Burke, 2002). For students of poverty, the teacher plays an important social and emotional support role, second only to the mother and father. Teachers must comprehend the social and emotional needs of their students and view them as unique, complex beings. A fearful,

frightened, hungry, or abused student has to have his/her emotional needs met before he/she can concentrate on the lesson of the day. Minority students succeed in schools where it has been determined that there are no acceptable excuses for failure and no reliance on a cultural deficit to prevent children from achieving--another way adults, especially the teacher, communicate love and caring (Towns, Cole-Henderson, and Serpell, 2001). In a study of four schools across the country, factors utilized by school staffs to help students achieve included going beyond goals and exceeding expectations while developing trust among the students and their parents. Among the practices that aided this endeavor were: (a) accountability of families, (b) careful consideration in the process of selecting the teaching staff, (c) priority given to teaching basic skills, and (d) adequate resources. As successful learning takes place and children succeed in emotionally supportive classrooms they become stronger and less socially and emotionally fragile.

Life experiences such as increased economic and social family pressures, access to media, and weakening of social institutions like church have changed drastically since the late 20th Century (Weissburg & O'Brien, 2004). Schools that serve high needs students lacking such social and emotional

skills have a major challenge. Programs are being created to address social issues like public and mental health, or juvenile justice initiatives, but many are not directly linked to the challenges educators encounter and of which they have no control. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), is defined as a conceptual framework addressing the needs of children and the fragmentation of school responses. SEL provides common language and a framework for communicating about family, school, and community programs that teach academic success, health, service, character, and citizenship, as well as social-emotional topics. Integrated SEL programs assist schools in coordinating efforts and programs to promote positive social, emotional, and academic growth of all students, especially those that are socially and emotionally fragile.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of decreasing enrollment patterns in a Title I school surrounded by economic decline on 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates compared to 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates in a nearby Title I elementary school surrounded by economic improvement and increasing enrollment patterns.

The following research questions were utilized to examine student achievement as measured by norm referenced achievement normal curve equivalent scores for reading, language, and math and end of 5th-grade report card grade scores.

Research Questions

Pretest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #1. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline lose, maintain, or improve 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT reading, language, and math achievement scores?

Sub-Question 1a. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE reading total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 1b. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE math total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 1c. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE language total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Overarching Pretest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #2. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement lose, maintain, or improve 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT reading, language, and math achievement scores?

Sub-Question 2a. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE reading total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Sub-Question 2b. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE math total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Sub-Question 2c. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE language total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #3. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline have congruent or different 5th-grade NRT reading, language, and math achievement scores compared to students who participate in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 3a. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' NRT reading total achievement scores after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 3b. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' NRT math total achievement scores after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns

in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 3c. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' NRT language total achievement scores after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #4. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline have congruent or different 5th-grade report card grade point average scores compared to students who participate in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Sub-Question 4a. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' report card grade point average scores for reading after completing elementary school programs with decreasing compared to increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 4b. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' report card grade point average scores for math after completing elementary

school programs with decreasing compared to increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 4c. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' report card grade point average scores for language after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

The following research question will be utilized to examine behavior as measured by student absence frequencies.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Behavior Research
Question #5. Do those students who participated in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline have observed absence frequencies that are the same as for those students who participated in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Sub-Question 5a. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade absence frequency totals after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 5b. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade absence frequency totals after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Overarching Pretest-Posttest Parent Involvement Research Question #6. Do parents whose students participate in elementary school programs with a decreasing or increasing enrollment pattern in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement lose, maintain, or improve their school climate survey scores over time?

Sub-Question 6a. Is there a significant difference between students' 5th-grade posttest compared to 5th-grade posttest absence frequency totals after participating in an elementary school programs with decreasing and increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

The following research question was utilized to examine parent involvement as measured by parents, teachers, and students' posttest climate survey response scores to the question students feel safe at this school.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Parent Involvement Research Question #7. Do parents whose students participate in elementary school programs with a decreasing or

increasing enrollment pattern in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement have different or congruent school climate survey response scores when their students have completed the 5th-grade?

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Parent Involvement Research Question #7. Do parents, teachers, and students who participated in elementary school programs with a decreasing or increasing enrollment pattern in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement have different or congruent school climate survey response scores to the question students feel safe at this school over time?

Sub-Question 7a. Is there a significant difference between the 5th-grade posttest school climate survey response scores for parents, teachers, and students who participated in an elementary school program with decreasing and increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement to the question students feel safe at this school?

The following research question was utilized to examine posttest teacher mobility rates as measured by posttest teacher transferred, terminated, retired, and active category frequencies.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Teacher Mobility Rates
Question #8. Have students who participated in elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or improvement experienced equivalent 5th-grade posttest teacher mobility rates?

Sub-Question 8a. Is there a significant difference between teacher mobility rates in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline compared to the teacher mobility rates in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Assumptions

The design of this study has several strong features including (a) school district leadership focused on having state-of-the-art school buildings, facilities, and programs regardless of the condition of the surrounding neighborhoods, (b) teachers with experience who are committed to urban education regardless of the condition of the surrounding neighborhoods, and (c) teachers who are assigned to their school of choice regardless of the condition of the surrounding neighborhoods. The study focuses on four areas of importance (a) achievement, (b)

student behavior, (c) parent involvement, and (d) teacher mobility. All data is available through the school district's database and all data are uniformly required and uniformly collected.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to 5th-grade students in an urban school district who were in attendance from 2nd-grade through 5th-grade, 2003-2007 school years, attending either a school in area of decline or a nearby school in an area of economic improvement. Both study schools are Title 1 schools. The findings of the study will be delimited to the students who attended these schools.

Limitations

This exploratory study is limited to two schools in an urban district that are located nearby one another but reflect differing neighborhood conditions. The study subjects ($N = 33$) represented a real world naturally formed sample. However, the small number of participants could skew the statistical results and limit generalizing the study findings.

Definitions of Terms

Absence. Absence is defined as not attending school for any reason.

Behavior. Behavior is defined as the number of absences, tardiness, and office referrals a student has accrued.

California Achievement Test. The California Achievement Test is a norm referenced standardized test with subtests in reading, language, and math administered to students in 2nd-grade and the 5th-grade.

Climate Survey. Climate Survey is an instrument completed at each school by parents following the spring semester parent/teacher conferences. The Climate Survey measures: (a) school climate, (b) school safety, (c) equity/respect for diversity, (d) discipline, and (e) overall rating for safe learning environment.

Decreasing enrollment. Decreasing enrollment is a school with an overall student population that has continuously decreased over the last 3-5 years.

Increasing enrollment. Increasing enrollment is a school with an overall student population that has continuously increased over the last 3-5 years.

Normal curve equivalents (NCE). Normal curve equivalents are a standard score with a mean equal to 100 and a standard deviation 21.06.

Norm referenced test (NRT). Norm-reference tests measure student performance compared to the performance of similar groups of students who have taken the tests.

Office referral. Office referral is when a student's misbehavior warrants removal from the classroom and a building administrator is needed to redirect misbehavior.

Parent involvement. Parent involvement is defined as parents attending parent/teacher conferences and their thoughts regarding the school climate.

Parent/Teacher Conference. Parent/Teacher conference is where parents meet with teachers to discuss their child's achievement and other issues as needed.

Social capital. Social-network resources and connectedness through family and involvement in civic organizations and neighborhoods occur by building social trust and enhancing engagement.

Suspension. Suspension occurs when a student commits an inappropriate act that requires removal from school for one or more days.

Teacher mobility rate. Data regarding teachers who transferred, retired or terminated their employment over a three-year period, 2004-2007 in the research schools.

Title 1. Title 1 is the largest federal assistance program that serves children through school-wide programs

and targeted assistance programs. Programs generally offer smaller classes, additional teachers and assistants, additional training for school staff, extra time for instruction, a variety of teaching methods and materials, counseling and mentoring, and/or career and college awareness, and a parent involvement component.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to research, practice, and policy. The study is of significant interest to parents and students in view of options available for enrollment, to educators and school district officials as they consider closing a school with decreasing enrollment patterns in areas of economic decline, and whether or not the school can remain educationally viable for children under these circumstances.

Contribution to research. A review of professional literature suggests that more research is needed on the subject of decreasing enrollment patterns in an urban public school. There is also a need for more research on urban school closings and restructuring. Furthermore, the results of this study may inform district central office staff of the impact of student achievement, student behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility in such schools. In addition, the findings indicate specific

factors for decreasing or increasing enrollments patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or improvement that may determine types of services the schools need to maintain buildings conducive to teaching so children may learn.

Contribution to practice. An urban school district may decide whether or not to maintain a school as an education facility or utilize it for community service agencies, based on neighborhoods in economic decline, loss of affordable housing, or loss of interest in attending the school, and schools operating in isolation from the community in which it is located.

Contribution to Policy. The results of this study may offer insight into how school districts develop criteria for closing schools with decreasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline. Given the study outcomes the school district may choose to reconsider its use of facilities in neighborhoods in economic decline for purposes other than the education of children.

Organization of the Study

The literature review relevant to this research study is presented in Chapter 2. This chapter reviews the professional literature related to poverty and economic conditions in neighborhoods that may cause decreasing

enrollment patterns in urban schools. Chapter 3 describes the research design, methodology, independent variables, dependent variables, and procedures that will be used to gather and analyze the data of the study. This includes a detailed synthesis of the participants, a comprehensive list of the dependent variables, the dependent measures, and the data analysis used to statistically determine if the null hypothesis is rejected for each research question. Chapter 4 reports the research findings, including data analysis, tables, and inferential statistics. Chapter 5 draws conclusions from the findings and provides a discussion of the study findings.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

The Quality of a School

The quality of a school is an important factor for people when deciding where to live. The role of choice, not only in the selection of a school but also in the selection of living in an economically viable part of town, has become a significant factor in school enrollment (Gordon & Richardson, 2001). Property rights and values are determined by where one chooses as a place of residence. All families want to live in a neighborhood that is affordable with opportunities for upward mobility and the best possible educational programs for their children. However, affordable, quality housing for low-income renters and families is being eroded by the demolition of large public housing projects (Nichols & Gault, 2003). Minimum wage employment, lack of affordable low-income housing, and few social support agencies often means that families facing poverty must move to even less desirable neighborhoods that are experiencing even greater economic decline with inferior and crumbling schools (Kozol, 2005).

Urban schools in neighborhoods of economic decline.

While neighborhood redevelopment planning is ongoing, population decline in many urban neighborhoods has left

school district officials and planners with no option other than to begin closing schools with rapidly decreasing student enrollments (Varady, Raffel, Sweeney, & Denson, 2005). Many parents, when they are able to and have the economic means, relocate from decreasing neighborhoods. Unfortunately, other parents with fewer economic options, out of necessity, must keep their children in schools that are deteriorating (Kozol, 1991; 2005; Meredith, 2003). These neighborhoods experience decreasing enrollment patterns in the schools that remain open and become what is referred to as transition neighborhoods (Crowley, 2003; Lawhon, 2003). An intervention such as housing vouchers for low-income families offers the opportunity to move to a neighborhood that is stable with affordable housing. If the family does not have to move then the mobility rate of the neighborhood schools also remains stable. Studies clearly indicate that schools in these transition neighborhoods must work harder to reach out to parents to help them become engaged in the life of the school, stay involved, feel valued and appreciated in order to ensure student achievement and success in the midst of economic decline (Meredith, 2003).

Models exist that are thought to be viable means in developing neighborhood designs in an effort to contain

urban sprawl (Lawhon, 2005). The impact of such designs determines the number of people that will move to the area, which has a direct correlation to the number of schools being built to accommodate the population. Wealthier citizens have the ability to move to the suburbs while many citizens, left in the core of an urban city, need more health care, have transportation issues, participate in welfare programs, and do not have the finances to pay for needed services (Meredith, 2003).

School closures and consolidations are inevitable because of decreasing birthrates and baby boomers growing older (McLean, 2003). School boards see these closures and consolidations as a way to save money. Opposition to school closures range from the school being the heart of the community, to needing more study before determining to close a school, as well as looking at the housing and business development occurring in the area (McLean, 2003). Parents with few economic options have little choice but to stay in schools with decreasing enrollments. Jobs or lack of jobs keep them in the area, as does minimal access to transportation.

Research indicates that schools in areas of economic decline (a) provide fewer learning options (Frankenberg & Lee, 2002), (b) a less experienced teacher core

(Breitborde, 2002, Gehrke, 2005), and (c) deteriorating facilities, all considered to be detrimental to the learning success of children. Unequal opportunities and outcomes are linked to concentrations of poverty, which are connected to segregation by race and poverty (Frankenberg & Lee, 2005).

High Stakes Assessment and Diverse Learners

It is thought that culture and environment contribute to test bias because of significant differences in family background and upbringing, discrimination, inadequate test preparation, and limited or inadequate school experiences (Phillips, 2006). An alternative to high stakes norm-referenced standardized assessment, criterion-referenced tests provide useful information about progress a student makes based on formative learning activities. Achievement information from norm referenced standardized tests is largely summative. School districts, such as the Omaha Public Schools, the research school district, use a combination of these types of tests to develop student profiles (Omaha Public Schools, 2004).

Furthermore, research sadly notes a long history of abuse and unintended negative consequences based on norm-referenced test results for minority and culturally diverse students (Volante, 2008). Changes to the basic form of

assessment could enforce equity for all students. According to Volante (2008) using test results to determine if a student graduates is not fair, nor is it an effective way to increase student achievement. Ethnic-minority students are more likely to be placed in special education programs than white students, resulting in less exposure to curriculum measured by high stakes assessment. Moreover, test results may also reinforce teacher bias of certain individuals or groups of students. Volante (2008) also recognizes that the home environment may be an important factor in achievement and is beyond the control of the school. All together, bias, multiple inequalities in learning opportunities, and limited encouragement and support for learning at home contribute to lower test scores.

Deteriorating facilities. It has become a necessity to close the gap in the quality of school facilities for the education of children (Arsen & Davis, 2006). Eleven states have court decisions that mandated local districts to improve buildings attended by a disproportionate number of children from low-income families. Feasibility procedures, created to determine calculations for the cost of whether school facilities are negatively impacting academic achievement, include measuring the existing capital stock--

such as school buildings and related infrastructure--and determining the cost of bringing existing school facilities up to an adequate standard (Argon, 2008). As school districts find ways to improve student achievement, the physical condition of the building plays a significant role (Argon, 2008). Many school districts nationwide are reacting to economic strains as they look at maintenance and operations budgets. Because of increases in costs of energy and utilities, funds are being taken from other areas resulting in a continued decrease in funds to maintain the facilities, thereby causing deterioration that is not being repaired. Even though costs are increasing, the most recent cost analysis indicates that maintenance and operation budgets have decreased to 8.35 percent, down from 9.19 percent from the previous year (Argon, 2008).

Furthermore, in a recent study on the wellbeing of school facilities to determine to what degree schools have healthy, physical environments, one third of the reporting districts--affecting about 14 million students--reported school buildings in need of extensive repair or outright replacement (Jones, Brener, & McManus, 2003). Also, nearly half of the schools reported unsatisfactory conditions such as heating, lighting, and ventilation issues. Urban schools with high minority and low-income students had the greatest

percentage of these problems. However, an important finding in the study noted that many urban districts have placed a high priority in changing or replacing these types of facilities and thus, improving student achievement.

Parent choice, voice, and power. The degree of success for school choice in decreasing neighborhoods is dependent on how a school district structures program offerings and how receptive families of the available options are to engage them (Godwin, Leland, Baxter, & Southworth, 2006). There are four structural components that are critical for a successful school choice program: (a) information, (b) transportation, (c) whether choice is voluntary or mandatory, and (d) whether the policy uses a lottery to determine spaces or utilizes a preferential process for students who meet specific criteria. Three years after implementing a mandatory choice plan, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District eliminated the word mandatory from the name of the choice policy. It also prevented students from choosing schools that had exceeded their enrollment capacity. Students not able to attend the schools of their choice, particularly students on free and reduced lunch, were most likely to remain in schools considered low-performing, as defined in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The choice by parents varied depending

on income. Their choices were usually based on academic achievement. By eliminating the choice obstacle for the district, it began to stress continuity and tried to prevent transfers from school to school.

Research has determined several factors that contribute to low academic achievement scores for African American students: (a) low participation of parents, (b) high poverty, (c) lack or little communication between school and families, and (d) lack of resources (Trotman, 2001). Parents are their children's first teachers and they should serve as their advocates and decision-makers, collaborating with school staff to meet their needs. Schools have taken on roles normally assumed by parents and unintentionally pushed parents away from any type of collaboration, even though research shows that the more parents are involved in their children's education, the more they achieve. The collaboration with parents needs to be meaningful and the child needs to understand everyone is helping them achieve their highest potential. The nuclear two-parent family of decades past has been replaced with single parent or blended families. Most low-income children live in single-parent families headed by women, often unemployed. If parents are employed, they are most likely working one or more minimum wage jobs that limit time with

their children. Parents experience isolation from their child's school, defined as a lack of connection, which makes them feel out of place, particularly when they perceive discrimination. When this occurs parents refuse to communicate with school staff (Brandon, 2007). The role of the educator is a major factor between African American families and the education process. Unfortunately, there are educators who show a lack of respect for the ways in which parents raise their children. The lack of respect may be the result of not being prepared to work with cultures different than their own or unwillingness to learn the cultures of their students. All educators need to know that poverty does not equate to a lack of intelligence (Davis, 2006).

Family-School Partnerships

In decreasing neighborhoods it is imperative that family-school partnerships be formed that provide a school-based action team framework that fosters parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning, decision-making, and collaborating within the community (Epstein, et al., 2002). Partnerships involving civic activities, cultural opportunities, business, and health agencies should also be considered. One challenge would be to ensure equity for students and families to engage in programs and services of

the community. Based on the study of several parent and community involvement models, students who have families actively involved in their education will most likely be successful in school (Lunenburg & Irby, 2002). Barton (2004) discusses a framework for shifting how educators understand parent involvement in their children's schools. Barton asserts that parents may be of two minds about direct school engagement, supportive of their child's daily school experiences but unsure about the schools role in the community. The framework also provides parents a means to impact what happens to their children. Models of parent involvement in neighborhoods of economic stress and decline can be defined as useful in representing the range and type of activities that might be incorporated in parent involvement programs. Partnership programs that include parents and empower them to assist with their children's education have been shown to be effective in improving academic achievement and have a positive effect on parent-teacher-school relationships (Barton, 2004).

In a study of four schools across the country, factors utilized by school staffs to help students achieve included going beyond goals and exceeding expectations while developing trust among the students and their parents (Towns, et al., 2006). Among the practices that aided this

endeavor were: (a) accountability of families, (b) careful consideration in the process of selecting the teaching staff, (c) priority given to teaching basic skills, and (d) adequate resources.

Accountability of families. Partnering with families is an essential piece of obtaining an increase in academic achievement and the demands of accountability for parents and families (Christendon, 2004). There is a need to create an environment that provides success for all students based on the belief that if a child is having difficulty at school, the whole family is affected, and if a family is having difficulty, a child's academic achievement is affected (Christendon, 2004). An opportunity is presented for schools and families to partner with each other to solve problems impacting a child's ability to learn. Barriers are in place, which impede successful family-school collaborations. No matter what socioeconomic status, families, and parents in particular, have the responsibility to make certain that their children's education is paramount. Educators have the responsibility of addressing barriers to family engagement. While educators find time to handle conflicts between schools and families, time must be spent developing relationships on behalf of the children.

In a study where teachers were asked to write their opinions regarding the roles and responsibilities of parents, schools, and teachers on the impact of student achievement, results showed that educators need to recognize their effect on student achievement and higher level thinking (Korkmaz, 2007). Learning takes place in a safe, positive, attractive physical environment where teachers can teach so students can learn. The results also indicated that since learning also takes place at home, parents should openly communicate with their children, encourage them to do their best, limit television viewing, and complete homework assignments.

Family and community strengths. Family and community members play a major role in transmission of values from which children develop their attitudes (Sankofa, Hurley, Allen, & Boykin, 2005). Stereotypes of African American culture by media and society--particularly in neighborhoods of economic distress and decline--may provide educators with negative attitudes about African American students (Schwartz, 2001). Schools in these neighborhoods particularly need building wide plans that acknowledge diversity to ensure the successful achievement of African American students.

Unfortunately, teachers all too often use culture, poverty, and low self-esteem to explain failures of diverse student populations (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Teachers have difficulty working with children whose culture, race, and neighborhoods are different from their own. The negative aspects of culture are being used to explain manners and behavior (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Social capital. Parent involvement can equate to a form of social capital (Yan & Lin, 2005). Social capital is generated from the strength of relationships between children and adults and is most important to adolescents who need guidance to implement developmentally appropriate tasks. The concept of parent involvement as social capital does not have the same effect on minority parents because of inequalities in society. Resource availability is different for people of color and may present barriers to the level of involvement (Yan & Lin, 2005). Minority parents do hold high expectations for their children to achieve, however, because of life circumstances they may not be able to participate in implementing those expectations.

Student Expectations and Cultural Competence

Expectations and standards should be the same for black and white students whether or not they are

economically advantaged (Futrell & Brown, 2000). High academic standards benefit everyone. There is a concern that children of color are underrepresented in advanced placement and international language courses; therefore, they are not receiving a rigorously challenging education in core content courses. One study determined that these advanced placement courses better prepare students for examinations such as the SAT, ACT, and state-required tests. As diverse student enrollments increase in transition neighborhoods with a teaching staff that is predominantly white, the need for cultural competency becomes imperative (Dantas, 2007). There are teachers who have difficulty working with students whose ethnicity and culture are different than their own. Side effects of not understanding various cultures result in stereotypes of how children learn and what their parents know and do to promote education in their family. Many teachers come from backgrounds and communities where there is little diversity and poverty. Consequently, their concept of how diverse students learn may only be a skill and drill approach when students of color also benefit from a hands-on approach to learning (Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001). Therefore, it is critical that teachers learn and understand various culturally sensitive styles of teaching.

As the demographics have changed over the years so have the views about how to teach and become more effective and responsive to the needs of children, particularly those of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds (Brown, 2007). One teaching method in diverse classrooms is culturally responsive teaching, defined as using the perspective, culture, and ethnicity traits to teach children. Culturally responsive teaching provides a connection that allows children to understand knowledge and skills within a frame of reference to the real world. Children are more engaged when lessons are meaningful. As a result, utilizing this approach improves academic achievement (Brown, 2007).

There are important skills teachers must have in order to have a culturally responsive classroom. Teachers must believe that students want to learn. Teachers who implement instructional strategies and behavior can motivate students and improve academic achievement. Every teacher must be committed to increasing successes and preventing failures through appropriate activities that engage students in the learning process (Brown, 2007).

Less experienced teacher core. Policymakers on the local, state, and national levels must understand the challenges in recruiting and retaining urban teachers

(Claycomb, 2000). With teacher shortages looming, creative means of encouraging teachers to move into hard to staff positions is becoming critical (Hanushek, 2004). The large amounts of money needed to staff urban schools with high turnover rates erode these schools of talent and finances. Teachers should not be hired to teach in an urban setting until it can be demonstrated that they have achieved the necessary skills to work in a diverse setting because urban schools need experienced, qualified, and committed teachers to assist students in achieving their highest potential (Claycomb, 2000). Unfortunately, many teachers leave urban schools because they no longer want to manage students' disruptive classroom behavior rather than leave because of any urban/suburban school salary differential (Stover, 2007). Schools serving minority and academically disadvantaged students lose a large number of teachers, many leaving for other schools in the district or leaving the district completely (Hanushek, 2004).

Many teachers miss an opportunity to teach a majority of children because of incorrect perceptions of children and their families, especially those in poverty. Teachers who successfully teach in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms understand the cultures from which their students come and actively engage in developing

relationships with their students and their families (Breitborde, 2002). In diverse school settings even the most experienced urban teachers must continually work to develop a growing awareness of what is culturally important to their students while maintaining the highest academic standards and expectations. The challenge becomes knowing what works while remaining cognizant of working in the confines of a district, or individual building setting, that may limit opportunities to try various techniques or match learning activities with individual student's learning styles (Gehrke, 2005).

Fewer learning options. Urban school districts educate one-third of the nation's school-aged children, making it clear that educators must improve, in every way, learning opportunities for this growing cohort of students (Gehrke, 2005).

Brown versus Board of Education (1954), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 1968), both major events in the history of public education, resulted in changes for students of poverty (Fields-Smith, 2005; Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Children from poor families are less likely to achieve high scores on standardized tests than students from more affluent households (Fields-Smith, 2005). Poor academic achievement is also blamed on

the quality of education in urban public schools (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). However, the poorest 25% of school districts across the country received fewer state and local funds per pupil than the richest 25%, according to a 1997 Education Trust study. These figures were adjusted to account for the greater expense of educating students in poverty as well as districts and areas with the highest cost of living. Inequality puts students at a disadvantage, particularly students of color (Gardner & Miranda, 2001).

Careful consideration in the process of selecting the teaching staff. Several studies have concluded that children of color and children who live in poverty are least likely to be taught by good or experienced teachers (Berry, 2008). The same is true for nationally certified teachers. Districts across the country have instituted signing bonuses. One district in North Carolina started an incentive program that pays algebra teachers an additional \$14,000 if they teach in high needs schools and students show improvement on state tests. In a nearby district, teachers are eligible for a \$3,000 stipend for teaching in high needs schools and another \$2,500 if they stay and are successful.

The Center for Teacher Quality and the National Education Association gathered information from 1700

National Board Certified Teachers from five states to participate in a series of structured state policy summits with policy makers. These summits were held in North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Washington, and South Carolina. There were 142 policy recommendations generated that would alleviate significant staffing problems in high needs schools. The major recommendations were: (a) transform the teaching and learning conditions of high-needs schools, (b) prepare and support teachers for the specific challenges posed by working in high needs schools, (c) recruit and develop administrators who can draw on the expertise of specially prepared teacher leaders, (d) create a menu of recruitment incentives, but focus on growing teaching expertise within high needs schools, and (e) build awareness among policy makers. It takes more than enticing qualified teachers to high-needs schools to make them work. It also takes a supportive district with policymakers, community members, and families, collaborating to build awareness before progress is made.

Smart recruiting is an important factor in teacher retention strategies for hard-to-staff urban schools (Stover, 2007). School systems are creating grow-your-own programs while some look to alternative certification. In New York, college graduates take employment within 40 miles

of home. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has begun to look for teachers internationally, in states with a teacher surplus, and at systems with decreasing enrollments. Districts are looking at industries laying-off engineers and scientists, as well as districts with decreasing enrollments letting teachers go. Another strategy is to provide a personal touch like making a large district seem smaller. Every candidate should know at least one person on staff and have their contact information. Miami-Dade offers 20 percent more pay at 39 high needs schools with extended days and years, aimed at increasing student achievement. In efforts to provide equity, Baltimore offered signing and relocation stipends to bring high quality teachers in high needs schools in shortage areas such as math, science, and special education. Another strategy is to work with the teacher unions for mentoring and professional development for new teachers. School climate is important in staff retention (Stover, 2007).

Improving equity and achievement. Two essential elements in improving equity and achievement are the quality of instruction and the leadership of the principal (Reeves, 2007). Interview strategies are important in making sure the right individual is hired. For a performance assessment, one urban district in Washington

had a candidate observe several classrooms and report what they observed. The observations allowed multiple levels of analysis from noting instruction techniques and the environment to see if they are comfortable around students (Reeves, 2007). Those aspiring to hold leadership positions take one of two positions when asked what they observed regarding instruction. They will either discuss the environment and what staff can control or they may make an empathetic statement about student potential, for example, saying of the students that they are doing the best they can. Caution is recommended for the latter statement because it may be a setting where expectations are not high enough for the students. A superintendent in the Midwest has each candidate arrive an hour early for the interview and provides them with data on achievement and demographics for one low and one high performance classroom. If the interviewer is interested in equity they will notice responses geared to teaching and leadership. Comments will also focus on the actions of the school rather than demographic information. It was suggested that candidates be given anonymous pieces of student work and evaluate that work compared to school district, state, or national standards (Reeves, 2007).

Priority given to teaching basic skills. Academic achievement is limited to a single measure--No Child Left Behind (Barrier-Ferreira, 2008). Elementary teachers express consternation over high stakes testing-which keep them from teaching children how to become employable citizens. The question being asked is what good is it to conduct standardized tests if students are academically successful but lack the skills to survive in global society? In nurturing social and emotional development, students will be prepared to work and learn from others different than themselves. Students can learn from shared beliefs and differences. A low-income, urban high school in California was labeled as underperforming because of scores on a state standardized mathematics test (Barrier-Ferreira, 2008). This California school outperformed the other high school in the district along with other schools in the Stanford University study. Taking into account where students began and knowledge gained to understand the concepts were ignored by the state. The methods used to teach the students were not recognized in any form by the state. The methods and questions used in the study were different than those used on the standardized test: (a) they were not set in contexts that are confusing to linguistic-minority and low-income students; (b) they

reward all students who attain the correct answers, rather than only those who answered the questions in the same form as the acceptable multiple-choice answer; (c) they do not use long and confusing sentences (Barrier-Ferreira, 2008). The study concluded that many of the schools labeled as underperforming are located in areas of high poverty where language and culture are huge factors in how students learn.

Adequate resources. Determining how much an adequate education costs is a daunting task with the most common technique being the use of professional judgment (Costrell, Hanushek, & Loeb, 2008). Professional judgment is defined as the opinion of educators of the cost functions of education. The difficulty in using this method is education cost functions do not disclose the actual costs of academic achievement. This study found that a system of knowledge, incentives, accountability, and professional capacity is needed to determine how to efficiently spend funds to increase student achievement and help students reach their learning potential. Education's role in our society's financial health is deemed critical (Kowal, 2002). The average cost of a college graduate who attended a four-year university, investing up to \$20 thousand, will yield \$380-\$400 thousand dollars in a lifetime more than a high school

graduate would earn. Taxpayers on average are spending \$34 thousand a year to incarcerate a prisoner. Calculations indicate that 82 percent of prisoners were high school dropouts. Hayward, California spends \$5,860 per year for students, one-tenth the cost of a prisoner (Kowal, 2002).

Adequacy is an effort to tie education and student outcomes to finance policies such as No Child Left Behind, and other state assessments that may mandate schools to provide an equal opportunity for all students (Knoeppel, 2007). Efforts to achieve these outcomes and resources necessary to meet them and other standards while ensuring equity in the process are major challenges for the education profession. Knoeppel (2007) states an adequate school finance system provides sufficient resources so that schools provide equal opportunities for all students to learn. There are a few exceptions for what the financial resources provide so all children can become productive citizens once they graduate from high school. Teachers are the most important predictors of student achievement. The teacher-student relationship, effective skills used by teachers, and the effect on student learning and pedagogy needs further study to determine the cost of adequacy.

The findings of a school-level expenditure framework, in 11 schools in 4 states, report differences in design and

implementation with the model's suggested resource allocation, student achievement scores, and the extent to which scores were improved with services such as before and after school tutoring (Odden et al., 2008). Odden and colleagues also questioned why more schools do not utilize tutors since tutoring is an effective way to provide extra help for struggling students. It was recommended that schools with high concentrations of poverty in their student enrollment designate as much as 25%-35% of their budgets for extra help programs that are both instructional along with student support services (Odden et al., 2008).

Current trends in educational spending show a shift in funding for public education to rising costs in other categories such as Medicaid (Murray, Rueben, & Rosenberg, 2007). States look at trends such as the increased cost of per pupil spending when the school-age enrollment was decreasing and the work age population was growing. Court cases where equalization of school finance issues was the heart of discussion, mandated court reforms increased the state share of education spending. Federal government spending is not at levels promised many years ago. No Child Left Behind, for example, funds states seeking new resources that maintain achievement standards while creating assessment and accountability systems. However,

developing highly qualified teachers with increased salary and training costs were borne by the state. As the population ages and political power shifts toward the elderly, education spending is expected to decline. This decline might result in drastic reductions in per-pupil spending as the school-age population continues to grow. It is possible that education will compete for funding with an elderly population that continues to grow.

Schools supporting success. Teachers have considerable impact on student achievement, particularly with low-income students (Tucker, et al., 2005). However, these same teachers may have low expectations and fewer interactions with low-income students. A proactive school has strong leadership and practices; it encourages diverse relationships and provides students with opportunities to learn about other cultures (Teaver, 2005). A reactive school may have no clear academic mission with little effort to meet student needs. A small school size may offer intensive contact among ethnically and culturally diverse students while creating an atmosphere that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning. In a study that looked at how pupils' culture affected teacher satisfaction, it was concluded that when staff trusts in the ability of students they improve in achievement scores (Van Houtte,

2006). Where there is distrust and dissatisfaction with their jobs, there is correlation with low performance or achievement measurements with students.

Parents and students, who perceive a cultural mismatch between a teacher's background and their own, blame the teacher for poor student classroom performance (Teaver, 2005). The NEA created a program called Culture Abilities Resilience Effort (2004), where it determined that staff should reflect on ways to work with low student achievement, focusing more on factors within the system rather than within children, that create barriers to effective learning. By developing cultural competence and sensitivity, teaching can be exciting as well as challenging, and provide opportunities for educators to be creative in establishing a diverse learning environment for students, with high expectations that are supportive of multiple ways to learn.

Achievement. There are many who believe that standardized tests are culturally biased, do not test what is being taught or learned, and are not aligned with local or state standards (Howell, West, & Peterson, 2007). Cultural differences and differences in values, practices, and language are also seen as negatively impacting the test results of diverse student populations. Teachers also have

been blamed for not correctly teaching what is to be tested (Borman, 2003; Picus et al., 2005).

However, and most important to this literature review, there is little research to indicate how a school culture and its organizational practices act to maintain racial inequities in academic achievement (Volante, 2008). Too many teachers choose not to teach in urban school settings because of stereotypes about the quality of schools, the students, their families, and the very physical condition of the school building (Breitborde, 2002). A teacher unprepared for such an environment, will not understand the culture of the students and their particular needs, and will most likely not respond to them. In this case, all stakeholders fail.

Today's reform efforts are top-down standards mandating what schools should do to increase achievement levels in high-needs schools while leaving the process up to educators to implement (Odden, et al., 2008). The challenge is that many of the mandated changes have failed students who do not learn by traditional teaching methods. The U.S. Department of Education touts the Comprehensive School Reform model (CSR) which shows more positive results in student achievement when compared to Title 1 programs. Study results showed that schools should be partners in

innovation, and therefore, be supportive of the CSR model. This model, according to the study, indicates that research based on models of educational improvement can be implemented in any type of school setting. Just as with Title 1, more federal support is needed to continue achievement gains in high poverty areas. Students' attitudes toward education and their individual student success is a reflection of their environment because students are aware of the physical conditions of their school buildings (Picus, et al., 2005).

Resilience and strengths. School staffs must understand resilience and adapt teaching styles to assist urban youths in becoming resilient in order to improve academic achievement, as well as self-confidence and self esteem. Resilience is defined as the capacity to overcome difficult and challenging life circumstances (Bryan, 2005). Educational resilience is defined as the ability of children to succeed despite obstacles. This resilience can be nurtured by establishing positive supports in an environment conducive to teaching and learning. School, family, and community partnerships should be a collaborative effort directed at improving and increasing the social, emotional, behavioral and academic success of students attending their school (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, &

Villares, 2006). Urban schools lack adequate financing to meet all student challenges. There must be a deliberate effort to shift from viewing families as a deficit to the educational process to viewing the family as an asset with a shared responsibility to contribute to the education of its children. Educators are moving their attention from seeking family deficits to seeking family strengths in determining how children learn. Educators have refocused attention on assisting families to help their children become academically successful (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006). Family resilience perspective is defined as the school and family developing a collaborative relationship, which analyzes interactions between school and home. Opportunities are sought to help families facing adversity that, in turn, result in helping children succeed in school.

Educators need preparation for working with diverse families and their children to understand the dynamics of how these families function. A missing ingredient in many teacher preparation programs is the element of caring, particularly when working with African-American families and communities. Family-school relationships have been strained since desegregation for African American parents,

particularly when teachers have low expectations, whether perceived or actual, for their students (Chavkin, 2005).

African American parents understand the impact of teachers on their children and they want to know the teachers better, and to be more aware of current events. African American parents want teachers to understand the culture of African Americans and to develop trusting relationships with them (Bryan, 2005). Teachers must be cognizant of how they define parent involvement and look at a variety of ways parents can be engaged. Efforts to close the achievement gap focus on blaming students of color and their families for what is perceived to be deficits. Parents are not regarded as partners in the educational process of their children. School officials blame cultural values for poor achievement results and parents cite racism and insensitivity (Bryan, 2005).

Family Variables and Achievement

The impact of family functioning on African American males' academic achievement has been analyzed through a review of empirical literature (Mandara, 2006). One of the most consistent findings is the underachievement of black males. School environment factors include low expectations on the part of teachers, tracking into low ability classes, and low performing schools with undereducated teachers.

Family environment factors include undereducated parents, poverty, and single-family homes that contribute to the underachievement of black males. Teachers may need more help in understanding the cultures of their students in order to help them become more successful in improving academic achievement. Parent perceptions of teachers' expectations of their sons' abilities and their level of involvement should be discussed. Teacher perceptions of parental involvement and the students' abilities to achieve are predictors of success and should be discussed as well (Mandara, 2006).

Single parenthood, achievement, and problem behavior in white, black, and Hispanic children has been investigated (Ricciuti, 2004). While some research has been done on the effects of single parenthood with inconclusive results, findings indicate that all of the negative aspects of single parenthood and its impact on student achievement can be offset by family characteristics that support positive parenting and childrearing. When resources are available to assist single parents, student achievement is enhanced.

Urban schools. Urban schools are increasingly under pressure to improve student achievement scores (Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Schools are being urged to form

collaborative partnerships with the parents and the community from which their students come in an effort to promote academic success. However, urban schools usually do not have the funding resources to form the partnerships to create a rigorous learning environment. If a school is to become high performing, it will need to reach beyond traditional territory and branch out in order to meet the parents by holding family-centered activities. The activities should not only benefit the family but the school itself. School obstacles for not achieving solid partnerships include teacher burnout, lack of preparation, and lack of time. Schools must reach out to the community to indicate what they need and what their parent partners can offer.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter describes the participants, procedures, independent variable descriptions, dependent measures and instrumentation, research questions, and data analysis.

Participants

Number of participants. The maximum number of participants ($N = 33$) were students ($n = 15$) attending the same school 2nd-grade through 5th-grade classes in a Title I school in a neighborhood of economic decline and students ($n = 18$) attending the same school 2nd-grade through 5th-grade classes in a Title 1 school in a neighborhood of economic improvement.

Gender of the subjects. The gender of the participants was congruent with enrollment patterns in the participating schools where females represent 51% and males represent 49% of the total enrollment in a Title I school in a neighborhood of economic decline. These numbers are representative of the overall student population of the school.

Age range of the subjects. The age range of study participants was 7 years old at the beginning of the study and 10 years old at the time of posttest data collection at both schools.

Racial and ethnic origin. The racial and ethnic origin ratio were congruent with enrollment patterns in the participating schools. The school with a decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline racial and ethnic origin ratio was 79.5% Black; 12.1% White, not Hispanic, 6.2%; Hispanic; 2% Native American; and .03% Asian/Pacific Islander.

The school with an increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement racial and ethnic origin ratio was 42.1% Black; 24.8 white, not Hispanic; 28.4% Hispanic; 4.5% Native American; and .03% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Inclusion criteria of the participants. 5th-grade students who attended the Title 1 neighborhood schools since 2nd-grade were eligible to participate in the study.

Method of subject identification. Thirty-three students were selected as participants for this study and were randomly selected from those who attend the same schools from 2nd-grade through 5th-grade. No individual identifiers were attached to the achievement, discipline, or parent involvement data.

Description of Procedures.

Norm-referenced test scores in the areas of reading, math, and language of students from the school with

decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline were compared to norm-referenced test scores from a school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement to determine if there is impact on student achievement between 2nd-grade and 5th-grade. Parent climate surveys from 2004 and 2007 were analyzed and compared to determine if there is a change in parent attitude for the school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline and the school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement. School attendance and suspension rates were analyzed to determine if there was a difference between the two schools. Teacher mobility rates were analyzed from 2004-2007 to determine if there is an impact based on increasing or decreasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement.

Research design. The pretest-posttest, comparative two-group survey study design is displayed in the following notation:

Group 1 $X_1 O_1 X_2 O_2$

Group 2 $X_1 O_1 X_3 O_2$

Group 1 = 5th-grade students ($n = 15$) who attended the same school from the 2nd-grade through the 5th-grade

Group 2 = 5th-grade students ($n = 18$) who attended the same school from the 2nd-grade through the 5th-grade

X_1 = Title I elementary schools with reported Adequate Yearly Progress for student achievement

X_2 = a Title I elementary school with decreasing enrollment patterns in a neighborhood of economic decline

X_3 = a Title I elementary school with increasing enrollment patterns in a neighborhood of economic improvement

O_1 = 1. Student Achievement: (a) California Achievement Test (CAT) Normal Curve Equivalent Scores (NCE) as measured in March 2004 for 2nd-grade students' (i) reading total, (ii) math total, and (iii) language total. 2. Behavior: Absence data as measured in March 2004 for 2nd-grade students. 3. Parent Involvement: School wide Parent Climate Survey response to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, as measured in March 2004.

O_2 = 1. Student Achievement: (a) California Achievement Test (CAT) Normal Curve Equivalent Scores (NCE) as measured in March 2007 for 5th-grade students' (i) reading total, (ii) math total, and (iii) language total, and (b) end of 5th-grade report card grade scores for: (i) reading, (ii) math, and (iii) language. 2. Behavior: Absence data as measured in March 2007 for 5th-grade students. 3. Parent

Involvement: Parent Climate Survey response to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, as measured in March 2007. 4. School wide stable or changing teacher mobility rates as measured by (a) active, (b) transferred, (c) terminated, and (d) retired frequency categories.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of decreasing enrollment patterns in a Title I school surrounded by economic decline on 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates compared to 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates in a nearby Title I elementary school with an increasing enrollment pattern surrounded by economic improvement.

Research Questions and Data Analysis

The following research questions were utilized to examine student achievement as measured by norm referenced achievement normal curve equivalent scores for reading, language, and math and end of 5th-grade report card grade scores.

Pretest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #1. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline lose, maintain, or improve 2nd-grade

compared to 5th-grade NRT reading, language, and math achievement scores?

Sub-Question 1a. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE reading total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 1b. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE math total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 1c. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE language total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Research Sub-Questions #1a, 1b, and 1c were analyzed using dependent *t* tests to examine the significance of the difference between students' 2nd-grade pretest compared to 5th-grade posttest NRT achievement scores after

participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a one-tailed .01 alpha level was employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Means and standard deviations are displayed on tables.

Overarching Pretest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #2. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement lose, maintain, or improve 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT reading, language, and math achievement scores?

Sub-Question 2a. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE reading total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 2b. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE math total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Sub-Question 2c. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade NRT NCE language total achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Research Sub-Questions #2a, 2b, and 2c were analyzed using dependent *t* tests to examine the significance of the difference between students' 2nd-grade pretest compared to 5th-grade posttest NRT achievement scores after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a one-tailed .01 alpha level was employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Means and standard deviations are displayed on tables.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #3. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline have congruent or different 5th-grade NRT reading, language, and math achievement scores compared to students who participate in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Sub-Question 3a. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' NRT reading total achievement scores after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 3b. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' NRT math total achievement scores after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 3c. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' NRT language total achievement scores after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Research Sub-Questions #3a, 3b, and 3c were analyzed using independent t tests to examine the significance of the difference between 5th-grade students completing an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline posttest NRT achievement scores compared to 5th-grade students completing an elementary school program with an increasing

enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement posttest NRT achievement scores. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a one-tailed .01 alpha level was employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Means and standard deviations are displayed on tables.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Achievement Research Question #4. Do students who participate in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline have congruent or different 5th-grade report card grade point average scores compared to students who participate in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Sub-Question 4a. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' report card grade point average scores for reading after completing elementary school programs with decreasing compared to increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 4b. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' report card grade point average scores for math after completing elementary school programs with decreasing compared to increasing

enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Sub-Question 4c. Is there a significant difference between 5th-grade students' report card grade point average scores for language after completing elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Research Sub-Questions #4a, 4b, and 4c were analyzed using independent *t* tests to examine the significance of the difference between 5th-grade students completing an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline posttest report card grade point average scores compared to 5th-grade students completing an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement posttest report card grade point average scores. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a one-tailed .01 alpha level was employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Means and standard deviations are displayed on tables.

The following research question was utilized to examine behavior as measured by student absence frequencies.

Pretest-Posttest Behavior Research Question #5. Do students who participate in elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement lose, maintain, or improve 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade absence frequencies?

Sub-Question 5a. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade absence frequency totals after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline?

Sub-Question 5b. Is there a significant difference between students' 2nd-grade compared to 5th-grade absence frequency totals after participating in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement?

Research Sub-Questions #5a and 5b, were analyzed using dependent *t* tests to examine the significance of the difference between students' 2nd-grade pretest compared to 5th-grade posttest absence frequency totals after participating in an elementary school programs with decreasing and increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a one-

tailed .01 alpha level was employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Means and standard deviations are displayed on tables.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Behavior Research

Question #6. Do students who participated in the decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline school program and students who participated in the increasing enrollment pattern school program in a neighborhood of economic improvement have different or congruent posttest 5th-grade compared to posttest 5th-grade absence frequencies?

Sub-Question 6a. Is there a significant difference between students' 5th-grade posttest compared to 5th-grade posttest absence frequency totals after participating in an elementary school programs with decreasing and increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement?

Research Sub-Questions #6a was analyzed using an independent *t* test to examine the significance of the difference between 5th-grade posttest compared to 5th-grade posttest absence frequencies after participating in an elementary school program with a decreasing or increasing enrollment pattern in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement. Because multiple statistical tests

were conducted, a one-tailed .01 alpha level was employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Means and standard deviations are displayed on tables.

The following research question was utilized to examine parent involvement as measured by parents, teachers, and students' posttest climate survey response scores to the statement: Students feel safe at this school.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Parent Involvement Research Question #7. Do parents, teachers, and students who participated in elementary school programs with a decreasing or increasing enrollment pattern in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement have different or congruent school climate survey response scores to the statement: Students feel safe at this school.

Sub-Question 7a. Is there a significant difference between the 5th-grade posttest school climate survey response scores for parents, teachers, and students who participated in an elementary school program with decreasing and increasing enrollment patterns in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement to the statement: Students feel safe at this school?

Research Sub-Questions #7a utilized a chi-square test of significance to compare observed verses expected school climate survey response scores to the statement: Students

feel safe at this school. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a .01 alpha level was employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Frequencies and percents are displayed on tables.

The following research question was utilized to examine posttest teacher mobility rates as measured by posttest teacher transferred, terminated, retired, and active category frequencies.

Overarching Posttest-Posttest Teacher Mobility Rates Question #8. Have students who participated in elementary school programs with decreasing or increasing enrollment pattern in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement experienced equivalent 5th-grade posttest teacher mobility rates?

Sub-Question 8a. Is there a significant difference between teacher mobility rates in an elementary school program with a decreasing enrollment pattern in neighborhoods of economic decline or economic improvement compared to the teacher mobility rates in an elementary school program with an increasing enrollment pattern?

Research Sub-Questions #8a utilized a chi-square test of significance to compare observed verses expected 5th-grade posttest teacher mobility rates. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a .01 alpha level was

employed to help control for Type 1 errors. Frequencies and percents are displayed on tables.

Data Collection Procedures

All student achievement data was retrospectively, archival, and routinely collected school information. Permission from the appropriate school research personnel was obtained. Non-coded numbers were used to display individual de-identified achievement data. Aggregated group data, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistical analysis was utilized and reported with means and standard deviations on tables.

Performance site. The research was conducted in the public school setting through normal educational practices. The study procedure did not interfere in any way with the normal educational practices of the public schools and did not involve coercion or discomfort of any kind. All data was analyzed in the office of the Primary Investigator at the Omaha Public Schools District located at 3215 Cuming Street, Omaha, Nebraska, 68131 or office of the doctoral dissertation supervisor. Data will was stored on computer drives for statistical analysis. Data and computer flash drives were stored in a locked records vault. No individual identifiers were attached to the data.

Confidentiality. Non-coded numbers were used to display individual de-identified achievement and skills data. Aggregated group data, descriptive statistics, and parametric statistical analysis was utilized and reported as means and standard deviations on tables.

Informed consent. All retrospective achievement and skills data were routinely collected school information. Permission from the appropriate school and district research personnel was obtained. No identifying student, teacher, or parent information was used in the study.

Exemption category. The exemption category for this study is category 1 45CFR46.101 (b). The research was conducted in the public school setting through normal educational practices. The study procedures did not interfere in any way with the normal educational practices of the public school and did not involve coercion or discomfort of any kind. Permission from the appropriate school and district personnel has been obtained. A letter of support from the school district is located in the Appendix.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of decreasing enrollment patterns in a Title I school surrounded by economic decline on 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates compared to 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates in a nearby Title I elementary school surrounded by economic improvement and increasing enrollment patterns.

Norm-referenced test scores in the areas of reading, math, and language of students from the school with a decreasing enrollment pattern were compared to norm-referenced test scores from the school with an increasing enrollment pattern to determine if there was impact on student achievement between 2nd-grade and 5th-grade. Aggregated parent climate surveys from 2004 and 2007 were analyzed and compared to determine if there was a change in parent attitude for the school with a decreasing enrollment pattern and the school with an increasing enrollment pattern compared to student and teacher responses to the question: Students feel safe at this school. Absence rates were analyzed to determine if there was a difference between students attending the two schools. Teacher

mobility rates were analyzed from 2004-2007 to determine if there was an impact based on increasing or decreasing enrollment patterns. All study achievement data related to each of the dependent variables were retrospective, archival, and routinely collected school information. Permission from the appropriate school research personnel was obtained before data were collected and analyzed.

Table 1 displays demographic information of individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline. Table 2 displays demographic information of individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement. California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline are found in Table 3. California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement may be found in Table 4. Table 5 displays beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for

individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline.

Research Question #1

The first pretest-posttest hypothesis was tested using the dependent *t* test. The first hypothesis comparing beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I School with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline results were displayed in Table 5. As seen in Table 5 the null hypothesis was rejected for all three of the measured achievement subtests: (a) Reading Total, (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total. The pretest Reading Total score ($M = 47.67$, $SD = 14.30$) compared to the posttest Reading Total score ($M = 33.07$, $SD = 11.36$) was statistically significantly different, $t(14) = -3.37$, $p = .002$ (one-tailed), $d = 1.13$. The pretest Math Total score ($M = 64.07$, $SD = 16.36$) compared to the posttest Math Total score ($M = 31.07$, $SD = 15.99$) was statistically significantly different, $t(14) = -11.67$, $p < .0001$ (one-tailed), $d = 2.04$. The pretest Language Total score ($M = 46.20$, $SD = 12.96$) compared to the posttest Language Total score ($M =$

35.47, $SD = 10.70$) was statistically significantly different, $t(14) = -3.89$, $p = .001$ (one-tailed), $d = .90$.

Overall, pretest-posttest results indicated beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline were statistically significantly different in the direction of lower posttest mean achievement NCE test scores for (a) Reading Total, (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total. Comparing students' NRT NCE Reading Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Reading Total mean score of 33.07 is congruent with a Standard Score of 88, a Percentile Rank of 21, a Stanine Score of 4 (the lowest stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Math Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Math Total mean score of 31.07 is congruent with a Standard Score of 86, a Percentile Rank of 18, a Stanine Score of 3 (the highest stanine of the below average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Below Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Language

Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Language Total mean score of 35.47 is congruent with a Standard Score of 89, a Percentile Rank of 23, a Stanine Score of 4 (the lowest stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average.

Finally, the lower Reading Total (-14.60), the lower Math Total (-33.00), and the lower Language Total (-10.73) pretest compared to posttest mean Normal Curve Equivalent test scores observed in the three achievement areas represents a statistically significant pattern of decline that may reflect the impact of attending and learning in a school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline. The data suggest that once a school is found with these conditions moving students to other schools with more positive conditions would be warranted to insure positive academic growth.

Research Question #2

The second pretest-posttest hypothesis was tested using the dependent *t* test. The second hypothesis comparing beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment

pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement results were displayed in Table 6. As seen in Table 6 the null hypothesis was not rejected for any of the three measured achievement subtests: (a) Reading Total, (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total. The pretest Reading Total score ($M = 46.78$, $SD = 17.38$) compared to the posttest Reading Total score ($M = 51.39$, $SD = 18.01$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(17) = 1.22$, $p = .12$ (one-tailed), $d = .26$. The pretest Math Total score ($M = 59.22$, $SD = 21.77$) compared to the posttest Math Total score ($M = 54.50$, $SD = 19.01$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(17) = -1.15$, $p = .13$ (one-tailed), $d = .23$. The pretest Language Total score ($M = 55.11$, $SD = 20.63$) compared to the posttest Language Total score ($M = 51.94$, $SD = 20.66$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(17) = -0.74$, $p = .24$ (one-tailed), $d = .15$.

Overall, pretest-posttest results indicated beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement were not statistically significantly different in the direction of improved (a) Reading Total and lower (b) Math Total, and (c) Language

Total posttest mean achievement NCE test scores. Comparing students' NRT NCE Reading Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Reading Total mean score of 51.39 is congruent with a Standard Score of 101, a Percentile Rank of 53, a Stanine Score of 5 (the middle stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Math Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Math Total mean score of 54.50 is congruent with a Standard Score of 103, a Percentile Rank of 58, a Stanine Score of 6 (the highest stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Language Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Language Total mean score of 51.94 is congruent with a Standard Score of 101, a Percentile Rank of 53, a Stanine Score of 5 (the middle stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average.

Finally, the improved Reading Total (+4.61), the lower Math Total (-4.72), and the lower Language Total (-3.17) pretest compared to posttest mean Normal Curve Equivalent test scores observed in the three achievement areas

represented a not statistically significant improvement in Reading Total, a not statistically significant decline in Math Total, and a not statistically significant decline in Language Total scores. Overall pretest-posttest achievement score equipoise represents continuous student achievement in the areas measured for students in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement.

Research Question #3

The third posttest-posttest hypothesis was tested using the independent *t* test. A comparison of students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline compared to students enrolled in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement ending 5th-Grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent score results were displayed in Table 7. As seen in Table 7 the predetermined .01 alpha level set for rejecting the null hypothesis was obtained for all of the three measured achievement subtests: (a) Reading Total = .001, (b) Math Total = .0003, and (c) Language Total = .004. As indicated in Table 7 the posttest students in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline group Reading

Total NCE score ($M = 33.07$, $SD = 11.36$) compared to the posttest students in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement group Reading Total NCE score ($M = 51.39$, $SD = 18.01$) was statistically significantly different, $t(31) = 3.41$, $p = .001$ (one-tailed), $d = 1.24$. As indicated in Table 7 the posttest students in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline group Math Total NCE score ($M = 31.07$, $SD = 15.99$) compared to the posttest students in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement group Math Total NCE score ($M = 54.50$, $SD = 19.01$) was statistically significantly different, $t(31) = 3.78$, $p = .0003$ (one-tailed), $d = 1.33$. Finally, as indicated in Table 7 the posttest students in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline group Language Total NCE score ($M = 35.47$, $SD = 10.70$) compared to the posttest students in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement group Language Total NCE score ($M = 51.94$, $SD = 20.66$) was statistically significantly different, $t(31) = 2.79$, $p = .004$ (one-tailed), $d = 1.05$.

Overall, results indicated that 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a

neighborhood of economic improvement had statistically significantly higher (a) Reading Total, (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total mean achievement NCE scores compared to 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. Also compelling is that the 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had achievement scores that fell within the middle or 5th stanine of the average range (Reading Total and Language Total) while Math Total scores fell within the highest or 6th stanine of the average range while the 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline had achievement scores that fell within the lowest or 4th stanine of the average range (Reading Total and Language Total) and Math Total scores fell within the highest or 3rd stanine of the below average range. Given the consistency of the statistical results for all three subtests, the large effect sizes observed across all three posttest-posttest comparisons, and use of the .01 level of significance for rejecting the null hypotheses insured that the result, indicating achievement may be negatively effected when enrollment decreases in a neighborhood of economic decline, was not a type I error.

Research Question #4

Table 8 displays students enrolled in a Title I School with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline compared to students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement ending 5th-grade posttest report card grade scores.

The fourth posttest-posttest hypothesis was tested using the independent *t* test. A comparison of students enrolled in a Title I School with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline compared to students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement ending 5th-grade posttest report card grade scores results were displayed in Table 9. As seen in Table 9 the predetermined .01 alpha level set for rejecting the null hypothesis was not obtained for any of the three measured posttest-posttest report card grade score comparisons: (a) reading report card grade scores = .15, (b) math report card grade scores = .36, and (c) language report card grade scores = .15. As indicated in Table 9 the posttest students in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline group reading report card grade score ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.77$) compared to

the posttest students in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement group reading report card grade score ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.86$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(31) = 1.05$, $p = .15$ (one-tailed), $d = .44$. As indicated in Table 9 the posttest students in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline group math report card grade score ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.62$) compared to the posttest students in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement group math report card grade score ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.04$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(31) = 0.36$, $p = .36$ (one-tailed), $d = .07$. Finally, as indicated in Table 9 the posttest students in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline group language report card grade score ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.74$) compared to the posttest students in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement group reading report card grade score ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.92$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(31) = 1.05$, $p = .15$ (one-tailed), $d = .09$.

Overall, results indicated that 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had lower but not

statistically significant (a) reading, (b) math, and (c) language mean report card grade scores compared to 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. It is noteworthy that students in both groups ended the 5th-grade with report card grade scores within the range of the letter grade of B despite the norm referenced achievement differences observed in the previous research questions. This data suggests that students in both schools are learning and successfully completing tests and assignments on a daily basis that bodes well for their future classroom success. Furthermore, it is not unusual to find that norm referenced test results and daily classroom achievement are independent, particularly when students are over achieving, that is, through their positive individual effort have report card grades that are higher, and therefore not predictive, of test score results alone. These results suggest that what takes place within a school and its classrooms may in some cases trump the economics without.

Research Question #5

Table 10 displays absences for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline. Absences for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a

Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement are displayed in Table 11.

The fifth pretest-posttest hypothesis was tested using the dependent t test. The fifth hypothesis comparing beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest absences for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I School with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline results were displayed in Table 12. As seen in Table 12 the null hypothesis was not rejected for pretest compared to posttest absences. The pretest absence frequencies ($M = 8.80$, $SD = 5.45$) compared to the posttest absence frequencies ($M = 8.60$, $SD = 8.77$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(14) = -0.12$, $p = .45$ (one-tailed), $d = .02$.

Overall, pretest-posttest results indicated beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest absences for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I School with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline while not statistically significantly different were observed to be in the direction of improvement that is declining absences. Comparing students' observed absence frequencies with the

research school absence policy puts student absences in perspective. The posttest observed mean absences frequency (8.60) is under the research school district's absence policy threshold of 10 absences that results in a letter from the district being sent to parents concerning the students' attendance pattern. However, the posttest observed absence frequency would result in a letter being sent home from the research school.

The fifth hypothesis comparing beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest absences for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement results were displayed in Table 13. As seen in Table 13 the null hypothesis was not rejected for pretest compared to posttest absences. The pretest absence frequencies ($M = 7.56$, $SD = 8.07$) compared to the posttest absence frequencies ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 4.82$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(17) = -1.46$, $p = .08$ (one-tailed), $d = .38$.

Overall, pretest-posttest results indicated beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest absences for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement while not

statistically significantly different were observed to be in the direction of improvement, that is declining absences. Comparing students' observed absence frequencies with the research school absence policy puts student absences in perspective. The posttest observed mean absences frequency (5.06) is under the research school district's absence policy threshold of 10 absences that results in a letter from the district being sent to parents concerning the students' attendance pattern. However, the posttest observed absence frequency would result in a letter being sent home from the research school.

Research Question #6

The sixth posttest-posttest hypothesis was tested using the independent t test. A comparison of students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline compared to students enrolled in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement ending 5th-Grade posttest absence frequencies were displayed in Table 14. As seen in Table 14 the predetermined .01 alpha level set for rejecting the null hypothesis was not obtained and the null hypothesis was not rejected for posttest compared to posttest absences. The posttest absence frequencies for students enrolled in a

Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline ($M = 8.60$, $SD = 8.77$) compared to the posttest absence frequencies for students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 4.82$) was not statistically significantly different, $t(31) = -1.47$, $p = .08$ (one-tailed), $d = .15$.

Overall, results indicated that 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had statistically not significantly lower mean absences (5.06) compared to the absence frequencies (8.60) of 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. While these respective absence frequencies are low and therefore below the research districts threshold for sending a written attendance notification home the lower absence frequency observed for 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement who were found to be academically successful could either be a result of or a cause of greater academic skills compared to the academic skills of students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline.

Research Question #7

Table 15 displays the analysis of aggregated school wide teachers, students, and parents posttest-posttest School Climate Survey response scores to the statement: Students Feel Safe at This School. Aggregate responses to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, for all students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline and their parents and teachers at posttest compared to aggregate responses to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, for all students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement and their parents and teachers at posttest are found in Table 15. For this study disaggregated climate survey data were not available for analysis. Therefore, aggregated data available were utilized as an overall representative indicator of a school wide response to the statement: Students feel safe at this school. As seen in Table 15 the predetermined .01 alpha level set for rejecting the null hypothesis was not obtained for the posttest-posttest chi-square comparison.

A comparison of aggregate responses to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, for all students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment

pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline and their parents and teachers at posttest compared to aggregate responses to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, for all students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement and their parents and teachers at posttest are found in Table 15. The seventh posttest-posttest hypothesis was tested using chi-square (X^2). The result of X^2 displayed in Table 15 was not statistically significantly different ($X^2(2, N = 422) = 0.50, p = < .80$) so we do not reject the null hypothesis of no difference or congruence for students', parents', and teachers' posttest compared to posttest aggregated responses to the statement: Students feel safe at this school.

Inspecting our frequency and percent findings in Table 15 we find that students, parents, and teachers participating in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline had lower, therefore less positive responses to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, for students (46, 23%), parents (82, 41%), and teachers (71, 36%) compared to students, parents, and teachers participating in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement who had more

positive albeit not statistically significantly different responses to the statement: Students feel safe at this school, for students (57, 26%), parents (85, 38%), and teachers (81, 36%). To put aggregate scores responses into context a score of 100 = Strongly Agree, a score of 67 = Agree, and a score of 50 = Weakness. Student aggregated score responses fell within the Weakness to Agree range for both comparison schools while aggregated parent and aggregated teacher responses were somewhat more positive falling within the Agree and Strongly Agree range in both comparison schools. While some frequency and corresponding percent variance is noted in Table 15 overall the chi-square comparison statistically represents equipoise.

Research Question #8

Table 16 displays the analysis of school wide teacher mobility in schools with decreasing and increasing enrollment patterns including a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline compared to a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement. As seen in Table 16 the predetermined .01 alpha level set for rejecting the null hypothesis was not obtained for the posttest-posttest chi-square comparison.

An analysis of school wide teacher mobility in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline compared to a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement is found in Table 16. The eighth posttest-posttest hypothesis was tested using chi-square (X^2). The result of X^2 displayed in Table 16 was not statistically significantly different ($X^2(1, N = 131) = 0.37, p = < .70$) so we do not reject the null hypothesis of no difference or congruence for teacher mobility in the comparison schools.

Inspecting our frequency and percent findings in Table 16 we find that at posttest teacher mobility in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline where transferred out, terminated, or retired teachers were (23, 36%) and active teachers were (42, 64%) compared to a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement where transferred out, terminated, or retired teachers were (20, 30%) and active teachers were (46, 70%). At posttest the mobility patterns of both schools reflect full teacher staffing, that is while teachers were transferred out, terminated, or retired new teachers were hired or transferred in to maintain an

appropriate student to teacher ratio. Maintaining a teaching staff is important to the wellbeing of students, continuity of instruction, and parent and community belief that the school is central to a strong community. No families want to move into a neighborhood with a failing, troubled, or about to close school suggesting that slowly letting a school decline may not be the best option even though teacher staffing levels can be maintained. While some frequency and corresponding percent variance is noted in Table 16 overall the chi-square comparison statistically represents equipoise--good news for the students in both schools.

Table 1

*Demographic Information of Individual 5th-Grade Students
Enrolled in a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment
Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline (a)*

Student Number	Gender	Ethnicity	Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program	Special Education
1.	Male	Black	Yes	No
2.	Male	Black	Yes	No
3.	Male	Black	Yes	No
4.	Female	Black	No	Yes
5.	Male	Black	Yes	No
6.	Male	Black	Yes	No
7.	Female	Black	Yes	No
8.	Female	Black	Yes	No
9.	Male	Black	Yes	No
10.	Female	Black	Yes	No
11.	Female	Black	Yes	No
12.	Female	Black	Yes	No
13.	Male	Black	Yes	Yes
14.	Male	Black	Yes	No
15.	Male	Caucasian	Yes	No

(a) Note: All students were in attendance in the research school 2nd-grade through 5th-grade.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement (a)

Student Number	Gender	Ethnicity	Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program	Special Education
1.	Female	Black	Yes	No
2.	Male	Black	Yes	Yes
3.	Female	Caucasian	No	No
4.	Female	Caucasian	Yes	Yes
5.	Female	Hispanic	Yes	No
6.	Female	Caucasian	Yes	No
7.	Female	Hispanic	No	Yes
8.	Male	Black	Yes	No
9.	Female	Indian	Yes	No
10.	Female	Caucasian	Yes	No
11.	Female	Hispanic	Yes	No
12.	Male	Black	Yes	No
13.	Female	Hispanic	Yes	No
14.	Female	Hispanic	Yes	No
15.	Male	Caucasian	Yes	Yes
16.	Male	Caucasian	Yes	No
17.	Male	Caucasian	Yes	No
18.	Male	Black	Yes	Yes

(a) Note: All students were in attendance in the research school 2nd-grade through 5th-grade.

Table 3

California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent Scores for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline

	Reading Total		Math Total		Language Total	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
1.	39	43	43	18	26	40
2.	28	29	69	38	40	20
3.	44	30	46	12	34	19
4.	41	15	84	57	38	30
5.	60	34	63	39	50	55
6.	67	34	83	52	55	35
7.	65	33	97	47	63	38
8.	56	24	43	32	46	35
9.	51	26	58	35	32	27
10.	57	25	61	19	58	35
11.	68	58	68	29	53	46
12.	29	34	42	1	55	38
13.	35	19	64	11	24	21
14.	48	45	75	39	61	44
15.	27	47	65	37	58	49

(a) Note: Student numbers correspond with Table 1.

Table 4

California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent Scores for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement

(a)	Reading Total		Math Total		Language Total	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
1.	40	50	48	44	28	39
2.	55	31	84	35	73	34
3.	67	74	71	87	70	64
4.	43	31	56	32	42	25
5.	39	74	67	51	53	73
6.	63	73	63	43	69	86
7.	29	34	28	32	39	19
8.	46	41	56	52	55	35
9.	56	46	63	68	88	56
10.	83	79	91	84	99	98
11.	45	61	79	79	55	52
12.	35	39	42	64	48	41
13.	24	59	60	65	34	57
14.	27	49	59	60	40	56
15.	14	18	3	26	17	34
16.	61	62	85	66	60	62
17.	59	67	72	62	66	62
18.	56	37	39	31	56	42

(a) Note: Student numbers correspond with Table 2.

Table 5

Beginning 2nd-Grade Pretest Compared to Ending 5th-Grade Posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent Scores for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline

Source	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores		<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	(d)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
(a)	47.67	(14.30)	33.07	(11.36)	1.13	-3.37	.002*	
(b)	64.07	(16.36)	31.07	(15.99)	2.04	-11.67	.0001***	
(c)	46.20	(12.96)	35.47	(10.70)	.90	-3.89	.001**	

(a) Note: Reading Total.

(b) Note: Math Total.

(c) Note: Language Total.

(d) Note: Negative *t* result is in the direction of lower posttest mean achievement NCE test scores.

p* = .002. *p* = .001. ****p* < .0001.

Table 6

Beginning 2nd-Grade Pretest Compared to Ending 5th-Grade Posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent Scores for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement

Source	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores		<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	(d)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
(a)	46.78	(17.38)	51.39	(18.01)	.26	1.22	.12*	
(b)	59.22	(21.77)	54.50	(19.01)	.23	-1.15	.13*	
(c)	55.11	(20.63)	51.94	(20.66)	.15	-0.74	.24*	

(a) Note: Reading Total.

(b) Note: Math Total.

(c) Note: Language Total.

(d) Note: Negative *t* result is in the direction of lower posttest mean achievement NCE test scores.

**ns.*

Table 7

Students Enrolled In a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline Compared to Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement Ending 5th-Grade Posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent Scores

Source	Students in a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern School Posttest Scores		Students in an Increasing Enrollment Pattern School Posttest Scores		<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
(a)	33.07	(11.36)	51.39	(18.01)	1.24	3.41	.001**
(b)	31.07	(15.99)	54.50	(19.01)	1.33	3.78	.0003***
(c)	35.47	(10.70)	51.94	(20.66)	1.05	2.79	.004*

(a) Note: Reading Total.

(b) Note: Math Total.

(c) Note: Language Total.

p* = .004. *p* = .001. ****p* = .0003.

Table 8

Students Enrolled in a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline and Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement Ending 5th-Grade Posttest Report Card Grade Scores (a)

	Decreasing Enrollment Pattern School 5th-Grade Report Card Grades (b)			Increasing Enrollment Pattern School 5th-Grade Report Card Grades (c)		
	Reading	Math	Language	Reading	Math	Language
1.	3	3	3	2	3	2
2.	2	2	2	3	3	3
3.	2	3	3	1	1	1
4.	4	2	3	2	3	3
5.	2	2	2	3	4	3
6.	2	2	2	3	1	2
7.	2	1	1	3	4	2
8.	3	3	3	3	3	3
9.	2	2	2	2	2	2
10.	1	2	1	2	2	2
11.	1	2	1	2	2	1
12.	3	3	3	4	3	3
13.	2	3	2	1	1	1
14.	2	3	2	2	2	2
15.	2	2	2	2	1	3
16.				3	2	3
17.				3	3	4
18.				4	4	4

(a) Note: 1 = A. 2 = B. 3 = C. 4 = D. 5 = F.

(b) Note: Student numbers correspond with Table 1.

(c) Note: Student numbers correspond with Table 2.

Table 9

Students Enrolled in a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline Compared to Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement Ending 5th-Grade Posttest Report Card Grade Scores

Source	Students in a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern School Posttest Grades		Students in an Increasing Enrollment Pattern School Posttest Grades		<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
(a)	2.20	(0.77)	2.50	(0.86)	.44	1.05	.15*
(b)	2.33	(0.62)	2.44	(1.04)	.07	0.36	.36*
(c)	2.13	(0.74)	2.44	(0.92)	.09	1.05	.15*

(a) Note: Reading Report Card Grade Scores.

(b) Note: Math Report Card Grade Scores.

(c) Note: Language Report Card Grade Scores.

**ns.*

Table 10

Absences for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline

(a)	Absences	
	2nd-Grade Pretest	5th-Grade Posttest
1.	11	2
2.	9	6
3.	12	7
4.	10	5
5.	2	3
6.	8	16
7.	3	6
8.	7	1
9.	23	25
10.	8	2
11.	4	2
12.	6	1
13.	6	10
14.	17	29
15.	6	14

(a) Note: Student numbers correspond with Table 1.

Table 11

Absences for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement

(a)	Absences	
	2nd-Grade Pretest	5th-Grade Posttest
1.	2	14
2.	4	9
3.	1	5
4.	0	0
5.	13	5
6.	22	5
7.	9	9
8.	6	4
9.	6	1
10.	2	6
11.	5	4
12.	31	18
13.	13	1
14.	7	2
15.	0	4
16.	8	2
17.	6	0
18.	1	2

(a) Note: Student numbers correspond with Table 2.

Table 12

Beginning 2nd-Grade Pretest Compared to Ending 5th-Grade Posttest Absences for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with a Decreasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Decline

Source	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores		<i>d</i>	<i>t</i> (a)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Absences	8.80	(5.45)	8.60	(8.77)	.02	-0.12	.45*

(a) Note: Negative *t* result is in the direction of improved absences result.

**ns.*

Table 13

Beginning 2nd-Grade Pretest Compared to Ending 5th-Grade Posttest Absences for Individual 5th-Grade Students Enrolled in a Title I School with an Increasing Enrollment Pattern in a Neighborhood of Economic Improvement

Source	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores		<i>d</i>	<i>t</i> (a)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Absences	7.56	(8.07)	5.06	(4.82)	.38	-1.46	.08*

(a) Note: Negative *t* result is in the direction of improved absences result.

**ns.*

Table 14

*Students Enrolled in Title I Schools with Decreasing
Compared to Increasing Enrollment Patterns Ending Posttest
Compared to Posttest Ending 5th-Grade Absences*

Source	Students in Decreasing Enrollment Pattern School Posttest Absences		Students in Increasing Enrollment Pattern School Posttest Absences		<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Absences	8.60	(8.77)	5.06	(4.82)	.15	-1.47	.08*

**ns.*

Table 15

Analysis of Aggregated (a) School Wide Teachers, Students, and Parents Posttest-Posttest School Climate Survey Response Scores to the Statement: Students Feel Safe at This School

Students Feel Safe at This School					
Sources of Data (b)	Decreasing School Enrollment Posttest Response Scores		Increasing School Enrollment Posttest Response Scores		χ^2
	N	%	N	%	
Teachers	71	(36)	81	(36)	
Students	46	(23)	57	(26)	
Parents	82	(41)	85	(38)	
Total	199	(100)	223	(100)	$\chi^2 = 0.50^*$

(a) Note: Disaggregated climate survey data for the study students were not available for analysis. Aggregated data available were utilized as an overall representative indicator of a school wide response to the question: Students Feel Safe at This School.

(b) Note: Score of 100 = Strongly Agree. Score of 67 = Agree. Score of 50 = Weakness.

*ns for observed verses expected cell scores where $df = 2$.

Table 16

*Analysis of School Wide Teacher Mobility in Schools with
Decreasing and Increasing Enrollment Patterns*

Sources of Data	Teacher Mobility				X^2
	Decreasing School Enrollment Posttest Teacher Mobility		Increasing School Enrollment Posttest Teacher Mobility		
	N	%	N	%	
T/T/R (a)	23	(36)	20	(30)	
Active	42	(64)	46	(70)	
Total	65	(100)	66	(100)	$X^2 = 0.37^*$

(a) Note: T/T/R = Transferred Out, Terminated, or Retired.

*ns for observed verses expected cell scores where $df = 1$.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of decreasing enrollment patterns in a Title I school surrounded by economic decline on 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates compared to 5th-grade students' achievement, behavior, parent involvement, and teacher mobility rates in a nearby Title I elementary school surrounded by economic improvement and increasing enrollment patterns.

Norm-referenced test scores in the areas of reading, math, and language of students from the school with a decreasing enrollment pattern were compared to norm-referenced test scores from the school with an increasing enrollment pattern to determine if there was impact on student achievement between 2nd-grade and 5th-grade. Aggregated parent climate surveys from 2004 and 2007 were analyzed and compared to determine if there was a change in parent attitude for the school with a decreasing enrollment pattern and the school with an increasing enrollment pattern compared to student and teacher responses to the question: Students feel safe at this school. Absence rates were analyzed to determine if there was a difference between students attending the two schools. Teacher

mobility rates were analyzed from 2004-2007 to determine if there was an impact based on increasing or decreasing enrollment patterns. All study achievement data related to each of the dependent variables were retrospective, archival, and routinely collected school information. Permission from the appropriate school research personnel was obtained before data were collected and analyzed.

This chapter contains the conclusions and discussion of the findings from this research effort. The chapter begins with the conclusions reached from calculating the data. The next section contains a discussion of those conclusions. The discussion includes an assessment of the significance of those findings. The discussion also includes recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the study for each of the eight research questions.

Research Question #1

Overall, pretest-posttest results indicated beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline were statistically

significantly different in the direction of lower posttest mean achievement NCE test scores for (a) Reading Total, (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total. Comparing students' NRT NCE Reading Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Reading Total mean score of 33.07 is congruent with a Standard Score of 88, a Percentile Rank of 21, a Stanine Score of 4 (the lowest stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Math Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Math Total mean score of 31.07 is congruent with a Standard Score of 86, a Percentile Rank of 18, a Stanine Score of 3 (the highest stanine of the below average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Below Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Language Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Language Total mean score of 35.47 is congruent with a Standard Score of 89, a Percentile Rank of 23, a Stanine Score of 4 (the lowest stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average.

Finally, the lower Reading Total (-14.60), the lower Math Total (-33.00), and the lower Language Total (-10.73)

pretest compared to posttest mean Normal Curve Equivalent test scores observed in the three achievement areas represents a statistically significant pattern of decline that may reflect the impact of attending and learning in a school in a neighborhood with decreasing enrollment patterns and neighborhood economic decline. The data suggest that once a school is found with these conditions moving students to other schools with more positive conditions would be warranted.

Research Question #2

Overall, pretest-posttest results indicated beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest California Achievement Test Normal Curve Equivalent scores for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I school with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement were not statistically significantly different in the direction of improved (a) Reading Total and lower (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total posttest mean achievement NCE test scores. Comparing students' NRT NCE Reading Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Reading Total mean score of 51.39 is congruent with a Standard Score of 101, a Percentile Rank of 53, a Stanine Score of 5 (the middle stanine of the

average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Math Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Math Total mean score of 54.50 is congruent with a Standard Score of 103, a Percentile Rank of 58, a Stanine Score of 6 (the highest stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average. Comparing students' NRT NCE Language Total score with derived achievement scores puts their performance in perspective. An NRT NCE posttest Language Total mean score of 51.94 is congruent with a Standard Score of 101, a Percentile Rank of 53, a Stanine Score of 5 (the middle stanine of the average range), and an achievement qualitative description of Average.

Finally, the improved Reading Total (+4.61), the lower Math Total (-4.72), and the lower Language Total (-3.17) pretest compared to posttest mean Normal Curve Equivalent test scores observed in the three achievement areas represented a not statistically significant improvement in Reading Total, a not statistically significant decline in Math Total, and a not statistically significant decline in Language Total scores. Overall pretest-posttest achievement score equipoise represents continuous student achievement in the areas measured for students in a Title I School with

an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement.

Research Question #3

Overall, results indicated that 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had statistically significantly higher (a) Reading Total, (b) Math Total, and (c) Language Total mean achievement NCE scores compared to 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. Also compelling is that the 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had achievement scores that fell within the middle or 5th stanine of the average range for Reading Total and Language Total and had Math Total scores that fell within the highest or 6th stanine of the average range, while the 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline had achievement scores that fell within the lowest or 4th stanine of the average range for Reading Total and Language Total and had Math Total scores that fell within the highest or 3rd stanine of the below average range. Given the consistency of the statistical results for all three subtests, the large effect sizes observed across

all three posttest-posttest comparisons, and use of the .01 level of significance for rejecting the null hypotheses insured that the result, indicating achievement may be negatively effected when enrollment decreases in a neighborhood of economic decline, was not a type I error.

Research Question #4

Overall, results indicated that 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had lower but not statistically significant (a) reading, (b) math, and (c) language mean report card grade scores compared to 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. It is noteworthy that students in both groups ended the 5th-grade with report card grade scores within the range of the letter grade of B despite the norm referenced achievement differences observed in the previous research questions. This data suggests that students in both schools are learning and successfully completing tests and assignments on a daily basis, that bodes well for their future classroom success. Furthermore, it is not unusual to find that norm referenced test results and daily classroom achievement are independent, particularly when students are over achieving, that is, through their positive individual

effort have report card grades that are higher, and therefore not predictive, of test score results alone. These results suggest that what takes place within a school and its classrooms may in some cases trump the economics without.

Research Question #5

Overall, pretest-posttest results indicated beginning 2nd-grade pretest compared to ending 5th-grade posttest absences for individual 5th-grade students enrolled in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement while not statistically significantly different were observed to be in the direction of improvement, that is declining absences. Comparing students' observed absence frequencies with the research school absence policy puts student absences in perspective. The posttest observed mean absences frequency (5.06) is under the research school district's absence policy threshold of 10 absences that results in a letter from the district being sent to parents concerning the students' attendance pattern. However, the posttest observed absence frequency would result in a letter being sent home from the research school.

Research Question #6

Overall, results indicated that 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement had statistically not significantly lower mean absences (5.06) compared to the absence frequencies (8.60) of 5th-grade students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline. While these respective absence frequencies are low, and therefore below the research districts threshold for sending a written attendance notification home, the lower absence frequency observed for 5th-grade students at posttest in the increasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic improvement who were found to be academically successful could either be a result of, or a cause of, greater academic skills compared to the academic skills of students at posttest in the decreasing enrollment pattern school in a neighborhood of economic decline.

Research Question #7

Inspecting our frequency and percent findings in Table 15 we find that students, parents, and teachers participating in a Title I School with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline had lower, therefore less positive responses to the

statement: Students Feel Safe at This School, for students (46, 23%), parents (82, 41%), and teachers (71, 36%) compared to students, parents, and teachers participating in a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement who had more positive albeit not statistically significantly different responses to the statement: Students Feel Safe at This School, for students (57, 26%), parents (85, 38%), and teachers (81, 36%). To put aggregate scores responses into context a score of 100 = Strongly Agree, a score of 67 = Agree, and a score of 50 = Weakness. Student aggregated score responses fell within the Weakness to Agree range for both comparison schools while aggregated parent and aggregated teacher responses were somewhat more positive falling within the Agree and Strongly Agree range in both comparison schools. While some frequency and corresponding percent variance was noted in Table 15, overall the chi-square comparison statistically represents numerical equipoise.

Research Question #8

Inspecting our frequency and percent findings in Table 16 we find that at posttest teacher mobility in a Title I school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline where transferred out,

terminated, or retired teachers were (23, 36%) and active teachers were (42, 64%) compared to a Title I School with an increasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic improvement where transferred out, terminated, or retired teachers were (20, 30%) and active teachers were (46, 70%). At posttest the mobility patterns of both schools reflect full teacher staffing that is while teachers were transferred out, terminated, or retired new teachers were hired or transferred in to maintain an appropriate student to teacher ratio. Maintaining a teaching staff is important to the wellbeing of students, continuity of instruction, and parent and community belief that the school is central to a strong community. No families want to move into a neighborhood with a failing, troubled, or about to close school suggesting that slowly letting a school decline may not be the best option even though teacher staffing levels can be maintained. While some frequency and corresponding percent variance was noted in Table 16, overall the chi-square comparison statistically represents numerical equipoise--good news for the students in both schools.

Discussion

Parents may want to study choice options for their children attending a school with declining achievement

scores over time for the same group of children. The ability to choose what school a parent would want their child to attend may be part of a district school choice plan. Choice programs can be sorted into a handful of useful categories (Smith, 2005). A United States Housing and Urban Development study on randomized housing mobility called Moving to Opportunity (MTO) had an experimental group that consisted of families randomly selected to receive housing vouchers (Blazer, 2007). The families that received housing vouchers moved to neighborhoods that were perceived to be less disadvantaged and of higher quality. Results showed there was no difference in math or reading scores, behavior or school involvement for any age group who participated in this voucher study compared to students that were resident in the schools chosen. Furthermore, by moving to a new area the voucher group experienced a neighborhood with less criminal activities including arrests. The study concluded that the school students attend is one of several factors that influence their academic achievement, which also include conditions impacting the family, housing, and neighborhood (Smith, 2005).

There are however, studies that suggest that the type of neighborhood does not greatly impact academic

achievement (Thompson, 2002) yet the relationship between poorer more troubled neighborhoods cannot be totally ignored. Understanding a student's neighborhood could help educators formulate better policy on what educational and life skills to teach so that enrolled students become academically successful, as well as socially, emotionally and behaviorally successful through resilience intervention (Reid, 2007). By mitigating the negative effects of living in poverty at the individual or household level, community development and neighborhood revitalization efforts should result in creating and implementing important strategies for mediating the effects of neighborhood poverty (Reid, 2004). There are many cases where community development efforts have failed to connect low-income families to strong neighborhoods with good schools and living-wage employment. Reid (2004) further states that community development organizations are moving toward more comprehensive strategies for neighborhood revitalization that consider local needs while building leadership among local residents and organizations, and investing in both *people and place* based strategies to lessen the effects of poverty. The links between neighborhood poverty and schools and efforts to integrate education reform with community development opportunities are likely to do more than

pursuing each of them alone, according to Warren (2005). Breaking down traditional divisions between school reform and community development to coordinate their efforts to revitalize neighborhoods has begun in many areas.

In the main, students who felt safe despite exposure to violence in their neighborhood, performed better on achievement tests (Ratner, Chiodo, Covington, Sokol, & Ager, 2006). However, community violence has been linked to behavior problems in children from preschool through late adolescence. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of other research where greater exposure to violence was significantly related to poorer cognitive and achievement performance. Further, these results indicate the possible damage across such a wide range of cognitive skills and abilities. Children who reported feeling safe in this study stated there were positive, 'care giving' adults in their lives. They were also considered resilient for their ability to overcome personal adversity and still be successful in school (Ratner, et al., 2006). Dysfunctional family behavior led to a sense of feeling less safe, in the study. Neighborhoods in economic decline may experience high rates of crime and violence. Isolation is manifested out of fear by parents when living in dangerous neighborhoods where families stay to themselves.

Neighborhoods of economic stability or improvement find parents not as fearful about safety and more likely to connect to teachers, neighbors, and other families. One concern of high mobility families is that it disrupted social connections considered significant in the development of children (Pettit, 2004; Sinha, Payne, & Cook, 2005). This results in the weakening of the foundation of success including academic achievement.

Where urban teachers have a high level of absenteeism they are more likely to transfer out of their positions (Foote, 2005). More qualified teachers or veteran teachers usually follow a traditional, seniority-based transfer system that rewards them by allowing those teachers to move from challenging schools to schools perceived to have higher status within their system. Students with the greatest need are more likely to be taught by new teachers or by teachers unable to secure a transfer Gordon (2003). Some teachers terminate their contracts or retire in order to leave high needs schools. In the interest of greater teacher responsibility for student learning and performance, researchers have turned to Bandura's (1977, 1982) cognitive social learning theory according to Gordon (2003). Districts, through professional development, want teachers to enhance their judgments about their ability to

make a difference in the lives of their students. Struggling teachers question their ability to work effectively with students but exert little effort in exploring, or do not have the support mechanisms in place, to understand and adapt their teaching styles to their students' learning styles. These teachers may exhibit low tolerance for students with learning difficulties and may worsen the situation by not helping these students work through their challenges. Teachers with a high sense of confidence adapt instruction to student characteristics and are willing to take the initiative to have a high level of tolerance for students with learning difficulties, and persist longer in helping them (Gordon, 2003) making true the thought: *Students must know you care before they care how much you know.*

Implication for further research. Warren (2005) asked the question, *What sense does it make to try to reform urban schools while the communities around them stagnate or collapse?* It is not feasible to restructure schools in isolation of the development of the surrounding community. Linking schools to the development in the communities in which they are located (a) improves the living conditions of families and the health of low-income communities, (b) creates conditions in which students are better able to

learn, and (c) delivers greater resources to schools (Warren, 2005).

Urban districts have many factors to contemplate when making decisions to close or maintain schools suffering decreasing enrollment due to achievement scores, especially when this occurs over time and does not seem to improve (Sinha, Payne, & Cook, 2005). Parents need assistance in determining if they want their children to remain in such a school or be provided the choice to attend school elsewhere. The ability to move to another neighborhood where crime rates, transportation, and employment are factors to be considered is crucial. While vouchers for the inner-city poor are acceptable as described by Viteritti (2005) political reality and funding for such programs does not follow. Viteritti (2005) acknowledges that for some, school choice is based on where families reside and suggests that school districts work with low-income families to provide high quality education in their schools so there is no need to close them.

Urban districts need to consider specific professional development offerings to assist teachers assigned to high need schools. Opportunities must be provided to help teaching staffs understand the neighborhood where their students reside, how to reach parents, especially those

working multiple jobs, how to create an educational environment that is warm, welcoming and safe for teaching and learning to take place. In addition to enhancing professional development offerings, district officials must take cautionary steps in selecting appropriate leadership for buildings where students are most in need of intensified instruction. Building leaders must engage their staff, that in turn must motivate their students to embrace learning.

Future research should study the impact of racism on district decisions to close or maintain struggling schools (Thompson, 2002). This would include the type of staff assigned to teach in inner-city schools and their preparedness to handle cultural challenges they may not have encountered through preservice courses (Saporito & Sohoni, 2006; Blazer, 2007). More research needs to be conducted on the factors for closing urban schools or perhaps using them for purposes other than as an instructional facility. The primary purpose of schools is to teach in order that students can learn (Jackson, 2005).

Finally, lower Reading Total (-14.60), lower Math Total (-33.00), and lower Language Total (-10.73) pretest compared to posttest mean Normal Curve Equivalent test scores observed in all three achievement areas represents a

statistically significant pattern of decline over time, 2nd-grade to 5th-grade, for students attending and learning in a school with a decreasing enrollment pattern in a neighborhood of economic decline warranting the relocation of students to a more positive environment and neighborhood.

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Appendix A. Research School District Letter of Support
(Contact the researcher)