One Rural Elementary School’s Experience in Becoming A School of Distinction

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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April 3, 2003
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: High Performing, Student Achievement, Elementary Schools, Leadership

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe overarching themes that were significant in helping a selected elementary school reach the standards for School of Distinction status. A descriptive case study design was used to identify answers to the overall guiding research question and subordinate questions formulated from the review of literature. A carefully planned sequence of questions was developed for each set of participants aimed at getting a detailed description of the school. Data collection procedures consisted of interviews, classroom observations, and review of school documents. Participants consisted of the principal, nine teachers and nine students from grades, 3, 4, 5 and a total of three parents who have children in these grades.

Data from this study were used to compare and analyze key words, phrases, and/or direct quotes in order to identify and describe emerging, overarching, and supporting themes from the following domains: principal’s leadership, teacher involvement, class size, student achievement, and parental involvement. Based on literature reviews, these domains were considered to be characteristics that contributed to promoting high student achievement and successful schools.

Findings provided supporting themes that were organized around the study’s domains. The supporting themes emerged from data triangulation on each of the domains.
Based on the data collected and analyzed, the following nine conclusions were identified as contributing to the school’s success: (1) a successful school staff maintains an instructional focus; (2) in a successful school, communication occurs among all stakeholders; (3) collaboration among teachers, parents, and the principal occur often in schools; (4) a successful school has a class size below 20 students; (5) a variety of complimentary programs led to school success; (6) a successful school has strong parental involvement; (7) a successful school has a nurturing staff; (8) a successful school has a stable staff; and (9) students perceive a successful school differently than the adults.

Implications and recommendations for practice are provided for consideration for school districts with similar demographics to this study. Finally, recommendations for further studies are provided.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Stacy; daughter, Deedra; my entire family; best friends, Deborah Mc and John, whose absolute support has been with me throughout this entire process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the support and guidance of many individuals. I first give all praises and glory to God for leading and guiding me during this process. I thank Him for providing me with the understanding, the finances, and the protection while traveling to and from classes. I am very thankful and appreciative to my family for giving encouragement and loving support throughout this journey.

I would like to thank Dr. Travis Twiford and Dr. Penny Burge for serving as my co-chairs. To my entire committee, thank you for your comments and recommendations. I also extend gratitude and appreciation to each of you for giving me time out of your busy schedules.

To my best friend, Deborah Mc from the Bronx, thank you for being my long distance cheerleader. You assisted me when I had to study for quizzes and you were my audience when I was preparing for class presentations.

To a very special friend, Dr. John Dixon, thank you for encouraging me to begin this journey. Thank you for believing in me and constantly pushing me when I became frustrated. Most of all I am grateful for all the times you spent reading my study and providing comments. You gave of yourself unconditionally.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... ii
DEDICATION ...................................................................................................................... iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................... v
TABLE OF CONTENTS ...................................................................................................... vi
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................ xvii
LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................ xviii

CHAPTER I  INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY ................................................................. 1
   National Perspective ........................................................................................................ 2
   Regional Perspective ........................................................................................................ 3
   State Perspective ............................................................................................................. 4
   Purpose of the Study ....................................................................................................... 5
   Overall Research Design ............................................................................................... 6
   Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................... 7
   Terminology and Definitions .......................................................................................... 9
   Significance of the Study ............................................................................................... 12
   Organization of the Study .............................................................................................. 13

CHAPTER II  REVIEW OF LITERATURE .......................................................................... 15
   Organization of Literature Review ................................................................................. 17
   Principal Leadership ...................................................................................................... 17
      Instructional Leader .................................................................................................... 20
      Principal as Motivator ............................................................................................... 21
   Teacher Involvement ..................................................................................................... 23
Teacher Practices........................................................................................................24
Classroom Activities ..................................................................................................26
Collaboration ...............................................................................................................26
Collegiality ..................................................................................................................28
Professionalism .........................................................................................................29
Class Size ..................................................................................................................31
Class Size and Student Achievement .......................................................................32
Differences in Enrollments .........................................................................................33
Advantages of Small Class Size .................................................................................34
Student Achievement ...............................................................................................37
School Environment ...................................................................................................38
Student Motivation .......................................................................................................39
Classroom Participation ..............................................................................................40
Learning Theories .........................................................................................................42
Metacognitive Skills ....................................................................................................43
Parental Involvement .................................................................................................44
Parent-Teacher Practices ...........................................................................................48
School Involvement .....................................................................................................50
Summary .....................................................................................................................51
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ..............................................................53
Purpose of the Study ...................................................................................................53
Significance of the Study ............................................................................................53
Research Design .........................................................................................................54
Teachers’ Involvement................................................................. 83
Class Size.................................................................................. 83
Student Achievement................................................................. 83
Parental Involvement................................................................. 84
Research Methodology............................................................... 84
Interviews .................................................................................. 84
Interview Procedures ................................................................. 86
Description of Participants......................................................... 87
School Staff .............................................................................. 87
Students ................................................................................... 89
Parents .................................................................................... 89
Observations ........................................................................... 91
Document Review ..................................................................... 92
Data Analysis ........................................................................... 92
Data Management ................................................................... 93
Triangulation of Data ............................................................... 94
Theme Development ................................................................. 94
Report of the Findings............................................................... 96
Demographics of Selected School ............................................ 96
Discussion of Interview Findings Categorized by Research Questions .... 97
Research Question 1: In What Way Does the Principal's Leadership Contribute to the School's Success? ......................................................... 98
Research Question 2: In what ways do the teachers’ involvement contribute to the school’s success? ................................................................. 107

Principal’s Response to Teachers’ Involvement ........................................ 107
Teachers’ Response to Teachers’ Involvement ........................................... 108
Students’ Response to Teachers’ Involvement ......................................... 110
Parents’ Response to Teachers’ Involvement ............................................ 111

Research Question 3: Does class size contribute to success? .................. 114

Principal’s Response to Class Size .......................................................... 114
Teachers’ Response to Class Size ............................................................ 115
Students’ Response to Class Size ............................................................ 117
Parents’ Response to Class Size .............................................................. 118

Research Question 4: What happens in this school to promote student achievement? ................................................................. 119

Principal’s Response to Promoting Student Achievement ....................... 119
Teachers’ Response to Promoting Student Achievement ......................... 121
Students’ Response to Promoting Student Achievement .......................... 125
Support Staff Development Initiatives ................................................................. 152
Encourage Staff and Students .............................................................................. 153
Communicate With School Staff and Parents ......................................................... 154
Demonstrate Concern For Students’ Welfare ........................................................ 155
Teachers’ Involvement ............................................................................................ 156
Teaches State Standards ......................................................................................... 157
Demonstrates Hard Work and Dedication ............................................................... 158
Communicate With Others ..................................................................................... 161
Care for Students .................................................................................................. 162
Class Size ................................................................................................................ 163
Teachers Individualizing Instruction ..................................................................... 163
Students Being in Close Proximity of the Teacher ................................................. 165
Distractions Being At A Minimum ......................................................................... 166
Student Achievement ............................................................................................. 167
The A+ Program .................................................................................................... 168
The Star Student Program ...................................................................................... 169
A Cooperative Staff ............................................................................................... 170
The Project Acceleration Program ....................................................................... 172
The Instructional Program ...................................................................................... 173
The Comprehensive Management System ............................................................ 174
The Communication With All Stakeholders .......................................................... 175
Parental Involvement ............................................................................................. 176
Being Involved In School Activities ...................................................................... 176
Assisting With Homework ................................................................. 177

Communicating With School Staff ................................................... 177

Summary of Findings .......................................................................... 178

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS,
IMPLIEDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONIOINS .............................. 181

Discussion of Findings ...................................................................... 181

Finding 1: A Supportive Principal ...................................................... 182
Finding 2: Teachers’ Involvement In The School’s Success ..................... 185
Finding 3: Class Size ......................................................................... 189
Finding 4: Programs That Contributed Toward Student Achievement ....... 192
Finding 5: Parental Involvement .......................................................... 194
Finding 6: Care For Students .............................................................. 195

Conclusions ....................................................................................... 198

Conclusion 1: A Successful School Staff Maintains an Instructional Focus .... 198
Conclusion 2: In a Successful School, Communication Occurs Among All
Stakeholders ..................................................................................... 200
Conclusion 3: Collaboration Among Teachers, Parents, and the Principal Occur
Often in Successful Schools ............................................................... 201
Conclusion 4: A Successful School Has a Class Size Below Twenty
Students ............................................................................................ 201
Conclusion 5: A Variety of Complimentary Programs Led to School Success .... 202
Conclusion 6: A Successful School Has Strong Parental Involvement .......... 204
Conclusion 7: A Successful School Has a Nurturing Staff ...................... 204

xiii
Conclusion 8: A Successful School Has a Stable Staff

Conclusion 9: Students Perceive a Successful School Differently than the Adults

Limitations of the Study

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Recommendations for Further Studies

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

Appendix A

A1. Request for Research Study

A2. Principal Thank You Letter

A3. Principal/Teacher/Parent Permission Form

A4. Student Release Form

A5. Student Consent Form

A6. Teacher/Student/Parent Thank You Letter

Appendix B

B. Virginia Tech’s IRB Form 4

Appendix C

C1. Principal Protocol and Interview Questions

C2. Teacher Protocol and Interview Questions

C3. Student Protocol and Interview Questions

C4. Parent Protocol and Interview Questions

Appendix D
Observation Form ............................................................................................................. 241

Appendix E .................................................................................................................... 242

Documentation Review Form ......................................................................................... 243

Appendix F .................................................................................................................... 244

Themes That Emerged From Participants on Research Questions Form........ 245

Appendix G .................................................................................................................... 246

G1. Reading Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 3 End-of-
Grade Tests ..................................................................................................................... 247

G2. Reading Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 4 End-of-
Grade Tests ..................................................................................................................... 248

G3. Reading Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 5 End-of-
Grade Tests ..................................................................................................................... 249

G4. Math Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 3 End-of-
Grade Tests ..................................................................................................................... 250

G5. Math Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 4 End-of-
Grade Tests ..................................................................................................................... 251

G6. Math Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 5 End-of-
Grade Tests ..................................................................................................................... 252

Appendix H ..................................................................................................................... 253

Mission Statement and Philosophy ................................................................................. 254

Appendix I ..................................................................................................................... 255

I1. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Principal’s Leadership
....................................................................................................................................... 256
I2. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Teachers’ Involvement..................................................................................................257
I3. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Class Size............. 258
I4. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Promoting Student Achievement................................................................................................................259
I5. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Parental Involvement ................................................................................................................260
VITA .................................................................................................................................................................................261
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Professional and Personal Data of Principal and Teachers…………………………... 88
Table 2  Student Data Information.......................................................................................... 90
Table 3  Number of Students In Grades 3-5 Scoring Level III or IV on Reading From 1999-02. ........................................................................................................................................... 143
Table 4  Number of Students In Grades 3-5 Scoring Level III or IV on Mathematics From 1999-02. ........................................................................................................................................... 145
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Indicators for School of Distinction ............................................................. 10