Public School Principals’ Perceptions in Accredited and Non-Accredited Elementary Schools Regarding Strategies to Improve Student Performance on the Michigan Education Assessment Program

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PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS IN ACCREDITED AND NON-ACCREDITED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS REGARDING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON THE MICHIGAN EDUCATION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

by

Mattie P. Hampton

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
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The purpose of this research study was to investigate whether principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected strategies used to prepare students for the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP). More specifically, this study attempted to address three focused interrelated questions: (1) Will principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected curriculum strategies used to prepare students for the MEAP? (2) Will principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected instructional strategies used to prepare students for the MEAP? and (3) Will principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected preparation strategies used to prepare students for the MEAP?

Educational literature and research were used to verify the fact that the three questions do impact strategies used to prepare students for the MEAP. A research survey was conducted with elementary principals to ascertain the extent that curriculum, instructional strategies, and student preparation influence student
performance. The chi-square ($\chi^2$) statistical test was used to analyze the three independent variables of the study. This test was used to distinguish the magnitude of the relationship between the variables. The level of significance for testing the hypotheses of this study was set at .05.

In this study when the data analysis was run, 6 of the 18 hypotheses tested resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected and the alternate hypothesis being accepted. The other 12 hypotheses, when tested, resulted in the null hypothesis being accepted. The research was limited to the perspectives of elementary principals. The recommendation was made that future studies include secondary principals and other categories of schools.
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This journey has finally come to an end, but I alone cannot take all the credit. Many have played a part in my reaching this pinnacle.

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Finally, with love and admiration I dedicate this dissertation to my mother “MaEmma” (Mrs. Emma Huff). If it were not for your sacrifices during my childhood years, I would not have been able to reach this point. To you I am eternally grateful.

Mattie P. Hampton
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The use of standardized testing to assess what and how well a student is learning continues to be a controversial issue among educators, politicians, and laymen alike. No other aspect of the national school-reform movement has generated so much discussion among the experts as this aspect of public education.

It appears that this form of assessment is here to stay, as the dominant vehicle in finding out whether American school children are learning what society wants them to know.

Why are students subjected to the dull, tedious task of norm-referenced, multiple-choice testing as the means of demonstrating skills they have learned? A great deal of it has to do with the results of the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984), which documented a decline in the quality of education in the United States. Due to the results of the study, many states have instituted legislation designed to improve their educational system. The result of such legislation has been the development of initiatives in order to achieve quality, that is, statewide assessment.

Over the last decade, statewide assessment of student achievement has assumed an important role in educational reform. Prior to 1980, nearly half of all states did not have a mandated program of this kind. Today, statewide assessment programs are prominent throughout the nation (Moody, 1991).
The Michigan State Board of Education initiated the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) to test students' performance in reading, math, and science. However, over the years, the MEAP has evolved in response to current research in learning, new areas of emphasis in curriculum and assessment, and increased interest in the performance and accountability of our schools. As a result of the MEAP, initiatives such as school improvement plans, core curriculum, state content standards, and school accreditation have impacted and influenced Michigan’s educational process.

For this research study, school accreditation was the main focus. Michigan schools are granted accreditation based on their MEAP scores. Accreditation was given at four levels: (1) summary accredited, (2) interim, (3) non-accredited, and (4) no status. This paper will concentrate on the summary accredited and non-accredited levels. Summary accredited status is given to schools when 75% or more of students score in the highest category on all MEAP subject tests (Reading/Math/Science). Non-accredited status is given to schools when fewer than 25% of students score in the highest category on one or more MEAP subject tests (Reading/Math/Science) (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

This research will take a look at what is occurring at the school level that is impacting student performance on the MEAP. Specifically, this study will investigate, through the perceptions of elementary school principals, the influence of curriculum, instructional strategies and student preparation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools
significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected strategies being used to prepare students for the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP).

More specifically, this study attempted to address three focused interrelated questions: (1) Will principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected curriculum strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP? (2) Will principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected instructional strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP? and (3) Will principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected student preparation strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP?

Statement of the Problem

Over the last decade, statewide assessment of student achievement has assumed a position of prominence in the landscape of educational reform. Prior to 1980, nearly half of all states did not have a mandated program of this kind. Today, statewide assessment programs are prominent throughout the nation (Moody, 1991).

The present MEAP is a statewide testing program initiated by the State Board of Education. It was designed to test students' performance in the areas of reading and mathematics in Grades 4 and 7, and in science and writing in Grades 5 and 8. Prior to the development of the MEAP, the state's testing program did not meet the needs of Michigan school districts or the State Board of Education. This was mainly because the state's testing program concentrated on comparing students'
performance with a representative sample of students in the nation (e.g. the national norm), as compared to what students should know based upon what Michigan educators felt Michigan students should know and be able to do (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

With the adoption of a recommended school curriculum for Michigan school students that relies heavily on the skills that all Michigan public school students should have, coupled with the fact that school district accreditation standards have been developed based upon expected student performance on the MEAP, it is extremely crucial to determine strategies that have been employed by Michigan school districts which lead to satisfactory performance status.

Therefore, the purpose of this study will address the following question: To what extent and in what ways are there differences in the perceptions of principals in "summary accredited" and "non-accredited" elementary schools regarding selected strategies used to prepare students for the MEAP?

Background of the Problem

Over the course of a decade following the release of the *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984), virtually all states have enacted some type of educational reform. Many reform efforts were legislated during the past 10 years to answer the question raised in the *Nation at Risk* report (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1994). Yet, much of the reform was defined in quantitative rather than qualitative terms (i.e., longer school year, additional graduation requirements, etc.). Too often these reforms were no more than quick political fixes absent of sound educational practices (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).
Nearly 6 years later, President Bush held an Education Summit with the nation’s governors. The result of that summit led to the development of six National Education Goals by a bipartisan task force led by then Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton (Lutz, 1997). The six goals have been the focus of a national strategy, linked to the National Standards, to increase the educational achievement of “all students” (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

Goal 3 of the national standard’s document calls for world-class student achievement in English, history, geography, science, and mathematics, and that “all students” will know how to “use their minds well” and be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a, p. 38).

With the passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) a National Education Standards Improvement Council was established. A part of this group’s responsibility was to work with appropriate organizations to determine the criteria for certifying voluntary content standards. The council had three objectives in mind: (1) to ensure that the standards are internationally competitive, (2) to ensure that they reflect the best knowledge about teaching and learning, and (3) to ensure that they had been developed through a broad-based open adoption process (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

The first voluntary National Standards were developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in 1988. The purpose for the development of voluntary National Standards was to identify what “all students should know and be able to do” (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a, p. 39).

After extensive review and discussion of national reports, such as A Nation at Risk, the Michigan State Board of Education published its Better Education for

The state legislature codified its own version of educational reform into law with the Quality Issues package—Public Act 25 of 1990 (Michigan Department of Education, 1994b). The goal was to raise the standards for public schools and improve the quality of education for every Michigan student. The law provided financial incentives for schools to begin a school improvement process, an accreditation process by building production of an annual report for the community on the status of reform efforts, and provision for a core curriculum for all K–12 students (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

The State Board of Education’s role was to develop a model core curriculum based on the Michigan K–12 Program Standards of Quality. In October of 1991, the State Board of Education approved the Model Core Curriculum Outcomes. These outcomes represented what all students in Michigan needed to: (a) know and understand, and (b) be able to do to become participating and contributing members of our society (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

In 1993, the Michigan Department of Education was awarded federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education to develop curriculum frameworks for English language arts, mathematics, science, and geography. The goal of the curriculum frameworks was to align classroom instruction with Michigan’s Core Curriculum Contents Standards and the National Standards for the purpose of improving student achievement. Curriculum frameworks were being used as vehicles for reform.
In a statement prepared by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1992), they describe the curriculum components and focus on “improving instructional quality by including and connecting all facets of the instructional system” (p. 42), including linking them to educational standards and achievement of those standards (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

To address the demands brought about by the National Standards and to comply with recent developments in assessing student learning, MEAP tests were changed dramatically to identify what all students should know and be able to do.

The new standards for accrediting schools were passed by the Legislative Committee on Education under Public Act 335. Public Act 335 required that all schools achieve summary accreditation. Three levels of accreditation were determined by the legislature: summary, interim, and unaccredited (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

The accreditation status of a school was based on three factors: (1) compliance with requirements in Public Act 335, (2) statements of assurance that a school has met the PA 25 of 1990 Standards for Accreditation (which were approved in January 1993), and (3) demonstration that students have achieved acceptable levels of performance as measured by MEAP test scores over a 3-year period. To comply with this measure, schools were required to report annually on their status with regard to PA335/339 compliance requirements, and PA 25 of 1990 Standards of Accreditation (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

Recently, MEAP has been viewed as both a blessing and a curse (Newman, January 21, 1998a). The statewide assessment program has become a high-stakes business for Michigan educators who continually toil to improve education, only to find the news media, parents, real estate agents, and the State Department of
Education focusing on a handful of scores as if they were the only determining factor of school performance (Newman, January 21, 1998b).

The MEAP tests were developed to gauge the effectiveness of a school’s curriculum. Instead, they have become a measure of a community’s quality. Realtors routinely show clients a comparison of MEAP scores to help them select a city or neighborhood based on a school’s test scores (Newman, January 21, 1998a).

The state uses MEAP scores as the major criteria for accrediting schools, with all districts expected to meet the same benchmarks, regardless of where their students started. The impact of MEAP scores is hard to swallow for districts in the lower end of the economic spectrum, who tend to do worse than their affluent counterparts (Newman, January 21, 1998b).

Many educators throughout Michigan believe that MEAP has contributed to the idea that some school districts are second-rate. Despite educators’ protests, the growing demand for accountability has continued unabatedly.

Identification of Variables

In this study, the dependent variable is school accreditation status, specifically “summary accredited” and “non-accredited” elementary schools. This variable was chosen because it is believed that certain strategies may be employed in accredited elementary schools and not in non-accredited elementary schools that may contribute to better preparing students for the MEAP.

The independent variables in this study are the principal’s perceptions of their school’s curriculum, the instructional strategies, and student preparation as they relate to better preparing students for taking the MEAP. It is believed that the
principal as instructional leader and usually the MEAP-results coordinator of his/her building will have first-hand knowledge of specific practices that address these areas.

Definition of Terms

*Assessment*: Using various methods to obtain information about student learning that can be used to guide a variety of decisions and actions.

*Benchmarks*: Statements that indicate what students should know and be able to do at various developmental levels (i.e., early/later elementary school, middle school, and high school) (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

*Content standards*: Description of what all students should know and be able to do in each of the subject areas (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

*Curriculum alignment*: Refers to the congruence of all the elements of a school curriculum, the curriculum goals, the instructional program (what is taught and the materials used), and the tests used to judge outcomes (Crowell & Tissot, 1986; Hartzell, 1984; Hunkins & Gehrke, 1985; Scott, 1983).


*Instructional strategies/practices*: Teaching practices used by educators to reinforce particular subject matter in order to ascertain the highest level of response from students.

*MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program)*: A statewide assessment instrument used to provide information on the status and progress of Michigan's essential skills content standards. The test covers the areas of reading and
mathematics in Grades 4 and 7, and science and writing in Grades 5 and 8 (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

*Michigan Core Curriculum:* A state level document used by local districts/curriculum committee/teachers to plan for instruction and learning. The document represents what all students in Michigan need to know and understand and be able to do to become participating and contributing members of society (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

*School accreditation:* A process the Michigan Department of Education developed and implemented in cooperation with the State Advisory Committee on Accreditation to ensure that schools throughout the state are meeting/following the guidelines of Public Act 25 and Public Act 335, which are to raise the standards for public schools and improve the quality of education for each student throughout the state. *Summary accredited* status is given to schools when 75% or more of students score in the highest category on all MEAP subject tests (Reading/Math/Science). *Non-accredited* status is given to schools when fewer than 25% of students score in the highest category on one or more MEAP subject tests (Reading/Math/Science) (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

*Standardized test:* Test are called “standardized” when the same questions are given to large groups of students under similar conditions. Most standardized tests are multiple-choice and are scored by a computer, which has been programmed to give credit for only one “right” answer for each question (Fair Test, 1991).

*State Standards:* A description of what all students should know and be able to do in each of the eight content areas of the state’s Core Curriculum (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).
Strategies: May be considered as planned activities specifically designed to assist students in preparing for the MEAP.

Student preparation: Planned activity that someone is doing to, doing for, or having done by somebody else (students) to support his or her performance on the MEAP.

Statement of the Hypotheses

This study will attempt to address the following null hypotheses:

H₁: There is no significant difference in the response of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to selected strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP.

H₂: There is no significant difference in the response of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to selected curriculum strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP.

H₃: There is no significant difference in the response of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to selected instructional strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP.

H₄: There is no significant difference in the response of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to selected student preparation strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP.
Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there are significant differences in the perception of principals in "summary accredited" and "non-accredited" schools in regards to selected strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP.

Presently, there has been a paucity of research to determine whether there are differences in the strategies utilized by principals in "summary accredited" and "non-accredited" elementary schools. Given the fact that a school district's accreditation status is primarily dependent upon student performance on the MEAP, it is extremely crucial that school districts identify meaningful practices that would lead to summary accreditation.

The results of this study will contribute to the literature in several ways. First of all, it will add to the limited field of research pertaining to the type of "best practices" utilized by principals that are in schools categorized as "summary accredited." This study will address curriculum issues as they relate to the alignment and the monitoring process of the Core Curriculum as compared to areas covered on the MEAP in summary accredited and non-accredited elementary schools. The study will examine teaching practices that are utilized in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools and determine those strategies that have the greatest influence on student performance. Finally, this study will examine the type of training received by professional staff and how it influences student learning as measured by student performance on the MEAP.
Limitations

This study was limited to principals in Kent County, Michigan, and did not include principals from outside of Kent County. This study was also limited to elementary principals, and did not include principals in middle and senior high schools. This study was also limited to public schools and did not include principals in private, parochial, or chartered schools. Finally, this study was limited to principals who responded to the study, and did not include those principals who did not respond.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Recent years have produced a flurry of influential reports decrying the impoverished state of American education. *A Nation at Risk* (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984), *Time for Results* (National Governor's Association, 1986), *Trends in Academic Progress: Achievement of U.S. Students in Science, Mathematics, Reading and Writing* (Mullis, Dossey, Foertsch, Jones, & Gentile, 1991), and *America 2000: An Education Strategy* (U.S. Department of Education, 1991) explicitly point out that schools are not adequately meeting societal needs. Students complete school unprepared to enter the work force or to pursue higher education. Studies that monitor student progress in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science corroborate these findings (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a). In an effort to rectify this educational dilemma, testing was viewed as being a viable solution to this problem.

This chapter will look at: (a) a historical perspective of our educational system; (b) prominent studies that led to the educational reform movement; (c) a description of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); (d) a description of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP); (e) a discussion regarding school principals as instructional leaders; and (f) a discussion of
the three variables of the study (curriculum alignment, instructional strategies, and student preparation).

**Historical Perspective of Education**

During the 19th century, education was reserved only for "citizens," which did not include slaves, indentured servants, or women (Mitchell, 1992). Citizens were required to be well educated if they were to discharge their civic responsibilities. Public education included the teaching of reading, writing, and a little arithmetic. Memorization of poems and passages was a major feature. Many one-room schoolhouses in developing Western settlements resorted to recitations as a form of teaching and learning (Berlak et al., 1992; Wiggins, 1993a).

Toward the end of the 19th century, the flood of immigrants and the development of the industries served by their labor added another dimension to the public education system. The public school system expanded rapidly to meet the demand by providing a minimal education — the basics of literacy and computation — regarded as necessary for the job (Berlak et al., 1992; Wiggins, 1993a).

Demands upon society influenced the foundation of the public education system. While the immigrant children were learning just enough to make them useful in factories, the private school system was preparing students to attend the Ivy League universities, which were founded by industrial philanthropists. Private schools were preparing students to become leaders, while the public education system prepared future factory workers to take orders (Berlak et al., 1992; Wiggins, 1993a).

Societal needs, rising educational aspirations, and student expectations began to weave their way into the educational arena. In an effort to develop and maintain an adequate public educational system, periodic examinations were established to assess
the outcomes of the educational program, thus the beginning of the testing movement.

National Studies

In April 1984, The National Commission of Excellence in Education published a report that summarized 18 months of study and research concerning the education status of the United States. The Commission's charter was to assess the nation's quality of learning in schools and colleges. The assessment process included comparing America's educational institutions with those of other industrial nations such as Japan, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Korea, Spain, France, Belgium, Canada, and Israel. They compared such variables as (a) content of the curriculum, (b) standards and expectations of the educational system, (c) time spent on educating students, and (d) instructional methods (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984).

The members of the Commission included university presidents, CEOs of major industries, school superintendents, principals, and professors. They relied upon the following sources for information: (a) input from administrators, teachers, students, representatives from other professions, parents, business leaders, public officials, and scholars; (b) current analyses of problems in education; (c) volunteer responses from concerned citizens; and (d) descriptions of notable programs (Commission on Excellence, 1984).

The outcome of the study was so startling that the Commission entitled the report, *A Nation at Risk*. The report documented evidence that the achievement standards of American schools did not equate with achievement standards of other industrialized nations. The following is a summary of the results:
1. On 19 academic tests, American students were never first or second in comparison with other industrialized nations (p. 8).

2. Approximately 13% of all students, who were 17 years old and lived in the United States, could be considered functionally illiterate. Approximately 40% of minority students, who were 17 years old and lived in the United States, were considered functionally illiterate (p. 8).

3. Average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests was lower than it was 30 years ago (p. 8).

4. College Board achievement tests show a decline in students of 50 points in verbal achievement over a period of 17 years (p. 8).

5. Twenty-three million American adults were functionally illiterate by the simplest of tests (p. 8).

6. The secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused in comparison to the curricula of other industrialized nations. Also, more American high school students take the "general track" courses instead of the vocational and college preparatory courses (p. 61).

7. The expectations for students were low as expressed by the absence of rigorous examinations such as mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics, and the time spent was far less than that spent on the same subjects in other industrialized nations (p. 62).

8. Compared to other nations, American students spent much less time on school work. The study also showed that time spent in the classroom and on homework is often used ineffectively (p. 64).

Several subsequent national reports, such as *The National Education Goals Report* (National Education Summit of the Nation's Governors and President, 1991)
and *The Condition of Education* (Alsalam, Ogle, Rogers, & Smith, 1992) revealed there has been little improvement in the quality of education since 1984. Those reports revealed that:

1. In 1990, fewer than one out of every five students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 had reached the education national goal of demonstrating competency in mathematics. Most of the U.S. students scored at the basic level in mathematics achievement. In 1988, American 13-year-old students scored the lowest among students in five nations on an international mathematics test (Alsalam et al., 1992, p. 13).

2. Average reading scores for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students showed little change between 1988 and 1990 (Alsalam et al., 1992, p. 46). (See Table 1.)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Age in Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Reading Proficiency Scale:
- Level 150: Carries out simple discrete reading tasks
- Level 200: Understands specific or sequentially related information
- Level 250: Searches for specific information, interrelates ideas, and makes generalizations
- Level 300: Finds, understands, summarizes, and explains relatively complicated information
- Level 350: Synthesizes and learns from specialized reading materials
3. In 1988, 14-year-old American students ranked among the lowest in science achievement on an international assessment (National Education Summit of the Nation's Governors and President, 1991, pp. 17-18). (See Table 2.)

Table 2
International Comparisons of Science Performance With Percentage Correct on Science Assessment, by Country: 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Larger Countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. In 1990, nearly 4 million young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 were high school dropouts. Dropout rates for African Americans have declined steadily over time. Dropout rates for Hispanics have been consistently higher than that for African Americans and Whites (National Education Summit of the Nation's Governors and President, 1991, p. 42).

5. Average writing scores for students in Grades 4, 8, and 11 remain relatively unchanged between 1984 and 1990 (p. 46).

In 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227), which placed the National Goals into law, supported the certification of voluntary national education standards and national skill standards,
and encouraged states through grant aid to develop their own standards for education (Lutz, 1997). The goals are:

1. All children will start school ready to learn.
2. At least 90% of high school students will graduate.
3. American students will achieve competency in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography at Grades 4, 8, and 12 and will be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in a modern economy.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every American adult will be literate and able to exercise the rights responsibilities of citizenship.
6. All American schools will be free of drugs and violence (Mitchell, 1992).

The action taken at the educational summit suddenly made education everyone's business. Many states responded by developing and implementing testing and other assessment procedures. California won acclaim for its pioneering assessments that asked students for answers in their own words. Arizona used an innovative statewide test that asked students to integrate knowledge across subjects. Vermont embarked on a statewide performance assessment that asked students to keep portfolios in writing and mathematics. Kentucky's testing program included portfolios, performance tasks, and multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Georgia's and Mississippi's state legislatures, with the support of the state school superintendents, opted to use a multiple-choice norm-referenced test for their state test system. Ohio established a set of "essential skills" that school districts were to teach. A statewide test was developed for students to demonstrate whether they have
mastered the essential skills. Illinois expanded a program intended originally to sample student performance statewide in reading, writing, and mathematics to a school-accountability instrument (Baker, 1994; Burnes, & Lindner, 1985; Bushaw, 1991).

Michigan responded by developing and implementing a statewide assessment instrument, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). The purpose of the MEAP is to provide information on the status and progress of Michigan's essential skills content standards (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is commonly known as "the Nation’s Report Card." Its purpose is to provide "a fair and accurate presentation of educational achievement in reading, writing and other subjects included in the third National Educational Goal, regarding student achievement and citizenship" (Linn & Baker, 1996, p. 72).

NAEP has been gathering data on the performance of American students since 1969. Over the years, it has gathered data about the performance of students not only in reading, writing, mathematics, and science but also in other areas such as citizenship, geography, history, and the arts. NAEP collected data annually until the 1979-1980 school year, but the data are now collected biennially. Data have been collected not only on students’ performances but also on their backgrounds, their attitudes, their schools and, at times, their teachers (Beaton & Gonzalez, 1995; Linn & Baker, 1996).

The population that NAEP samples consists of all students in American schools, both public and private, at Grades 4, 8, and 12, as well as ages 9, 13, and 17.
Until 1983, NAEP sampled only ages 9, 13, and 17, but since then it has also sampled Grades 4, 8, and 12, in which most of the 9, 13, and 17-year-old students are located. NAEP reports results by both age and grade (Beaton & Gonzalez, 1995; Linn & Baker, 1996).

NAEP data are designed for measuring trends in student performance over time and extensive cross-sectional analyses of the correlates of performance. All data collected by NAEP are available for secondary users, subject to the maintenance of the confidentiality of the participating students, districts, and states (Beaton & Gonzalez, 1995; Linn & Baker, 1996).

NAEP was originally conceived and developed to assess learning outcomes as related to practical life for enlightened citizenry (Tanner, 1997). The political push for national standards has changed the purpose and function of this organization. Its original design as a census-gathering instrument, based on national sampling of test findings, has been transformed into a national program of education accountability through state-by-state assessment.

Since 1969, NAEP has collected data in numerous subject areas and for many different populations. Because of the extensive use of the results of the NAEP, the National Center for Education Statistics employed the Technical Review Panel (TRP) to conduct a series of studies to address a range of validity questions regarding NAEP.

Beginning with the assumption that NAEP is intended to contribute to the improvement of education through the provision of “fair and accurate” information about student achievement, there remains a host of specific issues regarding the design, implementation, and uses of NAEP. The following topic areas and associated questions were addressed by TRP.
Level of Summarization: How can achievement in a given subject be most validly summarized? Are the accuracy and utility of the results enhanced by the use of a single global score for each subject (e.g., mathematics) or by the use of multiple scores (e.g., algebra, geometry, numbers, and operations)?

Motivation: Do NAEP results provide accurate information about what students know and are able to do? Or, do the results give a misleadingly low indication of student achievement because students do not put forth their best effort because they know that the results have no direct consequences for them or their schools?

National, State, and Local Reporting: What is the validity of state-by-state reporting and comparisons based on NAEP results? Can state or local assessments be validly linked to NAEP results? Can NAEP results be validly linked to international assessments?

Students at Risk of Low Achievement: How adequate is NAEP for providing information about the achievement of students who are most at risk of low achievement? Are the social context measures in NAEP adequate for this purpose? Does NAEP provide fair and accurate measurement of achievement of identifiable groups of students who are at risk?

Student Background Measures: NAEP is required to “include information on special groups, including, whenever feasible, information collected, cross-tabulated, analyzed, and reported by sex, race or ethnicity and socioeconomic status” (p. 21). How valid are the measures of these student background characteristics, particularly the measures of socioeconomic status? Are there better measures of these characteristics that could be used? Are there other policy-relevant, social-context
measures that are not available in NAEP that account for differences in performance of the special issues identified in the NAEP legislation?

Adequacy of Long-term Trends: How adequate are the long-term trend assessments for identifying changes in the relative performance, particularly for racial/ethnic population groups? Are the estimates based on the long-term trend substantially different than they would be if the trend assessment more closely mirrored the main assessments?

Data Quality: How adequate are the data obtained by NAEP?

Measures of Instructional Experiences of Students: How useful are measures of the instructional experiences obtained from teacher and student reports in accounting for differences in student achievement?

Reporting and Interpreting Results: What is the validity of interpretations of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) achievement levels and NAEP anchor points? How accurate are the interpretations of NAEP results by policy makers and educators? (Linn & Baker, 1996).

NAEP is expected to serve a wide variety of purposes, and the results it produces are interpreted in manifold ways by and for a diverse array of audiences. The Technical Review Panel concluded that NAEP provides the best available indicator of national trends in student achievement. The use of NAEP is continuously evolving, and the demands and expectations that confront it are expanding. This will create new questions of its validity. While national assessment is designed to provide general information, it is not designed to produce answers to specific questions.
Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP)

MEAP originally (1969–1973) used standardized norm-referenced tests designed to rank students from highest to lowest in each of four subject areas (vocabulary, reading comprehension, English usage, and arithmetic). Information provided by these tests did not adequately serve MEAP’s purpose of providing information on the status and progress of Michigan basic skills education. An alternative method of assessing student achievement was developed and implemented (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a).

In 1974, the MEAP staff was challenged to prove that the statewide assessment results could be used in local school districts. Current beliefs held that state assessment results could and should be used by local educators, but there was little evidence supporting their utilization, despite MEAP staff’s effort to train district-level staff to tell teachers how to use the results. Most districts sending representatives to be trained each year believed that gathering the information about the use of test results would be a simple matter.

MEAP staff developed a list of districts with characteristics that included maintaining a positive attitude about MEAP, having representatives involved in the annual training, and indicating a commitment to using MEAP scores. Each of these districts was visited, and school-level individuals were questioned about the use of results. What they found changed the future use of the dissemination and the training strategy of the MEAP.

The staff found that even districts with the most qualified and positively inclined individuals (e.g., directors of research or testing) held wide differences in the use of the results and in attitudes toward the MEAP program. Some staff felt the
program was not potentially useful. Those staffs that felt the program was useful were more likely to have held informational sessions for teachers focused on utilizing the results. Teachers and principals were also more likely to know about the MEAP program. Principals and teachers from buildings offering no pre-training sessions were found to do little or nothing with the results. Scores were quickly filed and forgotten (Coleman, 1982; Roeber, 1980). These buildings were more likely not to know factual information about the MEAP program (e.g., grades, subject areas tested), its purposes, uses, or limitations (Roeber, 1980). The key to each building's use of the results was not the district-level individuals' knowledge or attitude, but it was related to the level of understanding and commitment of the building principal.

The Building-Level Approach

Assessment Program staff began in 1975 to design materials and information directly for building principals. The aim was to make these individuals into Assessment Program experts. Building principals' understanding of the program led to the assumption that they would be able to respond to teachers' questions and concerns. The principal would certainly be more inclined to see that the results were used. A plan was implemented to develop communication techniques to allow MEAP staff to work directly with building-level individuals and conduct training for each of the 3,800 elementary, junior high/middle, and senior high schools in the state. This was complicated by the allocation of limited staff and resources (Roeber, 1980).

MEAP staff quickly realized that a staff of four individuals covering 3,800 buildings would take nearly a decade to complete individual visits. Direct individual contact was discarded as a strategy, as was direct coercion. Although the test scores might threaten a principal or teacher, MEAP staff couldn't force state educators to
use the results. Therefore, MEAP staff focused on enticing building-level personnel to use the results.

Department staff began to offer workshops in 1976 on using the results. The initial experience was not positive due to overestimating local educators' knowledge of testing and of MEAP. Many teachers and principals had never taken a testing course and had no prior experience, which could be transferred to using state assessment results. In fact, these educators' previous experience of not using the obtained results was an initial obstacle as many felt that tests just were not useful in classroom instruction (Coleman, 1982; Roeber, 1980).

MEAP staff soon learned that covering the topic of test utilization in general terms was not sufficient to motivate people to use the results. They developed a document entitled “Making a Difference—Using the Assessment Results,” which described general utilization hints. Schools utilizing steps described in the document would be using MEAP results. MEAP staff, who had no experience working with professionals who used the results, found it difficult to teach this skill to other professionals.

This began to change in 1977 when staff went looking for school districts that used the results. These sample districts (Clarkston, Haslett, Detroit, and Lansing) taught State Department personnel about how local schools used the results, what features of the program were acceptable, and what modifications needed to be made.

This information resulted in a number of small modifications to the MEAP program. These included changing classroom summaries to illustrate objectives students did attain as opposed to those not attained, and sending individual student reports of results to building principals rather than to classroom teachers. The
individual students’ reports were rather bulky, and this tended to discourage teachers
from using the results (Roeber, 1980).

More importantly, MEAP staff was able to document the ways these districts
and others actually used the results. What resulted was a series of “how to do it”
guidelines, which MEAP could provide to other schools. MEAP staff believed these
methods, generated by teachers and principals, would work effectively and be
accepted and implemented by principals and teachers.

School Use of State Assessment Results

Major uses of the state assessment results from local schools are twofold.
First is the utilization of results from 4th, 7th, and 10th grade assessments. Second is
using results to review curricula in the previous grade levels. MEAP staff’s
responsibility was to ensure that materials were developed to fit both types of criteria.
Instructional support materials for mathematics and reading and other subject areas
tested were developed to assist teachers to look at individual student results and to
teach skills that students lacked or were weak in.

Until recent years, a major unmet need concerned helping local schools share
MEAP results with parents. The report offered materials that were developed to
prepare school staffs to provide individual student results to parents, as well as a
copy of the Parent Pamphlet. Many schools wanting to share results with parents
found the provided reports too detailed (Michigan State Board of Education, 1994).
This led to the preparation of a special report, which generated questions in some
school districts, because school staffs were not prepared to answer parent questions.
Over the years, however, the report has become more “user friendly.”
The second major use of MEAP results concerns reviewing the curricula of the previous grade levels. State assessment results can be used to initiate this process, but individual schools are also encouraged to bring other test (or nontest) results to the process. This allows generalizing the process of using test results to the other tests that schools use.

The process of using test results to examine curricula needs is relatively simple. Teachers from each grade level should be represented, and the building principal is expected to participate. Teams should emphasize determining needs and not focus on fixing blame or finding fault. This positive approach is needed to ensure that agreed-upon changes are implemented. Team members need information about what other individuals do to teach the skills, what needs are perceived, and how each team member can help the others. This interactive process can be repeated with other testing results at later points in time, or can be used to review changes that may need to occur.

The initial step in the process concerns determining specific target skills. This may be accomplished by determining a criterion level to use for the objectives, or by asking team members to rate the importance of each skill and an expected level of student achievement. Selected objectives rate highest in importance and obtain results most discrepant from expected results. This later technique is preferable when team members are first exposed to a set of skills. The first technique has been found to be most effective when teachers had more experience with the skills tested (Coleman, 1982; Roeber, 1980).

Secondly, team members need to determine the priority given in their building for each particular skill. This requires team members to determine how much instructional time is allocated to each skill tested. This can be expressed in minutes,
hours, class hours, or any convenient unit. It is also important to note when instruction is given (e.g., end of the school year) and what materials are used. The purpose of this exercise is to determine who currently teaches this skill or if the skill is overtaught. This step alone may be most valuable in the process, as team members are taking important first steps in building an articulated curriculum. The principal’s involvement allows administrators access to first-hand information about who teaches specific skills and how that process occurs. This process typically reveals that skills poorly achieved by students are typically undertaught. Occasionally some skills are overtaught because individual teachers are not aware that other teachers are targeting the same skill areas.

Finally, team members need to determine how much emphasis should be given to particular skills. Grade levels at which greater emphasis will occur and how this emphasis will be accomplished need to be determined for undertaught skills. How the skills will be taught and what necessary materials already available or developed are revealed. Supplemented materials may be located among commercial vendors, specialist in the field, other school districts, or even the state department of education.

Completion of the process allows team members to begin teaching the skills determined to be of highest priority. This process is simple to implement and does not rely on using testing experts or curriculum experts. The team involvement component of this process capitalizes on the enthusiasm and spirit that typically accompanies working to accomplish a common goal. The affective results of the process can affect school operation in other areas. Principals become more involved in the instructional process as they work together with teachers to set common goals. Principals also
obtain knowledge about what needs to be taught, and when and how. Student achievement improves as principals increase their roles as instructional leaders.

As the instructional leader, the building principal sets the learning climate of the school. Therefore, this study will capitalize upon the expert knowledge and influence of the principal within the school.

Principal as Instructional Leader

Research on effective schools has determined that schools that succeed are invariably led by a principal who is recognized as an instructional leader (Edmonds, 1970; Krug, 1993; Terry, 1996). Effective instructional leadership moves the institution in the direction of academic success (Terry, 1996). The school leader is able to help motivate and energize staff by providing a vision of what would and should be the future state of the organization.

High expectations on the part of the principal are associated with greater student achievement. "In time, student behavior and achievement will conform more and more closely to the achievement and behavior originally expected of them" (Good & Brophy, 1997, p. 281).

Principals in effective schools place a strong emphasis on the accomplishments of objectives. They are assertive instructional leaders who convey expectations in such ways as: (a) establishing concrete norms and goals for teachers and students, (b) formulating procedures for evaluation of achievement of objectives, (c) making numerous classroom observations, and (d) providing teacher inservice on instructional skills (Michigan State Board of Education, 1988).

There are five areas in which the principal’s role in creating high expectations is important. These include: (1) promoting instructional climate, (2) self-expectations,
(3) managing curriculum and instruction, (4) supervising teaching, and (5) monitoring student progress.

**Promoting Instructional Climate**

"When the atmosphere of the school is one that values learning and supports achievement, it is difficult not to learn" (Krug, 1993, p. 242). The principal is responsible for creating an atmosphere of educational excitement at all levels and for channeling the energies of students and teachers in productive ways (Krug, 1993). The instructional climate of the school can be promoted in a variety of ways, including the provision of a safe and structured environment, child-centered activities, and a pervasive understanding that a premium is placed on doing one's personal best (Michigan State Board of Education, 1988; Terry, 1996).

**Self-Expectations**

To have clear expectations of others, one must first be able to define and communicate one's own expectations. In addition to the efficient handling of paperwork and other routine tasks, principals of effective schools tend to maintain high visibility and accessibility to parents, students, and teachers (Michigan State Board of Education, 1988; Terry, 1996).

As instructional leader, the principal becomes assertive while emphasizing increased achievement through the use of instructional goals and coordinated curriculum and programs. Howell's (1981) research found that a partnership must be formed with staff and students to set instructional goals, coordinate the total program, and, finally, evaluate the program.
Research on effective schools reveals the importance of a clearly stated purpose, which has been carefully communicated to all shareholders. A clear sense of purpose is especially important in time of structural change and/or crisis (Terry, 1996).

Managing Curriculum and Instruction

"The primary service that schools offer is instruction" (Krug, 1993, p. 242). Therefore, it is imperative that principals have some awareness of all subject areas and associated needs. A broad knowledge base that allows the principal to help others carry out the mission of the school is essential. Principals should be able to provide information to teachers regarding instructional methods, and they should be actively involved in and supportive of curriculum development (Terry, 1996).

Principals must assist and support staff in letting go of ineffective curricula or practices. The "planned abandonment" (Drucker, 1973; Krug, 1993) includes both abandoning ineffective practices and supporting teacher in adopting practices that promote and enhance student learning (Michigan State Board of Education, 1990).

Supervising Teaching

The principal, as instructional leader, must support the premise that all students can be taught and that no one will fall below minimum levels of achievement (Krug, 1993; Michigan State Board of Education, 1988; Terry, 1996). The most important strategy for attaining this goal is facilitating cooperative efforts between principal and staff.

The principal is responsible for monitoring and encouraging teachers to utilize techniques and strategies that will increase student achievement. These include: (a)
establishing clear instructional goals regarding what it is that teachers will teach and accomplish, and (b) attaining knowledge about the content that teachers teach (Michigan State Board of Education, 1988).

Principals also need to establish the pedagogical skills for teaching the specific curriculum. The strategies necessary include: (a) informing students of what they are expected to learn and providing them with a rationale related to the importance of this learning; (b) utilizing existing instructional materials in a manner that is relevant to what is being taught, so that more time is invested in clarifying and enriching the content; (c) frequently monitoring students' understanding of what is being taught and providing students with specific feedback regarding their learning; (d) integrating instructional materials to insure that concepts are not taught in isolation, but rather are integrated into other subjects; (e) accepting responsibility for student outcomes; and (f) constantly analyzing and reflecting upon their pedagogical and content knowledge in an attempt to refine the delivery of instruction to students (Michigan State Board of Education, 1988).

An effective instructional leader provides opportunities for teachers to continue their professional development both on and off the school site, with the goal of developing each teacher's specific qualities that will enhance student learning (Terry, 1996).

Monitoring Student Progress

Evaluations of student achievement and reiteration of expectations must occur on a regular basis (Krug, 1993; Terry, 1996). An effective leader is familiar with various ways in which student progress can be assessed and ensures that assessments be completed regularly. The principal clarifies the meaning of outcomes
when necessary. He or she can competently review test results and use them to assist teachers, students, and parents in developing strategies for improving performance. The principal, of course, cannot interpret every assessment given in a school building, but he or she can clearly state expectations relating to assessment and monitor the testing interpretation and productive response process (Terry, 1996).

Principals must be team builders, leading a team dedicated to improving the learning of the students in the school. Success requires the knowledge of all professionals in the building. An effective instructional leader knows how best to tap into that collective wisdom.

**Curriculum Alignment**

Curriculum alignment refers to the congruence of all the elements of a school curriculum – curriculum goals, the instructional program (what is taught and the materials used) and the test used to judge outcomes (Crowell & Tissot, 1986; Hartzell, 1984; Hunkins & Gehrke, 1985; Scott, 1983).

Curriculum alignment is a potentially powerful factor in improving schools (Hunkins & Gehrke, 1985). This concept is attractive due to its deceptive simplicity. The premise of this concept is to make sure that the district’s curriculum is “in line” with the objectives and that the district’s program reflects what is taught (Crowell & Tissot, 1986).

In practice, however, the process of alignment is exceedingly complex, calling for the careful articulation of all parts of the curriculum, the careful and technically difficult development of appropriate tests, and the cooperation of all the players in the local educational system (Crowell & Tissot, 1986; Hartzell, 1984). Alignment refers to the attempt to achieve the best possible relationship among the elements of
student performance (defined in terms of both school objectives and assessment of outcomes and accomplishments) and instruction (Crowell & Tissot, 1986).

Research on effective schools supports the finding that curriculum alignment emphasizes the link between curriculum and instruction (Hunkins & Gehrke, 1985). Practices identified as emerging from the research on effective schools appear to result in an organization where the curriculum and instructional program are automatically aligned with the goals of the school and the monitoring/assessment process. For example, the literature on effective schools consistently reveals that teachers know and can provide the instruction to get there (Crowell & Tissot, 1986). This statement reflects a curriculum that is aligned.

Effective schools have grade-level objectives that are clearly identified and understood by all members of the staff. Regular monitoring and assessment of the instructional program is maintained (Brookover, 1979). The principal is responsible for ensuring that appropriate tests and evaluations are regularly used. In effect, Brookover puts the onus for curriculum alignment on the principal to oversee this kind of school organization.

Good and Brophy (1986) see curriculum alignment as “that which school goals, school grade-level and classroom instructional objectives, instructional content and objectives, and measures of pupil performance are all carefully coordinated so that instructional efforts of teachers and other instructional staff are consistent and additive” (p. 47). The implication from such an effort would be that:

1. There are clear and publicly agreed upon goals that form the basis for selecting objectives, content, and materials.

2. There are no huge differences in the time allocated to the various subjects that would be in conflict with the basic objectives of the school.
3. There are shared goals by all members involved in the school.

4. There will be clear and articulated overlap in curriculum, test content and textbooks use (Crowell & Tissot, 1986).

Curriculum alignment is posited as a fundamental and critical concern, but very little practical research exists to guide the efforts of local school districts (Crowell & Tissot, 1986). Achievement of curriculum alignment necessitates widespread discussion and demonstration of the importance of alignment and the development of practical procedures to aid schools. Few procedures providing guidelines to enable schools to align their curricula currently exist.

The Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory (SWRL), is generally credited with coining the term “curriculum alignment,” a process called the Instructional Accomplishment Information System (Crowell & Tissot, 1986; Fliedermeyer, 1981). This system was designed to provide schools and school districts with information for reviewing and planning their instructional program at the classroom, school, and district level. The system uses an Instructional Accomplishment Inventory as an alternative to the standardized achievement test as the way to describe student performance on specific skills. The SWRL procedure results in a series of objectives that are aligned to the instructional program (Crowell & Tissot, 1986).

The Los Angeles Unified School District administrators, under the supervision of the SWRL, began efforts to ensure that teachers teach students what they were expected to learn and to test them accordingly. In 1979, this curriculum alignment project consisted of three stages:

Step 1: Reviewing the Essential Skills—Teachers became familiar with the objectives, the essential skills for their grade level.
Step 2: Setting Priorities—Teachers identified specific priorities for instruction.

Step 3: Planning Instruction—Teachers (in grade-level groups) planned which instructional strategies were likely to work best, which instructional materials were most appropriate, and the time that was needed for instruction (Scott, 1983).

The Los Angeles District’s achievements have been a unique step forward for a large urban school district. Teachers are more aware of the age/grade-level skills. Skills taught are more sequenced and materials are more compatible to the instructional program. Although progress has occurred in this curriculum alignment procedure, the Los Angeles District still has some distance to go before elementary school instruction is completely aligned.

The Educational Products and Informational Exchange (EPIE) offers a curriculum alignment service through its Integrated Instructional Information Resource Program (IIRP). This computerized curriculum alignment data system allows schools to dovetail their objectives into the IIRP database. This input is then correlated with objectives specified in textbooks, tests, computer software programs, and videotapes in content areas. Information is then provided as to where teacher-provided instruction and materials can most effectively supplement textbook curricula. This process is available to all schools that can supply a clear statement of the school’s curriculum objectives (Crowell & Tissot, 1986).

Michigan has developed state goals, content standards, and assessment and curriculum frameworks (Michigan Department of Education, 1994a). The state assessment program is aligned with these items. A curriculum group developed a comprehensive procedure to assist school districts throughout the state in reviewing and changing their current program in order to bring them into alignment with the
state assessment instrument. The procedure consisted of a set of comprehensive staff development activities directed specifically at bringing instruction into alignment with state objectives. The overall plan guides the separate pieces—tests, curriculum, and objectives—into a rational pattern of curriculum alignment (Roeber, 1980).

The most obvious benefit of curriculum alignment is that more students have an opportunity to learn more of the essential skills at grade level (Livingston & Nations, 1989). Teachers have a better idea of what is important to teach and what skills are most important for students who enter the class. They also have a better understanding of what they and their colleagues teach well and what needs improvement. Teachers become better equipped to communicate with parents regarding instructional goals and achievements.

Curriculum alignment can assist principals in becoming strong instructional leaders. The process provides a structure to allow teacher, not principal-imposed, instruction. Alignment activities also help the principal articulate goals of the entire school and maintain the focus on instruction.

District administrators benefit from alignment activities, which build an information base allowing accurate descriptions of accomplishments of the school district and the targeting of instructional support to defined need areas.

Instructional Strategies

What makes an elementary school effective? It is well established that outstanding leadership is required from a building principal or other administrators and that instructional goals and activities must be focused on attainable objectives (Cawelti, 1995; Gersten, Carnine, & Green, 1982; Levine & Stark, 1982).
Several useful studies have identified characteristics of elementary schools that have been "successful" in achievement. One study (Edmonds, 1979) concluded that unusually effective schools share such characteristics as outstanding leadership, focused objectives and instruction, and high expectations for student performance (Levine & Stark, 1982).

Another study concluded that the success of urban schools is associated with, among other things, effective leadership, emphasis on staff development and inservice training, reductions in adult/child ratios, clearly stated curricular goals and objectives, structured learning environment, and high levels of parental contact and involvement (Wiggins, 1989a).

The National Institute of Education compiled a list of research regarding educational practices that improve student achievement despite the background of the student. These practices are:

1. Parent Involvement: Learning is enhanced when schools encourage parents to stimulate their children's intellectual development.

2. Graded Homework: Students learn more when they complete homework that is graded, commented upon, and discussed by their teachers.

3. Aligned Time on Task: Students who are actively focused on educational goals do best in mastering the subject matter.

4. Direct Teaching: Direct teaching is most effective when it exhibits key features and follow systematic steps.

5. Advance Organizers: Showing students the relationships between past learning and present learning increases its depth and breadth.
6. Teaching of Learning Strategies: Delegating some control to students for the learning goals and the monitoring of personal progress in achieving them yields learning gains.

7. Tutoring: Teaching one student or a small number with the same abilities and instructional needs can be remarkably effective.

8. Mastery Learning: In subject matter to be learned in a sequence, thorough mastery of each step is optimal.

9. Cooperative Learning: Students in small, self-instructing groups can support and increase each other’s learning.

10. Adaptive Education: Employing a variety of instructional techniques to adapt lessons to individual students and small groups raises achievement (Cawelti, 1995).

Brophy (1982) identified eight strategies associated with producing student learning gains that can be utilized by teachers. They are:

1. Set High Expectations: Believe that the students are capable of learning. Treat students’ failure as a challenge. Display a positive attitude.

2. Student Opportunity to Learn: Allocate most of the available classroom to instruction.

3. Classroom Management and Organization: Display an efficient classroom learning environment. Focus on student engagement in academic activities. Make sure students know what they are supposed to do and hold them accountable. Plan appropriate lessons/activities.

4. Curriculum Pacing: Plan a variety of learning activities at different difficulty levels. Present tasks in small steps.
5. Active Learning: Teach students in large and small groups, demonstrate skills, explain concepts, allow time for practice, and review when necessary.

6. Teaching to Mastery: Provide opportunities for practice and application, monitor individual student’s progress, and provide feedback and remedial instruction.

7. Grade-level Difference: Take into account differences in students, subject matter, and other factors when planning academic activities.

8. A Supportive Learning Environment: Maintain high standards and demand that students do their best (Brophy, 1982).

Another program that has received widespread attention for contributing to student academic achievement has been the Chicago Mastery Learning Reading Program (CMLRP). The CMLRP is part of a comprehensive reading program that consists of 194 units of instruction for teaching comprehension, word attack, and study skills in Grades K–8. Features of this program consist of: (a) full-time staff developers who provide inservice training and curriculum leadership, (b) full-time resident trainers in each school to help teachers implement the program, (c) a writing program in several grades, and (d) full-time reading teachers in each Title I school to provide paralleled instruction. Implementation of this program allows schools to experience a reduction in class size (Levine & Stark, 1982).

While many specific strategies can be employed to address improving student achievement, administrators who are supportive of teachers and skilled in fostering a supportive learning environment in which teachers can function effectively create an environment for success.
Student Preparation

Evaluation may be thought of as an evidence-gathering exercise. Various measuring devices are used to provide feedback to the learner and to the teacher. Often the numerical scores from measuring devices, such as tests, are combined and converted into discriminatory symbols known as letter grades. Grades become records that are associated with a person. Society accepts these symbols as being equivalent and a true measure of achievement (Brown, 1998).

The National Commission on Testing and Public Policy estimates that students take 127 million separate tests in a year (Fair Test, 1991; Neill & Medina, 1989). The 41 million students in American public schools are each completing an average of three tests per year. Students in remedial programs, such as Chapter I and English as a Second Language, are especially subject to heavy test schedules. These tests, commonly referred to as standardized tests, are given under the same conditions and ask the same questions across different populations in order to permit comparisons. More than 55 million standardized tests of achievement, competency, and basic skills are administered to fulfill local and state mandates (Neill & Medina, 1989).

In the past, tests were just one of several educational tools used to assess student achievement and to diagnose academic strengths and weaknesses. In recent years, however, they have become not only the primary criteria used by many schools for making decisions that affect students, but also major forces in shaping instruction and assessing the quality of teaching and of the schools (Brandt, 1985; Berlak, 1985; Haney, 1985; Medina & Neill, 1990).
With such a taxing testing schedule facing students, how can schools better prepare their students for this task? Duke and Ritchhart (1990) offer the following six tips as suggestions to assist students in their test-taking:

1. Don’t skimp on practice tests—They are vital to helping students understand the mechanics of the test.

2. Promote a positive attitude about testing—When discussing tests with students, make three recommendations: be serious, confident, and strategic.

3. Deal with roadblocks—Do your best to circumvent problems, such as inadequate breakfast, lack of sleep, and chronic tardiness prior to testing.

4. Plan a fun day-of-test activity—Avoid academic activities immediately before testing. Instead, try something less stressful, such as Simon Says.

5. Look out for day dreamers—Seat easily distracted students in cubicles and corners. Encourage them to stay on task by checking off each line they read.

6. Talk about those last few minutes—The final moments of a test period are valuable for checking work and guessing on remaining questions.

On an ongoing basis, not just at test-taking time, the students’ educational atmosphere should be conducive to learning, and prior to the testing periods, classroom activities should reflect overall learning principles. Brown (1998), a professor of Curriculum and Instruction, identified nine factors affecting the relationship between learning and test performance that can be implemented by the classroom teacher on a continuous basis:

1. Time-on-task: When a teacher spends a lot of time on a topic, the students generally assume that that topic is important. A small amount of time spent on a subject sends a message of lesser importance.

2. Level of learning: Be consistent in how we teach and test. The testing/evaluation process should be compatible.

3. Question format: Test questions should reflect the purpose of the test: factual recall, meaning and understanding, compare and contrast, etc.
4. Number of questions: The teacher should take into consideration the type of questions on the test: multiple-choice, short answer, essay, etc. The number of questions should be based on an estimate of student response time, allowing enough time to complete the test.

5. Inclusion of past work: A method to encourage students to retain what they have learned is to include test items on each test from a previous area of study.

6. Difficulty level: Place the more difficult-level question toward the end of the test. Encountering difficult test items early on a test tends to decrease the test taker's confidence.

7. Grouping: Group similar test questions together (multiple-choice, short answer, essay, etc.).

8. Use of new items: Periodically new test items should be incorporated into a test so that teachers do not become dependent on a limited range of test items.

9. Difficulty distribution: What is the frequency of difficult-level test items? (p. 103)

When these variables are implemented in classrooms as "standard procedure," then test-taking time for students will not be a pressure situation. Teachers feel these strategies and practices can improve the overall performance of students on tests (Burnes & Lindner, 1985).

Summary

The discussion of the literature revealed that the achievement standards of American schools did not equate with the achievement standards of other industrialized nations. This revelation prompted the educational reform movement. Development of the National Education Goals Report not only drew attention to specific areas of weakness, but also created a plan of action to combat those weaknesses—Goals 2000.
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is commonly known as “the Nation’s Report Card.” Its purpose is to provide “a fair and accurate presentation of educational achievement in reading, writing, and other subjects” (Linn & Baker, 1996, p. 8). Information gathered from NAEP is designed to measure trends in student performance over time. Based on a national sampling of test findings, NAEP has been transformed into a national program of education accountability through state-by-state assessment.

At the state level, many states began implementing programs that would lead to increased student performance in the basic subject areas (reading, mathematics, science, and writing). Michigan developed the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). This test was designed to test students’ performance in the areas of reading and mathematics in Grades 4 and 7, and in science and writing in Grades 5 and 8.

The first 4 years of MEAP (1969-1973) used standardized norm-referenced tests designed to rank students from highest to lowest in vocabulary, reading comprehension, English usage, and mathematics. The information provided by these tests did not adequately serve the purpose of providing information on the status and progress of Michigan basic skills education.

Over the years, the MEAP evolved in response to input from school districts, new learning trends, new emphasis on curriculum and assessment, and school accountability. Advisory groups were formed to develop specific performance objectives in the basic skills areas. The groups were composed of local, state, and higher education curriculum specialists and teachers from throughout Michigan.

Discussion of the literature also revealed that there are certain factors that influence student achievement, such as outstanding leadership of building principals,
alignment of the school’s curriculum to the state’s curriculum, utilization of specific
instructional strategies, and preparing students with a “plan of action” for test-taking.

Testing provides a valuable measure of instructional effectiveness. It can
reveal the strengths and weaknesses of a school program, just as it reveals the
strengths and weaknesses of an individual student. Assessing a student’s academic
progress should follow a high-quality and balanced assessment system.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected strategies being used to prepare students for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program.

The purpose of this chapter will describe the study’s research methodology, procedures, and analysis of data. The methodology section will describe the research design and information regarding the population of the study. The procedure section will include information regarding the development and administration of the instrument. The analysis of data will describe the statistical procedures and interpretation of the data.

Methodology

To test the hypotheses in this study, an ex post facto design was utilized (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1985). This research will study elementary principals’ perceptions of selected strategies being used to prepare students for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program in summary accredited and non-accredited elementary schools.
The population of this study included public school principals in summary accredited and non-accredited elementary schools in Kent County, Michigan. All of the elementary schools within Kent County that hold "summary" accreditation status were asked to participate in the study. However, only half of the elementary schools within Kent County that are classified as "non-accredited" were asked to participate in the study.

There are 127 public elementary schools within Kent County. Twenty-four of these schools have achieved "summary" accreditation status, 93 of the elementary schools are "non-accredited," and 10 schools are classified as "no status" at this time. The non-accredited elementary schools were randomly selected to participate. Schools classified as "no status" were not involved.

To randomly select the schools, all non-accredited schools in Kent County were listed and numbered 1–93. Schools were listed in alphabetical order by school districts. By using the Chart of Random Numbers, a starting point was randomly selected. Going down the list, using the last two digits of the numbers given (less than 93), numbers were chosen until 46 schools had been selected.

An examination of the literature did not yield an instrument that would meet the objective of this study; therefore, an instrument was developed. The questionnaire was revised on the basis of review and examination by individuals who are interested in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. These individuals included college professors, public school administrators, and practicing evaluators in the field.

In order to determine its validity and reliability, pilot testing of the instrument was conducted. Principals from some of the elementary schools within Kent County were asked to complete the questionnaire. Information gathered from their responses impacted the merit of this instrument.
Administration of Instrument

A self-administered, coded questionnaire was used. This questionnaire is comprised of 18 forced-response items, with the exception of one question at the end of each section, which calls for an open-ended response. All 18 forced-response questions require a response to a 4-point Likert scale: To a Very Great Extent (4), Somewhat (3), Not Very Much (2), and Not At All (1).

The questionnaire, accompanied by a letter and a stamped self-addressed return reply envelope, was mailed to each principal in the sample. After a 2-week period, a second questionnaire was forwarded to all nonrespondents to the initial survey. One week later, postcards were mailed to those who had not yet responded, reminding them of the need for their response.

Each survey had a random number written in the upper right-hand corner. This number was used only to identify which schools had not returned their questionnaire. The number was not used to identify the school or respondent, and no names of persons, schools, or school districts were reported or otherwise released. Once the questionnaires were returned, the number was cut off.

Data Analysis

The primary goal of this research is to determine the significance of the school’s curriculum, instructional strategies, and student preparation in preparing students for the MEAP in summary accredited and non-accredited public elementary schools in Kent County, Michigan. Specifically, the study focused on elementary principals’ perceptions concerning selected strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP.
To facilitate the data analysis process, the principals' responses to the questions for each independent variables (curriculum, instructional strategies, and student preparation) were numerically coded according to the following codes: To a Very Great Extent (4), Somewhat (3), Not Very Much (2), and Not At All (1).

The chi-square ($X^2$) statistical test was used to analyze the three independent variables of the study. This test was used to distinguish the magnitude of the relationship between the variables. Chi-square is a nonparametric statistical test that is used when research data are in the form of categories rather than continuous scores or ranks. This test is used to determine whether the frequency distributions differ significantly from each other. The chi-square test is most often used when the categories into which frequencies fall are discrete rather than continuous (Borg & Gall, 1989).

The level of significance for testing the hypotheses of this study was set at .05. This alpha level is deemed appropriate in minimizing a Type I error. If it is determined that the findings of the data are greater than .05, then the null hypothesis must be rejected (Ary et al., 1985).

When the null hypothesis is rejected as a result of the chi-square test, it can be stated that the measures obtained from the variables involved differ and the differences are greater than one would expect to exist by chance alone. If the null hypothesis is rejected, then the alternate hypothesis will be accepted (Ary et al., 1985).
CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Overview of Chapter

In Chapter IV, the results of the data analysis are reported and explained for the null hypotheses that were tested as to whether principals of summary accredited elementary schools and principals of non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected strategies being used to prepare students for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). The organization of the chapter will be as follows: (a) a brief summary of the research design, (b) an explanation of the descriptive data, (c) an explanation of the results of tests run on the hypotheses, and (d) a summary.

Brief Summary of the Research Design

The purpose of the research was to investigate the perceptions of elementary school principals in regards to selected strategies used to prepare students for the MEAP. The dependent variable for this study is school accreditation status, and the independent variables are curriculum, instructional strategies, and student preparation.

A questionnaire was developed and sent to 70 principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools within Kent County (24 accredited and 46
non-accredited). Forty-two (60%) questionnaires were returned (15 accredited and 27 non-accredited). (See Table 3.)

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # Sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Accredited Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire solicited information concerning the three independent variables. The purpose of the questionnaire was to compare the responses from principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools.

Explanation of Descriptive Data

Because of the collapsed data, the hypothesis tables that follow display the 3.00 (No) and 4.00 (Yes) rated responses and not the 1.00 and 2.00 rated responses. This was done because the researcher wanted to use all of the data that were provided by the participants. The researcher noticed that participants from the accredited schools very seldom checked the lower scores (Not Very Much and Not at All) on the questionnaires, thus leaving many empty cells, which would lead to the chi-square test condition not being satisfied. Some participants from the non-accredited schools gave responses in the 1.00 (Not Very Much) and 2.00 (Not at All) cells. So as not to ignore the data, the data were collapsed. The 1.00 and 2.00 rated responses were collapsed into the 3.00 (Somewhat) rated responses.
Testing of the Hypotheses

The purpose of this section is to test the hypotheses in this study. Each hypothesis is stated and corresponding data is provided to determine whether the hypothesis is accepted or rejected.

Curriculum

H$_{2a}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which their curriculum is aligned with the Michigan Core Curriculum.

The data in Table 4 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding whether their curriculum is aligned with the Michigan Core Curriculum. Because there is a statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

H$_{2b}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which they have a written curriculum.

The data in Table 5 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which they have a written curriculum. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.
**Table 4**

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which Their Curriculum Is Aligned With the Michigan Core Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Curriculum Alignment</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(10.0)</td>
<td>(5.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(18.0)</td>
<td>(9.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $\chi^2 = 7.467$, $p$ value = .006.

**Table 5**

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-Accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which They Have a Written Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Written Curriculum</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(13.6)</td>
<td>(1.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(24.4)</td>
<td>(2.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $\chi^2 = .221$, $p$ value = .638.

$H_{2c}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which specific areas covered on the MEAP are also taught in the applied curriculum.
The data in Table 6 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which specific areas covered on the MEAP are also taught in the applied curriculum. Because there is a statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Specific Areas</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(10.7)</td>
<td>(4.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(19.3)</td>
<td>(7.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 5.486$, $p$ value = .019.

$H_{2d}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools regarding having adequate resources at the district level that allows for implementation of the curriculum at the school level.

The data in Table 7 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which adequate resources are available for implementation of...
curriculum. Because there is a statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Table 7

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which Adequate Resources Are Available for Implementation of Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Adequate Resources</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected (8.2)</td>
<td>(6.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected (14.8)</td>
<td>(12.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( \chi^2 = 5.999, p \text{ value} = .014.\)

H2e: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which the curriculum allows for student mastery of the state standards.

The data in Table 8 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which the curriculum allows for student mastery of the state standards. Because there is a statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

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Table 8

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which the Curriculum Allows for Student Mastery of State Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Mastery of State Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(8.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(16.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 11.070$, $p$ value = .001.

Instructional Strategies

$H_{3a}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which teachers are teaching skills that are tested on the MEAP.

The data in Table 9 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which teachers taught skills that were tested on the MEAP. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals’ perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

$H_{3b}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which teachers are incorporating instructional strategies that would likely lead to increased MEAP scores.
Table 9

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which Teachers Teach Skills on the MEAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Teaching MEAP Skills</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = .840$, $p$ value = .359.

The data in Table 10 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which teachers incorporate instructional strategies that increase MEAP scores. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

H3c: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which a process is in place that allows staff to determine what skills and strategies have been introduced, taught, and reinforced.

The data in Table 11 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which there is a process to determine the skills introduced,
taught, and reinforced. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals’ perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 10**

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which the Teachers Incorporate Instructional Strategies That Increase MEAP Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategies</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited Observed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(11.4)</td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited Observed</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(20.6)</td>
<td>(6.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 1.412$, $p$ value = .235.

**Table 11**

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which There Is a Process to Determine the Skills Introduced, Taught, and Reinforced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process for MEAP Strategies Taught</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited Observed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(9.3)</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited Observed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(16.7)</td>
<td>(10.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = .036$, $p$ value = .850.
**H₃ₑ**: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which ample time for remediation is included in teaching the math, reading, and science content skill standards.

The data in Table 12 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding remediation time in teaching the content skill standards. Because there is no statistical significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

Table 12

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding Time in Teaching the Content Skill Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>MEAP Remediation</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(2.9)</td>
<td>(12.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(5.1)</td>
<td>(21.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. χ² = 3.088, p value = .079.*

**H₃ₑ**: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which classroom discussions and classwork are used to prepare students for the content of the MEAP.
The data in Table 13 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which work done in the classroom prepares students for the MEAP. Because there is a statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

### Table 13

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which Work Done in the Classroom Prepares Students for the MEAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>MEAP Classroom Discussion</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.1)</td>
<td>(5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.0)</td>
<td>(9.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. \( \chi^2 = 4.200, p \text{ value} = .040.\)

**H\(_3\)**: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which staff development/retraining efforts are planned with consideration to skill areas where students are experiencing the greatest amount of difficulty.

The data in Table 14 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which staff development efforts are planned to assist students
experiencing difficulty in skill areas. Because there is no statistically significant
difference in principals’ perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

Table 14

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and
Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to
Which Staff Development Efforts Are Planned to Assist
Students Experiencing Difficulty in Skill Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>MEAP Staff Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited Observed</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(8.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited Observed</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(16.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = .002, p$ value = .963.

H$_{3g}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in
summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited
elementary schools in regards to the extent to which an item analysis of the test is
done and weaknesses are immediately addressed to prepare for the next test.

The data in Table 15 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference
in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools
regarding the extent to which an item analysis of the test is done and immediate
preparation is made for the next test. Because there is no statistically significant
difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

H$_{3h}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in
summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited
Table 15

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which an Item Analysis of the Test is Done and Immediate Preparation Is Made for the Next Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>MEAP Item Analysis</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(11.1)</td>
<td>(3.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(19.9)</td>
<td>(7.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 1.995, p \text{ value} = .158.$

elementary schools in regards to the extent to which MEAP test results are shared with all staff.

The data in Table 16 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which MEAP test results are shared with staff. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

Student Preparation

$H_{4a}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which students are familiar with the item format of MEAP.
Table 16
A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which MEAP Test Results Are Shared With Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>MEAP Results Shared</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(14.3)</td>
<td>(.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(25.7)</td>
<td>(1.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = .187$, $p$ value = .666.

The data in Table 17 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding familiarity of the MEAP item format. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals’ perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

Table 17
A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding Familiarity With MEAP Item Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Familiarity With Items</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(9.3)</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(16.7)</td>
<td>(10.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = .224$, $p$ value = .636.
H₄₅: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which students are given practice with "MEAP-like" test items administered before the MEAP test.

The data in Table 18 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which students are given "MEAP-like" practice test items. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>MEAP Practice Test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(8.6)</td>
<td>(6.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(15.4)</td>
<td>(11.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. χ² = .078, p value = .780.

H₄₆: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which classroom tests are constructed to follow the kinds of questions on the MEAP.
The data in Table 19 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which classroom tests are constructed in MEAP-like question form. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

Table 19

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which Tests Are Constructed in MEAP-like Question Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Classroom Test in MEAP Format</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td>(9.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(10.3)</td>
<td>(16.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 2.297$, $p$ value = .130.

H$_{4d}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which students know what is expected of them on the MEAP.

The data in Table 20 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which students know of MEAP expectations. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals' perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

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Table 20

A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which Students Know MEAP Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Student Knowledge of MEAP</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(9.3)</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(16.7)</td>
<td>(10.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 3.240$, $p$ value = .072.

$H_{Ae}$: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals in summary accredited elementary schools as compared to principals in non-accredited elementary schools in regards to the extent to which there is a quiet, well-ventilated, and spacious room for testing.

The data in Table 21 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools regarding the extent to which the test environment is appropriate. Because there is no statistically significant difference in principals’ perceptions, this hypothesis is accepted.

Summary

When the data were run using the collapsed data design, 6 of the 18 hypotheses tested resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected and the alternate
Table 21
A Chi-square Test of Relationship Between Principals in Accredited and Non-accredited Elementary Schools Regarding the Extent to Which the Test Environment Is Appropriate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Classroom Environment</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(11.4)</td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Accredited</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>(20.6)</td>
<td>(6.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $\chi^2 = 1.412$, $p$ value = .235.

hypothesis being accepted. The other 12 hypotheses when tested resulted in the null hypothesis being accepted.

Hypotheses Relating to Curriculum

Based on the results of the chi-square test relating to MEAP and the hypotheses regarding curriculum alignment ($H_{2a}$), specific areas taught in the curriculum ($H_{2c}$), adequate resources ($H_{2d}$), and mastery of State Standards ($H_{2e}$), it was concluded that there is a difference when comparing the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools to these corresponding variables (see Tables 4, 6, 7, and 8).

Based on the results of the chi-square test relating to MEAP and the hypothesis regarding the written curriculum ($H_{2b}$), it was concluded that there is no significant difference when comparing the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools to these corresponding variables (see Table 5).
Hypotheses Relating to Instructional Strategies

Based on the results of the chi-square test relating to MEAP and the hypotheses regarding remediation time (H₃d), and classroom discussions and class work used to prepare students (H₃e), it was concluded that there is a difference when comparing the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools to these corresponding variables (see Tables 12 and 13).

Based on the results of the chi-square test relating to MEAP and the hypotheses regarding teaching MEAP skills (H₃a), incorporation of instructional strategies (H₃b), a process for determining what skills and strategies are taught (H₃c), staff development opportunities for staff to help students (H₃p), analysis of test items (H₃g), and test results shared with staff (H₃b), it was concluded that there is no significant difference when comparing the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools to these corresponding variables (see Tables 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16).

Hypotheses Relating to Student Preparation

Based on the results of the chi-square test relating to MEAP and the hypotheses regarding familiarity with the item format (H₄a), students being given “MEAP-like” practice test items before the test (H₄b), classroom test having similar construction as MEAP (H₄c), students being aware of expectations on the MEAP (H₄d), and the testing environment (H₄e), it was concluded that there is no significant difference when comparing the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited elementary schools to these corresponding variables (see Tables 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21).
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter V is a summary of the research study. A synopsis of the questions guiding the study is discussed, and recommendations for further study are suggested.

A Summary of Findings

This study attempted to address three focused interrelated questions:

1. Do principals in summary accredited elementary schools and principals in non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected curriculum strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP?

2. Do principals in summary accredited elementary schools and principals in non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected instructional strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP?

3. Do principals in summary accredited elementary schools and principals in non-accredited elementary schools significantly differ in their perceptions in regards to selected student preparation strategies being used to prepare students for the MEAP? Each question will be addressed separately.

Literature on effective schools supports the belief that curriculum and instruction are powerful factors in improving student achievement (Hunkins & Gehrke, 1985). The first question of this study addressed the area of curriculum. This
portion of the study investigated strategies regarding curriculum alignment, written curriculum, correlation between the areas covered on the assessment instrument and the regular classroom curriculum, availability of adequate resources, and a process within the curriculum that allows for mastery of skills.

The data revealed that there is a difference in the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited schools regarding curriculum alignment, specific areas covered on the assessment instrument and the regular classroom curriculum, availability of adequate resources, and student mastery of skills. It is advantageous for schools to provide activities/opportunities within the curriculum that support the achievement of students.

Regarding schools having a written curriculum, the data revealed no significant difference between principals in accredited and non-accredited schools. Having a written curriculum is standard practice.

Many states have curriculum requirements imposed by legislature and/or state departments of education. At the state level, decisions regarding content area standards, benchmarks, course offerings, and curriculum guides are available for school districts. The local board of education and or individual school districts determine what subjects are taught and the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that are essential at a specific grade level.

At the school level, the responsibility for determining the details of the content of the curriculum for the school should be assumed by the professional staff of the school under the leadership of the principal. The main focus areas addressed should include: (a) analyzing what subjects, topics, knowledge areas and skills are to be taught; (b) designing, developing, or modifying courses; (c) delivery of the curriculum (sequencing of courses and units, scheduling, availability of courses); and
(d) evaluation of the curriculum (congruence among course content areas, evaluation of student progress, and relevance of curriculum (Livingston, Castle, & Nations, 1989).

Principals should have a broad base of curriculum-related knowledge. Without it, they cannot provide the resources that staff members need to effectively carry out the mission of the school. School districts must also be supportive of the school’s efforts regarding curriculum and instruction by providing staff development opportunities that will enhance the learning experience for the students.

Since the statewide assessment instrument is based on the content areas of the state’s curriculum, it is advantageous for schools to align their curriculum with the state’s curriculum. This allows for continuity and balance, as well as consistency in the design and delivery of the curriculum.

Curriculum can described as simply what is taught in the school; instruction is the how of what is taught, the methods and techniques that assist students in their learning. The emphasis of instruction should be on student achievement. Instruction is the process by which the curriculum is shared/presented to the students.

As we address the second question regarding instructional strategies, this study sought information regarding: Are teachers teaching skills tested on the MEAP? Are teachers incorporating instructional strategies to improve MEAP scores? Is there a process in place to determine what skills are introduced, taught, and reinforced? Is their time for remediation of content skills? To what extent do classroom discussions and class work prepare students for the MEAP? Are there staff development opportunities to assist teachers in helping students who are having difficulty on the MEAP? Is there an item analysis of the test to determine weaknesses
and address those weaknesses in order to prepare students for the next test? To what extent are MEAP test results shared with staff?

The data revealed that there is a difference in the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited schools regarding having ample time for remediation and whether classroom discussions and class work are used to prepare students for the MEAP. Literature revealed that when schools/classrooms demonstrated skills in lesson planning, lesson implementation, student motivation, evaluation methods, cooperative learning, and individualization of instruction, students improved academically (Brown, 1998; Duke & Ritchhart, 1990).

The findings uncovered from the accredited and non-accredited principals' responses revealed no significant difference in the following areas: (a) teaching skills that are tested on MEAP; (b) incorporation of instructional strategies; (c) what skills are introduced, reinforced, and taught; (d) staff development opportunities for staff to help students; (e) analysis of test items; and (f) test results shared with staff. Literature revealed that opportunities for students to review materials, feedback to students, a variety of activities, and teaching methods impact student performance (Brown, 1998; Duke & Ritchhart, 1990).

The literature regarding effective schools identifies instructional leadership of the principal as a positive factor that contributes to student achievement (Cawelti, 1995; Gersten et al., 1982; Levine & Stark, 1982). Curriculum and instruction forces school administrators to look very carefully at not only what is taught in the school but how it is taught. Effective school leaders need to guide and support instructional activities.

The principal should encourage innovative teaching, which will foster a learning environment where teachers feel secure in being creative with instructional
strategies they employ to address improvement in student achievement. At the building level, the principal should stress the importance of teachers having a diversified system of instruction. This system should include skills in lesson planning, lesson implementation, student motivation, evaluation methods, cooperative learning, and individualization of instruction. The school leader needs to be aware of advances in instruction and learning theories that can be successfully applied in the classroom.

Students are faced with very taxing test schedules. Considerable amount of time is given to preparing students for this activity.

The third question regarding student preparation investigated areas relating to student familiarity with the MEAP format, student practice with “MEAP-like” test items, similar test construction between MEAP and classroom test, student awareness of test expectations, and the testing environment.

The data revealed that there is no difference in the responses of principals in accredited and non-accredited schools regarding student familiarity with the test format, students being given “MEAP-like” practice test items before the test, classroom tests with similar construction to the MEAP, student awareness of expectations on the MEAP, and the testing environment.

Often the annual assessment instrument is based on the state’s curriculum, so teachers spend a great deal of time teaching to the test because so much weight is placed on the students. Sometimes teacher creativity in the classroom is sacrificed in order to prepare students for the test. Students may spend hours practicing types of questions that might appear on the test and, as a result, are denied enrichment options. Depending on what teachers think will be emphasized on the test, they sometimes suspend regular instruction and spend time giving practice tests. Teachers
often feel obligated to set aside other subjects in order to teach test-taking skills (Neill & Medina, 1989).

Testing provides a valuable measure of instructional effectiveness. It can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of a school program, just as it reveals the strengths and weaknesses of an individual student. Assessing a student’s academic progress should follow a high-quality, balanced assessment system.

If testing is to remain the major vehicle by which educators assess student achievement, then the question must be asked: How do we help students become better prepared for taking tests and feel capable and confident about learning?

Recommendations for Further Study

In the continuing process of improving the quality of education, it is recommended that other studies be done that examine the relationship between school accreditation and strategies used to prepare students for the MEAP. A suggestion would be to include more demographic data regarding the principals in the study: to look at the educational level of the principals, the number of years in administration, and the number of years in the school to which they are currently assigned, as well as their curriculum and instruction knowledge level. Secondly, this study could gain new information if the pool of participants was increased. Thirdly, the inclusion of secondary principals as well as elementary principals would add to the credibility of the study. Finally, this study can be expanded to include principals of private, parochial, and chartered schools, as well as public school principals.
Summary

The findings of this study provided evidence to support the rejection of 6 of the 18 null hypotheses presented in this research. Specific differences between groups representing differences in perceptions of elementary principals in accredited and non-accredited schools were determined on the six variables where significant differences were found. The chi-square analysis findings were reviewed in this chapter.

Although there were some limitations found in this study, the findings have relevance for future curriculum and instructional planning in elementary schools. Information ascertained from this study's questions regarding curriculum, instructional strategies, and student preparation were addressed. Other research possibilities, which became evident as a result of this study, were discussed.
Appendix A

A Letter to Judges Regarding Development of Questionnaire
TO: Judges
Dr. Walter Burt
Dr. Sherry Collins
Dr. Andrea Smith
Diane Smolen
Chris Shawn
Phillip Babcock
Cheryl Edwards

FROM: Mattie Hampton
Researcher

RE: Refining the pool of questions for the Questionnaire

DATE: May 5, 1998

Thank you for agreeing to help me develop this questionnaire. Enclosed, please find a pool of questions for the questionnaire that I am developing to assess elementary principals perspectives on selected strategies for preparing students for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). The pool of questions are divided into three areas: Curriculum, Instructional Strategies and Student Preparation. As I explained, your job is to help me refine these questions.

If you feel I have omitted an essential question that should be considered, please feel free to add that question. Also, please feel free to correct the question grammatically if necessary. As experts in the field I greatly value your expert opinion.

Thank you very much for your time on this project.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (616) 247-7532 during the evening hours and (616) 771-2764 during the day.
Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire
Purpose: The purpose of this instrument is to gather the perceptions of elementary school principals regarding the curriculum and instructional strategies utilized to ensure maximum student performance on the MEAP test. Please check the box you feel most closely approximates your situation. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential, and names of individuals or school districts will not otherwise be released or reported. Thank you very much!

### Part 1 - Curriculum

This section is designed to determine the type of curriculum you have and the extent to which it is aligned with the Michigan's Core Curriculum. To what extent would you say:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a Very Great Extent</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not Very Much</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your school's curriculum is aligned with the Michigan Core Curriculum?</td>
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<td>Your school has a written curriculum.</td>
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<td>The specific areas covered on MEAP are taught in your applied curriculum.</td>
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<td>You have adequate resources at the district level that allow you to implement the curriculum in your school.</td>
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<td>The curriculum allows for student mastery of the State Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have any additional statements you would like to make regarding your school's curriculum that have not been addressed in the above questions?</td>
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MEAP TEST Questionnaire

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategies</th>
<th>To a Very Great Extent</th>
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<th>Not Very Much</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers are teaching skills that are tested on MEAP.</td>
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<td>Teachers are incorporating instructional strategies that would likely lead to increased MEAP scores.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a process in place that allows staff to determine what skills and strategies have been introduced, taught, and reinforced.</td>
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<td>There is ample time for remediation included in teaching the Math, Reading, and Science content skill standards.</td>
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<td>Classroom discussions and classwork are used to prepare students for the content of the MEAP.</td>
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<td>Staff development/retraining efforts are planned with consideration skill areas where students are experiencing the greatest amount of difficulty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>An item analysis is done of the test and the weaknesses are immediately addressed to prepare for the next test.</td>
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<td>Your school's MEAP results are shared with all staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have any additional statements you would like to make regarding your school's instructional strategies that have not been addressed in the above questions?</td>
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</table>
### MEAP TEST Questionnaire

**Part III - Student Preparation:** This section is designed to identify specifically what is done to prepare/accommodate students when taking the MEAP. To what extent would you say that:

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>To a Very Great Extent</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not Very Much</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students are familiar with the item format of MEAP.</td>
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<td>Students are given practice with MEAP; “MEAP-like” test items administered before the MEAP test.</td>
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<td>Classroom tests are constructed which follow the kinds of questions on the MEAP.</td>
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<td>Students know what is expected of them on the MEAP test.</td>
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<td>There is a quiet, well-ventilated, and spacious room for testing.</td>
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<td>In services are given to specifically address administration of the MEAP procedures.</td>
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<td>Do you have any additional statements you would like to make regarding your school’s student preparation methods that have not been addressed in the above questions?</td>
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Appendix C

Cover Letter to Principals
Dear Principal,

Being an educator for many years I have come to realize and appreciate the importance of student achievement. Therefore, out of respect for the education of our children, my desire for a dissertation has been to make a contribution to educational research that would help children in elementary schools.

This study will attempt to determine whether there are significant differences in the perception of principals in "summary" accredited elementary schools and principals in "non-accredited" elementary schools concerning strategies they employ to improve the performance of students on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP).

The attached questionnaire was developed from the input of numerous educators with backgrounds in elementary education. Information gathered from the questionnaire should help schools determine what strategies to put into practice to help improve student's performance on the MEAP. Also, information gathered from this questionnaire can be used to help educators in the decision-making process concerning the benefits of criterion-reference testing.

The average time required for principals piloting the questionnaire was 6-8 minutes. I would be very appreciative if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the enclosed stamped envelope before December 17th, 1999. Your responses will be kept anonymous, and no name of individual, school district or individual responses will be reported or otherwise released.

Results of the questionnaire will be made available to each individual participating in the study.

Respectfully yours,

Mattie Hampton  
Doctoral Student  
Western Michigan University
Appendix D

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Approval
Date: 5 November 1999

To: Charles Warfield, Principal Investigator
Mattie Hampton, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Sylvia Culp, Chair Sylvia Culp

Re: HSIRB Project Number 99-10-11

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “Public School Principals’ Perception of Strategies to Improve Student Performance on the MEAP in Accredited and Non-Accredited Elementary Schools” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: 5 November 2000
Appendix E

Principals' Responses to the Open-ended Questions
A Summary of the Principals’ Responses to the Open-ended Questions

The open-ended questions were optional. In analyzing the open-ended questions, the responses are grouped into categories: summary accredited and non-accredited. The principal’s responses are quoted for each category.

The first question the principals were asked was: “Do you have any additional statements you would like to make regarding your school’s curriculum that have not been addressed in the above questions?”

Summary Accredited:

1. “We are MEAP focused and MEAP driven from our district standards to classroom preparation.”
2. “Aligned also to the Standards and Benchmarks.”
3. “Our curriculum is constantly reviewed by teachers and administration and is changed as necessary.”
4. “Teachers feel more and more that the “test” is taking away their creative opportunities to teach.”

Non-Accredited:

1. “Each year we have made adaptations after analyses of the previous year’s MEAP!”
2. “Our curriculum is currently being aligned—we hope that this will help.”
3. “I believed that when the district set up the Early Childhood curriculum we watered down expectations!”
4. “Everything was ‘covered’ but there is so much to cover that teachers often feel they must move on before students have truly mastered the content.”
5. “We need curriculum that meets the need of ESL students.”
6. “Revised curriculum standards are being developed and scheduled to be released in mid-February 2000.”

The second question the principals were asked was: “Do you have any additional statements you would like to make regarding your school’s instructional strategies that have not been addressed in the above question?

Summary Accredited:

1. “Important that skills and strategies being taught are integrated and not taught in isolation.”
2. “Our current reading, math, science and social studies textbooks stress MEAP strategies also.”
3. "The test is driving all curriculum and instructional development."

Non-Accredited:

1. "Instructional strategies do not account for the language distracters and tricky questions that are used in this test."
2. "Teachers fell driven by the MEAP. The test has raised anxiety. Older teachers do display resistance."
3. "We have 30% move-in population-makes it difficult to keep track of what we miss."
4. "Teachers need staff development and material support."
5. "We’re making efforts to address the coordination of curriculum with MEAP style assessments."

The third question the principals were asked was: "Do you have any additional statements you would like to make regarding your school’s student preparation methods that have not been addressed in the above questions?

Summary Accredited:

1. "We begin test taking strategy instruction in first grade-same as kindergarten."
2. "To assure our consistent success we have to do a lot of the above (referring to items on the questionnaire)."

Non-Accredited:

1. "This prep time needs to be coordinated with teaching our existing standards and curriculum—not just ‘test prep.’ We need help with this on the district level."
2. "We really need to address the issue of increased pre-school education. High needs urban schools seem to always be trying to catch up from kindergarten on."
3. "We have MEAP after school tutoring 2 times a week starting the month before the test for at risk kids. We divide students into groups to take the test: Fast and Inaccurate (usually ADHD kids), Fast and Accurate, Slow and Inaccurate, and Slow and Accurate."
4. "The most difficult factor to address in any test-taking situation is student motivation."
5. "Teachers use MEAP Coach throughout the year to help prepare for MEAP testing."

Based on the responses from the principals of the accredited schools, the general consensus is that the MEAP test has impacted curriculum standards, benchmarks, and curriculum development. The daily curriculum teaches the concepts presented on the MEAP test. Student preparation for taking the MEAP is addressed,
beginning in the early grades. It is evident that a process is in place to ensure student success on the MEAP, and this process serves a positive function for staff and curriculum development.

Responses from principals of non-accredited schools reveal that schools are in the process of finding out what it takes to do well on the MEAP. Part of the process includes making curriculum adjustments based on the previous year's test results. Information was also shared that teachers have not completely adjusted to MEAP. There is still some anxiety from teachers about the MEAP test. It is felt that staff development options would be helpful in establishing a process to assist students with the MEAP. Teachers are overwhelmed about curriculum and instruction, student motivation, and teacher development.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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School tests: Comparisons are faulty, commitment to students isn’t. (1998, January 20). *The Detroit Free Press, p. 6A.*


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