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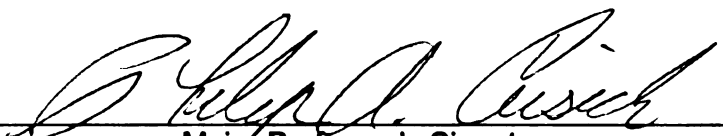
A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF RECENT LEGISLATION  
ON  
THE BEHAVIOR OF SCHOOLS  
AND  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

presented by

CHRISTOPHER COOPER

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF RECENT LEGISLATION  
ON  
THE BEHAVIOR OF SCHOOLS  
AND  
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By

Christopher Cooper

A DISSERTATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF RECENT LEGISLATION ON THE BEHAVIOR OF SCHOOLS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS**

**By**

**Christopher Cooper**

The purpose of this study was to describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. The research examined the opportunity and transaction costs of recent legislative reform efforts (No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25) on elementary schools and teacher behaviors, including additional time required for compliance.

A qualitative research design was employed to conduct semi-structured interviews with 24 elementary school teachers and 6 elementary principals from three different school districts in southeastern Michigan during the spring of 2004. Interviews questions were based upon four research questions: 1. What influence does legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25, and Education YES! have upon elementary teacher behavior?, 2. What influence does legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25, and Education YES! have upon the school organization?, 3. Has elementary teacher instruction changed fundamentally because of requirements mandated by NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES!?, and 4. How do local district support, teacher practice, teacher professional learning and testing requirements work together to advance reform policy at the elementary school level? Interviews were tape-recorded, coded and transcribed to detail responses from study participants. The interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method

(Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to create rich narratives describing the ways in which the school organization and elementary teacher activity has been influenced by the legislative reforms being studied.

Analysis of the data collected from participant interviews demonstrated a convergence of legislative influence upon six primary areas of elementary school and teacher behaviors. Respondents indicated that recent legislation had influenced reform of elementary teacher instructional practices, student assessment practices, professional time usage behaviors, student record keeping, teacher professional development and administrative behaviors. From the narratives, a model (see Appendix E) was created to depict the influence of No Child Left Behind and Education YES! upon elementary school and teacher behaviors.

Study respondents reported that recent legislative mandates have influenced elementary teacher and principal behaviors and the manner in which schools operate. Conclusions concerning the influences of No Child Left Behind and Education YES! legislation are presented and discussed in a supportive and expansive manner. The conclusions discuss the issues studied in the research project. At the time of the study, No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates had been operating in Michigan elementary schools for approximately two years. Due to the short duration of the legislation's implementation, there may be aspects of the study that require future research to determine the lasting influences of Education YES! and No Child Left Behind on elementary schools and teacher behaviors.

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**This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful wife Leann and to my twin sons Brett and Jack for their unending encouragement and support of my work. I would also like to dedicate this manuscript to my parents Ron and Monika Cooper for always believing in their son.**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Federal Involvement in Education

The study will describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. When the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed on April 11, 1965, it opened the way to more federal and state involvement in local education. ESEA legislation encouraged the thinking that large-scale government intervention could equalize educational opportunities by providing more educational resources. The ESEA extended federal financial assistance to 90% of all schools in the country. The objective of ESEA was to improve education and life opportunities for disadvantaged students through the establishment of Titles I, II and III. Title I of the ESEA provides the single largest package of federal aid to primary and secondary schools having a large concentration of students from low-income families. Title I funding exceeds eight billion dollars per year for numerous programs to meet the compensatory education needs of educationally deprived children (Carleton, 2002). Additional federal money is available through Title II of the ESEA which provides funding for the purchase of school library materials, and Title III allocates approximately \$100 million per year to fund supplementary education centers and services for at-risk students.

To receive funding under the ESEA, local districts must comply with federal health and safety, civil rights, and gender equity requirements. Additional conditions include participation and involvement of parents for ESEA compliance. The federal



government's vast educational expenditures through the ESEA make it financially advantageous for local districts to comply with the mandates and requirements specified. The initiation of ESEA was one of the first federal programs having the ability to influence the behavior of elementary schools and teachers. ESEA opened the door to increased federal involvement in education and other legislated acts followed.

In this study designed to describe federal and state legislation and its influence on schools and elementary teachers, the Bilingual Education Act was another landmark legislative act passed by the federal government. On January 2, 1968, the Bilingual Education Act provides federal funding for bilingual and other language-related programs in schools. The Bilingual Education Act funds training programs for staff who work with English-deficient students directs services for students classified as limited English proficient. Currently, the Bilingual Education Act directs over \$300 million per year to programs aimed at 3.4 million students with limited English proficiency. School districts requesting funding via the Bilingual Education Act must submit a series of applications and forms confirming the need for bilingual funds and agreeing to comply with the mandates of the act. The Bilingual Education Act was the first legislation having the ability to influence schools and elementary teachers in areas of school culture, language and cultural heritage.

Closely following the thinking of the ESEA and the Bilingual Education Act, Title IX, referred to as the Civil Rights Act of 1972, was the first federal legislation to address gender discrimination in education. The rights of female students, teachers and support staff are protected under Title IX, which prohibits illegal gender discrimination in educational institutions receiving federal funding. Currently, Title IX is applicable to

more than 16,000 school districts, 3,000 colleges and universities, and 5,000 libraries across the United States focusing on expanding educational programming and opportunities for women. Educational institutions receiving federal funding must be in compliance with Title IX. Since the early 1990s, schools that fail to comply with provisions of Title IX can be held liable for monetary damages. Each of the above legislative acts allow for greater governmental influence in the educational community.

The federal government's expanding role in equalizing educational outcomes for all students led to the enactment of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act on November 29, 1975. This act significantly changed the way disabled students were treated in American schools. Renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), this legislation mandates that all children, regardless of handicap or disability, are guaranteed a free and appropriate public education. The IDEA is centered around 6 principles: 1) no student may be rejected, regardless of disability, 2) all disabled students must be given a nondiscriminatory evaluation to determine their educational needs, 3) every special education student must have a written individualized education plan (IEP) which includes their current level of performance, program goals, and an evaluation system, 4) handicapped students must be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and integrated with non-disabled children as much as possible, 5) parents must have access to due process rights if they do not agree with school decisions, and 6) parents can and must participate in the IEP process by attending meetings, signing forms and having access to student records. The six principles indicated above aid in empowering parents of special needs children and allowing parental participation in planning for their disabled child's education. Heward and Orlansky (1992) note that

changes in the IDEA now require local school districts to provide transition services for disabled students from school to further education, independent living and training opportunities. The IDEA established a new level of federal involvement in local schools including changes to classroom structure, teaching methods, school administration and funding.

The expanding federal role in local education, demonstrated above, now includes acts governing special education, school finance, gender equity, bilingual education and socio-economic status. This increase in federal involvement in local districts produced a need for an organization to manage programs mandated by educational legislation. On October 17, 1979, the Department of Education Organization Act was passed creating the United States Department of Education. In 1999, the Department of Education was responsible for administering over 175 federal programs having an annual budget of \$34.5 billion. The Department of Education Organization Act is a clear illustration of the expanding authority of federal government influence on schools and elementary teachers.

The late 1980s produced a continuation of the expanding federal role in school districts with legislation governing different segments of local education without addressing the education of gifted and talented students. In 1988, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act was passed to create a coordinated program of scientifically based research, demonstration projects, innovative strategies, and similar activities designed to build and enhance the ability of elementary and secondary schools to meet the special education needs of gifted and talented students (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). The Javits legislation extended federal influence into the domain of gifted and talented students. Under the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act,

the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) may distribute awards to state and local education agencies ranging from \$200,000 to \$500,000 per year. In the 2003 fiscal year, appropriations by the OESE are expected to be in excess of eleven million dollars. With the addition of the gifted and talented legislation, the federal government extended its influence into another segment of schools.

Since the publication of “A Nation At Risk” in 1983, the federal government had been looking for a way to develop the scope of national educational reform more broadly. On March 31, 1994, the Educate America Act (Goals 2000) was passed establishing educational reform as a national concern and priority. Goals 2000 designated a set of specific educational goals, a national curriculum and student performance standards for the United States. The Educate America Act requires a cooperative effort among the federal and state governments by providing a framework, resources and flexibility to states and schools. Under Goals 2000, federal and state governments can act together in pursuit of systemic educational change and improvement through a program with goals such as graduation rates, student competence, literacy, parental participation and drug-free schools (Carleton, 2002). While participation in Goals 2000 is voluntary, local districts that meet the requirements mandated by the act are eligible to receive grants toward reform efforts. State education reform efforts totaled in excess of \$400 million in 1998. The Educate America Act is another example of the growth of the federal government’s control in local education through legislation that may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior.

Beginning with ESEA in 1965 and continuing through Goals 2000, the federal government passed legislation that has become more specific and restrictive in their

mandates toward schools and elementary teachers. This study will describe current federal and state legislation and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), titled No Child Left Behind, is an example of recent legislation passed by the federal government. On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind into law. The objective of No Child Left Behind is to close the achievement gaps between students of different demographic groups. These groups include students who are of different genders, belong to minority groups, have disabilities, limited English proficiency, or coming from families in lower socioeconomic groups (US Department of Education, 2003c). No Child Left Behind is possibly the boldest piece of federal legislation ever to affect public schools, for it presses the idea that all children can achieve high standards of learning if given the right tools.

To better understand the sections covered under the No Child Left Behind legislation, Friedrich (2002) dissects the law into four reform principles: accountability for students' academic achievement, local control of federal education dollars, parental involvement, and the implementation of scientifically proven programs and teaching methods. At the start of the 2002 school year, No Child Left Behind legislation mandated that each state was responsible for creating their own academic standards for determining what every child in grades pre K-12 should learn in reading and mathematics for elementary, middle and high schools. Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, states must add science standards to those established for reading and math. Student progress in these subject areas will be monitored by standardized tests as chosen by the state. By the end of the 2002-2003 school year, assessments must be administered to each student

at least once in grade spans 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12 for reading and math; with science assessments following the end of the 2007-2008 year (US Department of Education, 2003b). These testing standards suggest a greater governmental influence on schools and elementary teacher behavior.

The No Child Left Behind legislation contains some of the most specific and restrictive language for the federal government's administering programs and oversight of the act. Districts that fail to comply with the mandates specified by No Child Left Behind may face a series of administrative, personnel or financial sanctions. One specific sanction provides that students in failing schools may transfer to other schools within the district, while the district provides and bears additional costs, including transportation for these students. Other sanctions require replacement of the staff at failing schools or allowing a state takeover of the school not making progress per No Child Left Behind. The severity and specific nature of these sanctions may radically influence a local district's operating dynamics and elementary teacher behavior.

A review of federal legislation affecting the educational system during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrates a trend of policy decisions expanding the purview of the federal government over schools and classroom teachers. These federal policy decisions appear to have a basic premise in mind, to equalize outcomes for students and school districts, while improving educational quality. Currently, the federal government has passed legislation governing school finance, socio-economic status reform, gender equity, educational reform frameworks, education for special needs students, as well as continual school improvement through testing and professional development. Carleton (2002) explains the expanding involvement of the federal government:

The federal role in education has only been expanded, therefore, in particular areas of clear need; to bend the principle of localism, federal expansion must be strongly justified. Over the years, only four rationales or areas of national concern have consistently justified federal expansion: the promotion of higher education, the needs of national defense, civil rights and expanded access to education, and improving educational quality. (p. 5)

In attempting through legislation to equalize outcomes and improve educational quality, the federal interventions discussed above have become continually more specific and restrictive, culminating with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. These legislative acts, which establish standards and mandates, may be viewed as producing legislative elements influencing the behaviors of schools and elementary teachers specifically.

#### State Involvement in Education

As well as increased federal scrutiny, schools and elementary teachers have been subject to increased state scrutiny. Since 1965, there have been a series of policy decisions expanding the involvement of the federal and government over local school districts and classroom teachers. The State of Michigan has increased its role in managing local districts and classroom teachers by passing legislation, which in many cases, expands existing federal legislation. The State of Michigan received its impetus in the late 1960s, when the federal government began funding its programs by sending the money directly to the states. Individual states were permitted to draw 5 percent off the top of the federal funds for administration expenses and then disburse the remainder to local districts. Peters (1997) argues the push for state involvement in school reform policy began in Michigan under the guidance of State Superintendent John Porter. Dr. Porter is described as the forefather of the educational reform plan in Michigan while

serving as the State Superintendent for Public Instruction from 1969-1979. He initiated efforts to bring financial and educational reform to Michigan schools.

Porter had a vision for giving public schools in Michigan a means of identifying, directing, enforcing, and evaluating a quality educational program. To facilitate his vision, Porter employed the "Six-Step Accountability Model" designed in 1968. This model consisted of six steps, creating a quality educational program including goals, objectives, needs assessment, a delivery system, evaluation, and reporting status to the public. In 1969, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) began as the first initiative of the six-step model. Peters (1997) describes the role of the state:

State policy-makers felt that, without a push, local districts were not going to solve the education problems. All programs, laws, and reform elements since 1969 have been related in one way or another to MEAP and the continuation of performance-based education. (p. 18-19)

Six years after the federal Bilingual Education Act was enacted, the State of Michigan passed Public Act 294 in 1974. P.A. 294 surpassed the guidelines set by the federal government by mandating that schools with 20 or more students were required to institute a bilingual program. The State of Michigan enacted Public Act 451 just 18 months after the federal government had passed the Education For All Handicapped Children Act (IDEA). The requirements of P.A. 451 exceeded the standards established under IDEA by making special education programs mandatory in Michigan public schools. Five years after A Nation At Risk was published in 1983, Donald Bemis became the State School Superintendent for Michigan. During his tenure, Bemis worked to pass legislation regarded as a solidification of reform efforts. Bemis, wanting to continue the work of his two predecessors, Dr. Philip Runkel and Dr. John Porter, proposed legislation that supported the Michigan Educational Assessment Program



(MEAP) as well as using the "Six-Step Accountability Model" (goals, objectives, needs assessment, delivery system, evaluation, and public reporting). As a culmination of Bemis' "Quality Plan", Michigan's Public Act 25 was passed in 1990 and is considered a significant step taken by the State of Michigan toward education reform (Peters, 1997). The reform efforts mandated by Public Act 25 further demonstrate the expanding control of the State of Michigan regarding local districts and classroom teachers.

Public Act 25 is referred to as the Quality Issues Package and was designed to establish a legislative framework for statewide school improvement. Some of the ideas for Public Act 25 came from "A Blueprint for Action" (Michigan State Board of Education, 1984), however, Public Act 25 extended these ideas and combined them with an accountability model that contained financial consequences for non-compliance.

Scheerhorn (1995) notes:

The realignment of standards forced schools to redefine their curricula to meet the state mandates in order to prevent the loss of critical funding incentives (the quality incentive of \$25/student was added for full compliance with the requirements of P.A. 25) in an era of diminished state financial support of local schools. (p. 64)

Addressed in the Quality Issues Package were sections regarding accreditation of schools, core curricula to be implemented in schools, annual reporting for districts and requirements for district and individual building school improvement teams to involve stakeholders (Michigan Legislature, 1990). Stephens (1994) described the theory of

Public Act 25 in four sections:

1. the school improvement plan as the process for change, 2. the core curriculum as the content of change, 3. accreditation as the verification of the change, and 4. the annual education report as the communication of change. (p. 78-79)

The legislative acts passed by the state enhancing federal legislation reinforce the concept of governmental interventions influencing schools and elementary teacher behaviors.

Two months after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed, the Michigan State Board of Education approved Education YES!- A Yardstick for Excellent Schools in accordance with section 1280 of the Revised School Code and under its authority under Article VIII, Section 3 of the Michigan Constitution (Education YES!, 2002) . This state directive is designed to attain rigorous, challenging and focused standards. Many of the provisions of Education YES! align with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. The authors of Education YES! advocate a public education system that is intended to provide all students the following: (1) academic skills and knowledge to succeed in today's global, information age economy, higher education, the armed services, and other post K-12 opportunities; (2) an excellent grounding in the history, principles and form of our political system of self-government and constitutional liberty, and the ability to fully and thoughtfully participate in political activities and elections; (3) an excellent understanding of history, civics, political science and conflict resolution; (4) a broad cultural exposure, including comprehension of the arts, humanities, and the classics; and (5) the opportunity to participate in community involvement, including volunteering, social studies and character development, membership in community associations, clubs and organizations, athletics, student mentoring and similar activities (Education YES!, 2002) .

The objective of the Michigan State Board of Education is to accomplish their vision and purpose with what they describe as a fair, challenging, and supportive accreditation system to help all schools be good schools. The Michigan accreditation

system, as described in the Education YES! document, is based upon three standards that focus on every school working with every child (the same premise as No Child Left Behind): (1) all Michigan elementary and middle school children will read independently and use math to solve problems at grade level; (2) all Michigan students will experience a year of academic growth for a year of instruction; and (3) all Michigan high school students, in addition to demonstrating high academic achievement, will have an individual education plan leading them to be prepared for success (Education YES!, 2002). The State of Michigan will evaluate these standards by measuring the adequate yearly progress (AYP) of each school and district through school improvement measures and students' scores on the Michigan Educational Assessment Profile (MEAP) tests. Education YES! provides specific and restrictive mandates for how AYP is to be calculated and various sanctions for schools failing to meet the requirements. Education YES! in combination with other state educational legislative actions may be the most direct example of the State of Michigan's expanding scope over local districts and classroom teachers. A review of current state law affecting schools suggests specific and restrictive standards that may have influenced the conduct and behavior of schools and elementary teachers.

### Results of Legislative Actions

A study of educational policy decisions since 1965 has shown several trends among federal and state legislation enacted. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 began a movement in thinking that large-scale government intervention could equalize educational opportunities by providing more educational

resources. This development encouraged a gradual increase in the federal and state involvement regarding schools and classroom teachers, and continued through the No Child Left Behind and Education YES! acts of 2002. Federal and state legislative acts regarding education have been written with a common focus; to equalize educational outcomes, while improving education for all students. To accomplish these common aims, governmental interventions have become increasingly more specific about requirements mandated and more restrictive about sanctions levied for noncompliance. The mandates specified by existing legislation have progressively moved down the organization to the point where individual schools and teachers may feel the expanding presence of both the state and federal government in local education.

Federal and state educational legislative mandates faced scrutiny when James Coleman and colleagues published *Equality of Educational Opportunity* in 1966. In a study of student achievement variance, Coleman analyzed 600,000 students and 60,000 teachers in over 4,000 schools. The results of the study suggested that the quality of schooling a student receives accounts for only about 10 percent of the variance in student achievement. Coleman's research indicated that the remaining 90 percent of variance in student achievement was influenced by a student's natural ability or aptitude, the socioeconomic status of the student and the student's home environment (Coleman et al, 1966). In 1972, Jencks and colleagues reexamined the data collected by Coleman and published *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effects of Family and Schooling in America*. The conclusions reached by Jencks and associates corroborated Coleman's earlier findings. Jencks (1972) notes:

Most differences in...test scores are due to factors that schools do not control.  
(p. 109)

The Jencks study claimed that schools do little to lessen the gap between rich and poor students, nor the gap between more and less able students. Jencks (1972) also contended that student achievement is primarily a function of the background of the student and little evidence exists that educational reform can improve a school's influence on student achievement.

Both Coleman and Jencks came to the conclusion that the effects of schooling were small and educational reform could do little to counter inequality. Researchers began to scrutinize the results of Jencks and Coleman and noticed some serious flaws in the conclusions. Although Coleman (1966) claimed that schools had very little impact on student achievement, he did note that teacher differences and the quality of teachers showed more of a relationship to the variation in student achievement. Sanders and Horn (1994) conducted research on student achievement and noted that the individual classroom teacher has even more of an effect on student achievement than originally thought. Wright, Horn and Sanders (1997) concur with these findings and mention:

Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels, regardless of the heterogeneity in their classrooms. (p. 63)

Research conducted since Coleman and Jencks has shown that individual teachers can have an influential effect upon their students' achievement even if the school does not. This line of thinking makes sense because within schools, there is variation in the quality of instruction from one teacher to another. Despite the caveats by Coleman and Jencks, the thrust of improving achievement via school reform persists. Legislation such as No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25 seem to agree with this paradigm shift as schools and teachers are held accountable for the education of every child under these legislative mandates. Being held accountable for the success of each child under

Education YES!, Public Act 25 and No Child Left Behind may influence schools and elementary teacher behavior.

The No Child Left Behind and Education YES! acts, as well as Public Act 25, are three of the most current legislative acts that are more specific and restrictive. Requirements of the legislative acts are described, in depth, on over 1,000 pages of legislative text meant to take the guesswork out of administration. Education YES! and NCLB clearly spell out explicit sanctions for not achieving annual yearly progress (AYP) and failure to meet the compliance requirements of the acts. Public Act 25 mandates that all Michigan public school districts participate in school improvement and accreditation processes and contains specific penalties for failure to participate. The current movement of the federal and state governments toward more specific and restrictive legislation governing the educational enterprise may change the way schools and elementary teachers conduct business. The study will explain how those efforts may have influenced the behavior of schools and elementary teachers.

### Organizational Theory

Current legislative reforms, such as PA 25, No Child Left Behind and Education YES!, will most likely cause changes in the educational system. Many of the changes are attempts by governmental authorities to tighten up the educational enterprise by means of a more overt bureaucratic system. The principles of organizational theory that underlay federal and state decision-making will be studied and elementary teachers' actions described in response to legislative mandates. Weber (1946) described bureaucracies as being ideally designed to control and systematize personnel on a large scale.

Bureaucracies provide a way to systematize the school organization in a rational, honest and efficient structure that has technical superiority over other forms of organizations. Weber's ideas regarding a bureaucratic structure's limitation of organizational behaviors are a result of having written rules of conduct and standardized procedures based upon official documents. Public school organization is built around a cohesive and systemic framework that has fixed and official jurisdictional areas structured through a hierarchy with levels of graded authority. Each level of the organizational hierarchy has graded levels of responsibility and are accountable for their charges. Officials who make organizational decisions that are impersonal and best for the entire organization govern the school bureaucracy. The school bureaucracy is driven by both federal and state mandates, and therefore must stay in compliance with current legislation or face dire consequences. The requirements mandated by federal and state legislative acts have expanded the educational bureaucracy, thus creating more rules, procedures and organizational documents. In turn, it can be stated that the legislation may have significantly influenced elementary teacher and organizational behavior by the expansion of the educational bureaucracy.

The responsibilities of each hierarchical subgroup within the organization have limited tasks and specialized workers. Durkheim (1893) describes worker specialization as the division of labor that affords the educational structure productive power. Simon (1997) describes the organization as a system in equilibrium, and to keep the organization efficient, all employees must contribute, as whole group participation is the controlling determinant for efficiency. Within the educational organization, workers have thorough and expert training in their specific fields that enable them to perform their

responsibilities and keep the bureaucracy moving ahead. Accommodations made by workers in educational organizations revolve around the limited resources allocated within the organization. The expansion of the school bureaucracy by federal and state legislative acts will trickle down to the elementary teacher and the additional demands concerning expectations, standards, and responsibilities may have directly influenced their performance and the behavior of each.

No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25 have considerably expanded the educational bureaucracy with specific requirements and restrictive mandates. The expansion of the educational organization, required by the legislation, may reallocate elementary teacher time and opportunity cost to stay in compliance with legislative directives. Simon (1997) proposes two questions that frame the discussion of reallocated instructional time:

If a particular end is to be realized at a given time, what alternative ends must be relinquished for that time? If a particular end is to be realized at a given time, how does this limit the ends that may be realized at other times? (p. 76)

Simon's questions demonstrate the rational decision-making process posed in an organization that is structured to limit behaviors. Whether it is time required for direct instruction, planning, collaboration, or communication, time is clearly one of the scarcest resources within the educational organization's structure. Rozycki (2001) describes the dangers of continually adding organizational requirements to the school day:

Politically popular statewide testing programs, from the teacher's perspective an organizational activity, inevitably reduce instructional time, because socialization needs do not shrink when standardized testing are administered. Indeed, one might expect greater demands for socialization activities to develop- exerting, consequently, additional pressure for reduction of instructional activities. (p. 158)



Flinders (1989) argues that time has become even more limited due to competing demands from legislative requirements, and that elementary teachers and the organization have to make choices as to the most efficient and productive ways in which to use time. It is anticipated that the study results will agree with the findings demonstrated in the review of literature as it concerns the allocation of elementary teacher time. It is possible that elementary teachers will realize the increase of demands made by state and federal legislation will compete for their time and thus their behavior, instruction and preparation may have changed.

The study will describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. Current legislative mandates may have influenced elementary teacher use of time from different perspectives, and thus time will be a key unit of measure for the study. Elementary teacher instructional time, lesson preparation time, time spent in collegial meetings, time spent on professional development, time spent attending to new job requirements, and time spent with parents are all elements that together, make time a key unit of measure. The research questions have been designed to provide information on how elementary teacher behavior may have been influenced from a perspective involving time.

Elementary teachers and the school organization make choices among competing values described by a set of indifference curves (Simon, 1997). The indifference curves designate which sets of possible consequences are comparable to each other or mutually indifferent as alternatives. Simon (1997) describes the process of rational choices within the organization:

Almost all human beings have the feeling, at one time or another, that there are more things that they would like to do than there is time to do them. That is, there are more possible stimuli for behavior than could be acted out if they were all simultaneously present to the attention. Rationality demands that a conscious choice be made among competing "goods" instead of leaving the choice to the caprice of the attention-directing stimuli. (p. 103)

Legislative requirements, lesson planning, parent correspondences, classroom instruction and other job duties all vie for the limited time resources available from elementary teachers. From the list of competing demands within the limiting organizational structure, teachers must make choices and some demands may be deleted (Flinders, 1989). When objectives are forced upon teachers, in the case of legislative mandates, organizational goals become internalized and limited time resources dictate that behaviors are affected and opportunity cost demands that some choices be relinquished. This concept may be applicable to schools and elementary teacher behaviors.

School organizations do not have complete control over cause and effect relationships that ensure the stability of the structure. Thompson (1967) describes this phenomenon as the organization having a soft technical core. The soft technical core afforded by the existing school structure requires schools to establish firm expectations by controlling the environment around the bureaucracy as much as possible. School organizations work hard to buffer environmental influences by surrounding the technical core with behavior limiting input and output components (Thompson, 1967). One such component is the lobbying mechanism that schools employ to gain input to legislative mandates such as No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25, to ensure a continued flow of resources into the system and keep the organization in equilibrium.

When new legislation mandates change the educational structure of schools, elementary teachers find themselves in the midst of a policy game. Firestone (1989) uses

the policy game metaphor to describe the creation and disposition of public policy. When involved in the policy game, players (teachers, administrators, parents and students) attach a different meaning to the policy based upon how the requirements affect them. According to Stephens (1994), winning the policy game for teachers means making minimal change to what they are doing in their classrooms. When describing the behavior limiting functions of the school structure, Simon (1997) agrees:

Attention and behavior, once initiated in a particular direction, tend to persist in that direction for a considerable interval of time... Activity very often results in "sunk costs" of one sort or another that make persistence in the same direction advantageous. (p. 105)

It is anticipated that mandates required by recent legislation will cause a change in elementary teacher behavior, however, the study will measure whether these legislative acts actually influence and modify schools and elementary teacher behavior.

To avoid potential non-compliance sanctions imposed by No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25, it is projected that schools and districts have revised or adopted new policies and procedures. The organization's administration acts impersonally by making decisions that benefit the most students, while following guidelines from official documents and regulations established by the educational structure. The behavior-limiting structure of schools reflects the way teachers behave within the organization. The graded hierarchy, standard procedures, and official written documents of schools indicate the magnitude of incentives for employee participation within the organization. Information flows up the chain of command in schools and directives filter down. In the case of legislative mandates, school organizations exercise authority over teachers, thus affecting teaching behaviors and requiring compliance. The federal and state Departments of Education hold authority over local districts, which in

turn hold authority over the teachers. The school organization limits behaviors by enforcing teacher responsibility in connection with legislative requirements, making knowledgeable decisions regarding implementation of legislative mandates, and coordinating the implementation through the school structure (Chubb & Moe, 1990). The study will examine how the behavior-limiting framework of educational systems are affected by No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25 and cause a trickle-down effect, thus potentially modifying elementary teacher behaviors in terms of time reallocated for compliance activities and opportunity cost.

The educational organization has a cohesive and systemic structure that provides rules and procedures for daily business operations. Today's educational enterprise is over a billion-dollar a year venture that requires efficiency, strong resource procurement and allocation, and solid expectations to meet the needs of today's students. By providing necessary resources in a systemic manner, the educational bureaucracy limits the behaviors of individuals working within the organization's structure (Cusick, 1983). In this manner, an individual's behavior within the educational organization directly reflects the way the organization is managed. The purpose of this study is to describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. The educational organization affects elementary teacher behavior, and it can be stated that an expanding bureaucracy, caused by mandates from No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25, may have significantly influenced schools and elementary teacher activity.

## Educational Policy Implementation

Since 1965 the American educational enterprise has experienced remarkable developments with regard to educational policy implementation. Spillane and Jennings (1997) describe current trends in school reform as being centered on ensuring more ambitious instruction for all students and crafting more coherent and closely aligned policies that will support this ambitious instruction. Recent legislation such as No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25 all demand increased student performance delivered through improved instruction. A number of common findings have emerged from recent research regarding the relationship between reform policy and teacher practice. The first collective belief describes teachers as the main agents when it comes to changing classroom instruction through policy (Spillane, 1999; Cohen, 1990; McLaughlin, 1987, 1990). Cohen and Hill (2000) describe the importance of teacher practice as an intervention:

...teachers' practices are a crucial intervening factor, for if instructional reform were to affect most students, it would mainly be through teachers' practice. (p. 296)

New educational policy implementation depends largely upon whether or not classroom teachers are putting into practice, the objectives of reformers. Putting into practice new reform ideas may influence schools and elementary teacher behavior.

A second common conclusion resulting from a review of recent research on educational policy implementation indicates that for teachers to meet the requirements of new policies, teaching practices must change fundamentally (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Spillane & Jennings, 1997; Cohen & Barnes, 1993; Weiss, 1990). Policy makers strive to attain a change in teacher practices through policy initiatives that focus on manipulating

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various aspects of instruction including teachers' practice, assessment and curriculum. Cohen and Barnes (1993) suggest that if policy makers are to get to the core reform ideas, teachers must raise questions about current practices, discard many deeply rooted understandings of teaching and learning and focus on the construction of alternative practices to meet policy objectives. In writing the foreword for Jennings' (1996) work on policy at work in classrooms, Cohen describes the paradox of fundamentally changing teacher instruction:

Teachers and other education professionals are the chief problem, because they stand in the way of better instruction for children. But teachers and other education professionals also are the chief solution to the problem, for it is difficult to imagine how most students' learning could be improved unless educators become the agents of improvement. Learning would seem to be the solution to this problem – that is, the new policies would only work if teachers and other education professionals learned a great deal and remade their practice. (p. vii)

Spillane and Zeuli (1999) describe changing teacher practices as one of the most difficult challenges of reform policy, and Cohen and Hill (2000) note the failure of central policies to shape practice in street-level agencies such as local schools. Herein lies the challenge for educational policy writers, writing reform policies that will fundamentally change teacher instruction. No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25 have the ability to fundamentally influence schools and elementary teacher behavior.

The answer to the challenge of fundamentally changing teacher instruction lies within the third shared belief for policy implementation. To fundamentally change teacher practices, educators need frequent opportunities to connect policy and practice via professional learning (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Spillane, 1999). In a study of how reform changed teacher practices at a southern California elementary school, Barnes (2002) writes:

...both teachers and school leaders at Mission Elementary needed extended opportunities to learn a new common language and the conceptual foundation underlying reforms. (p. 137)

Cohen and Hill (2000) assert that when reform policies are focused on teacher learning, and opportunities for professional learning are abundant, teaching practices and student performance are likely to improve. Spillane (1999) adds:

...the potency of 'external' incentives and opportunities for learning and changing the core of practice is dependent in great part on teachers' zones of enactment. Enactment zones serve a powerful mediating function between reform initiatives and practice. (p. 170)

The term, zones of enactment, is used to refer to the space in which teachers make sense of and operationalize for their own practice, the ideas advanced by reformers. Teachers' zones of enactment facilitate fundamental change of instructional practices when teachers have ongoing opportunities to deliberate with colleagues regarding instruction and reform. Additionally, instructional reform is more likely to occur when teacher deliberations are grounded in understanding reform as opposed to policy edict only. Fundamental change in teacher practice relative to reform objectives requires that teachers' enactment zones extend beyond their individual classroom (Spillane, 1999). Current research supports the notion that when teachers are given multiple opportunities to learn and practice alternative instruction, teaching practices can be altered fundamentally.

A fourth common principle advanced by recent policy research indicates that school districts play an influential role in the local implementation of instructional policy reform (Spillane, 2002, 1999). McDonnell and Elmore (1987) suggest that to truly change teacher practice, local bureaucratic control and accountability mechanisms are



needed in support of frequent opportunities for professional learning. Spillane (2002)

agrees, noting:

In the segmented and decentralized American educational system, many governmental and nongovernmental agencies provide support and sometimes apply pressure to guide teachers' practice. Pressure, though necessary, is believed to be insufficient for local implementation. Support is essential, and the local work setting, because of its proximity to the classroom, is possibly the most influential environment with respect to teacher support. (p. 378)

Local districts interpret policy reform and also create local policies, procedures and curriculum that are designed to guide the change of instructional practices. By interpreting federal and state policy and providing support to teachers, local districts play a significant role in reform policy implementation. Recent legislation such as Public Act 25, Education YES! and No Child Left Behind demand the attention of school district administration. These legislative acts may force local districts to create policies and procedures to meet the mandates within.

A final common belief emerging from the review of recent policy literature maintains that testing is the instrument through which policy is monitored (Hillocks, 2002; Madaus, 1988). Many Americans equate test scores with education. Michigan's MEAP tests draw correlations throughout the state regarding the quality of school districts. Testing pervades our culture, and because of this, tests are frequently used to monitor reform policy at the local level. Hillocks (2002) concurs citing President George Bush:

Without testing, reform is a journey without a compass. Without testing, teachers and administrators cannot adjust their methods to meet high goals. Without testing, standards are little more than scraps of paper. Without testing, true competition is impossible. Without testing, parents are left in the dark. (p. 11)

The current reform policies being studied, No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25, all have accountability measures that depend on test scores to demonstrate student achievement. Madaus (1988) states that researchers have known for a long time that testing drives the school curriculum. Because curriculum drives teacher instruction, testing, curriculum and teacher practices are woven together as elements of policy reform and dependent upon each other. The accountability measures mandated by recent reform legislation may influence school and elementary teacher behavior by creating new demands for successful test-taking preparation.

Public Act 25, Education YES! and No Child Left Behind are not three discrete acts, but rather reform policies that follow a certain line of thinking. All three policies are complex documents that contain the common elements found in recent policy level research. The common beliefs emerging from recent reform research indicate that 1) teachers are the key agents of reform, 2) teacher practice must change fundamentally to meet the requirements of new policies, 3) teachers require opportunities to attend authentic professional learning sessions in order to change their instruction fundamentally, 4) the local district plays an influential role in the implementation of educational policy, and 5) testing is the instrument through which educational policy is monitored. The five common policy beliefs included in Education YES!, No Child Left Behind and Public Act 25 have the potential to influence schools and elementary teacher behaviors. The common findings mentioned above are incorporated into the design of the dissertation research and have been used to develop the research questions below.

## **Research Questions**

From previous research, it is known that teachers learn their practice through a variety of methods including an apprenticeship of observation, college coursework, and in-class teaching practice. Teachers learn their practice before they start the job and after they have been on the job. There is a large amount of organizational learning that teachers do to acclimate to the school enterprise and meet the requirements of legislation that affect elementary educators.

Though the research is vast, many questions regarding teacher learning and development (within organizational contexts) have yet to be answered. Teachers develop a perspective regarding methods for handling volumes of new information, and employ strategies to discern what to believe and how to behave. Current research concerning educational policy implementation indicates that teachers are the key agents in reform and their practice must change fundamentally to meet requirements mandated by educational policies. Research has also demonstrated that providing teachers multiple opportunities for professional learning regarding policy implementation at the local level is problematic, and the cause of many central policy failures. The following questions are posed to guide the collection of data for this study:

What influence do legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25, and Education YES! have upon elementary teacher behavior?

What influence do legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25, and Education YES! have upon the school organization?

Has elementary teacher instruction changed fundamentally because of requirements mandated by NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES!?

How do local district support, teacher practice, teacher professional learning and testing requirements work together to advance reform policy at the elementary school level?

### Methodology

The focus of this study is to describe Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind, and Education YES! and to determine the influence of these legislative reforms upon schools and elementary teacher behaviors. Due to the nature of the research questions, qualitative research methods were preferred over quantitative techniques. Qualitative research methods were selected because of their propensity to produce a rich, thick description of people, places, and conversations not easily handled with statistics (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Examination of various current qualitative research methods revealed that using a semi-structured interview technique would be best suited for this study because such interviews are capable of providing inductive, descriptive data while drawing meaning in a complex subject matter.

Patton (1988) suggests that the semi-structured interview format allows specification of topics and issues to be covered in advance, however the interviewer may decide the sequence and wording of the questions during the course of the interview. Using an outline during a semi-structured interview increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection systematic for each respondent. The format of the semi-structured interview remains conversational and situational, and logical gaps in data collection can be anticipated (Patton, 1988). The flexibility and unrestricted characteristics of the semi-structured interview make it a good choice for the nature of the study conducted.

Elementary teacher and principal participants were interviewed for approximately 60-75 minutes during the 2004 school year. Interviews were conducted at the respondents' schools during regular school hours and were tape-recorded with the consent of the respondent. Regarding the tape-recording of participants for qualitative research studies, Whyte (1984) notes:

Informants are likely to talk more for the record with the machine than without, even when they have been told that the interviewer is going to write up the interview later. Where the interviewer has strong rapport, informants may accept the machine with little hesitation, but in the early stages of the study its introduction may damage rapport. (p. 114)

Comprehensive fieldnotes were taken during interviews and, in following best practices in fieldwork research, expanded fieldnotes were added to the raw data upon completion of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Sanjek, 1990; Seidman, 1991). After being carefully coded, tape-recorded interviews were transcribed for further analysis using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). An individualized copy of the transcribed interview was e-mailed to each respondent with a cover letter. The cover letter asked respondents to review the transcript for accuracy and to add any additional thoughts regarding the topics discussed during the interview.

The information collected through semi-structured interviews was repeatedly analyzed for identifying patterns and commonalties (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Wolcott, 1995). The data was scrutinized for evidence that supported or refuted existing assertions and built overarching themes (Seidman, 1991) using the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While examining the descriptive data provided from interviews, preliminary arguments were constructed. Data was organized and collated as supporting evidence to the arguments written. It was expected that review and analysis of the interview data would provide a deeper understanding of how schools and

elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced by the legislative reforms included in the study.

The sample of respondents consisted of 24 Michigan elementary school teachers, drawn from three separate school districts in southeast Michigan. In addition to the elementary school teachers, the principal from each selected elementary school building was interviewed to gather additional information regarding the influence of recent legislation upon schools. The current study is designed to develop a model that will describe and conceptualize the ways in which the school organization and elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced by Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind, and Education YES! legislation. To facilitate the study design, a theoretical sampling technique was chosen. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe theoretical sampling:

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal. The initial decisions for theoretical collection of data are based only on a general sociological perspective and on a general subject or problem area. (p. 45)

In addition to theoretical sampling, the constant comparative method of data analysis was employed. Using the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) involves studying each participant independently, then looking for common themes among participants. As themes and patterns evolve, each was analyzed and contrasted with findings from other studies concerning the influence of legislative reform on schools and elementary teacher behavior. The interviews were used to identify the degree to which specific reform efforts have influenced elementary teacher activity

and the organizational structure of the local public school. Glaser and Strauss describe the process:

In contrast to analytic induction, the constant comparative method is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems (e.g., the distribution of services according to the social value of clients). Some of these properties may be causes, as in analytic induction, but unlike analytic induction others are conditions, consequences, dimensions, types, processes, etc. (p. 104)

We shall describe in four stages the constant comparative method: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory. Although this method of generating theory is a continuously growing process- each stage after a time is transformed into the next- earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage until the analysis is terminated. (p. 105)

Studying the influence of recent legislative acts on schools and elementary teacher behaviors requires units of measure that are intellectually coherent following the logic of the argument. To attain the measurement, schools and elementary teachers will be examined based upon two units of measure: 1) what schools and elementary teachers are doing in order to comply with legislative mandates, and 2) what schools and elementary teachers are not doing because they are focusing on compliance with the legislation.

Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind and Education YES! have been selected for measurement because each contains a common central thrust. All three acts follow the pattern of becoming more restrictive and specific in their mandates as they flow through the educational organization. More importantly these three acts push for educational reform through the school improvement process, ultimately changing teacher behaviors. Elementary teacher instructional practices, lesson preparations, collegial work, student assessment, and professional development, were a select few of the conditions that were

examined through interview responses to determine what elementary teachers are doing in order to comply with current legislation.

School decision making processes, resource allocation and public communications are a few of the criteria that will be scrutinized through elementary principal interviews to establish what schools are doing in order to comply with legislative mandates. These same selected subjects were reevaluated to determine what schools are not doing because of the effort to comply with mandates from Education YES!, Public Act 25 and No Child Left Behind. It was anticipated that semi-structured interviews with elementary school teachers and their principals will provide richly thick description revealing what each are doing in order to comply with current legislation as well as the opportunity cost of compliance.

The focus of this study is not on theory development, but rather, thick description of legislative reforms influencing school and elementary teacher behavior designed to create a deeper meaning of the phenomenon being studied. Use of theoretical sampling combined with the constant comparative method of data analysis will facilitate construction of models describing how schools and elementary teachers make sense of their experiences related to the legislative reforms studied.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. The research will examine the opportunity cost of these legislative reform efforts on elementary teacher activity, including additional time required for compliance. The unit of analysis for this study will be how elementary teacher time has been reallocated due to these reform efforts and how the school organization has been realigned to meet the requirements of these three pieces of legislation. Included in the second chapter are a definition of terms used in the study, an overview of organizational behavior and recent reform efforts. An introduction to the three legislative acts studied in this dissertation, Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind and Education YES!, is told through extensive background research. The chapter concludes with an overview and summary of how Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind, and Education YES! may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior.

#### Definition of Terms Used in the Study

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The amount of annual improvement needed to get all students to proficiency

**Apprenticeship of Observation.** A term coined by Lortie (1975) describing the time preservice teachers spend as a student in educational settings.

**Authority.** The power to make decisions which guide the actions of another (Simon, 1997).

**Bureaucracy.** A form of organizational structure known for being efficient, rational, technically superior, and having the functional ability to control and systematize personnel on a large scale. (Weber, 1946)

**Constant Comparative Method.** A form of data analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), that sets a framework for studying each participant independently while looking for common themes among respondents.

**The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).** The DRA is a performance assessment kit developed by Joetta Beaver in collaboration with primary classroom teachers. The DRA is conducted in the classroom during a short individual reading conference. It allows teachers to gather information about students' reading interests, use of strategies, comprehension, and attitudes. (Hawaii Public Schools, 2004)

**Education YES!** Michigan legislation, passed in 2002, which addresses school and student improvement issues and measures of school performance. This legislative body is also referred to as A Yardstick for Excellent Schools.

**Environmental Pressures.** Stresses caused by the setting and demands of one's workplace which tend to produce a set of relations between the people effected by those demands.

**HBJ.** The Harcourt Brace Jovanovich basal reading series used by certain districts participating in the study.

**Michigan Educational Assessment Profile (MEAP).** A statewide assessment given annually to students in selected grades to assess specific academic content areas such as reading, writing, math, social studies and science.

**Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP).** The MLPP is a kit to be used by trained educators to determine and document student growth in the areas of literacy development for the purpose of improving the learning opportunities for students. (MLPP, 2004)

**NCA.** The North Central Association, a non-profit organization, accrediting over 9000 schools divided up into 8 categories: elementary, middle, secondary, college preparatory, vocational/adult, special purpose, unit (K-12), postsecondary. (North Central Association, 2003)

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB).** Another name for the federal reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This act, passed in 2002, mandates school improvement issues and allocates funding for those improvements.

**Opportunity Cost.** The highest valued opportunity foregone in the pursuit of an activity, in this case, reform legislation. (Amos Dictionary, 2003)

**Organizational Learning.** On-going knowledge that must be acquired by employees to become acclimated to an establishment and meet the requirements therein.

**Public Act 25 (PA 25).** Michigan legislative framework passed in 1990 addressing statewide school improvement. Also referred to as the Quality Education Package or Quality Issues Package.

**Qualitative Reading Inventory (ORI).** An informal reading inventory, written by Lauren D. Leslie and JoAnne Caldwell, that provides a variety of diagnostic options designed to assess individual students' reading ability.

**Scarcity.** The lack of an important or critical resource that is needed to obtain some a priori defined objective. (Bruno, 1997)

**School Improvement Plan.** A school improvement plan includes an identification of the student performance goals, the assessments that are aligned with each of the goals, the interventions that are aligned with each of those goals, and an implementation plan. (North Central Association, 2003)

## **Public Act 25**

Michigan's Public Act 25, also called the Quality Issues Package, was passed in 1990. The purpose of PA 25 was to design and establish a legislative framework for statewide school improvement. Addressed in the Quality Issues Package were sections regarding accreditation of all schools, core curricula to be implemented in all schools, annual reporting for districts and requirements for district and individual building school improvement teams to involve all stakeholders (Michigan Legislature, 1990). Stephens (1994) described the theory of Public Act 25 in four sections:

1. the school improvement plan as the process for change, 2. the core curriculum as the content of change, 3. accreditation as the verification of the change, and 4. the annual education report as the communication of change. (p. 78-79)

Public Act 25's mandate for accreditation goes hand in hand with the school improvement process. To meet this requirement, most school districts align themselves with an accrediting association such as the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (National Education Association, 2003). The State Board of Education defined school accreditation as meeting or exceeding the State Board of Education-approved standards for the following six areas of school operation: administration and school organization, curricula, staff, school plant and facilities, school and community relations, and school improvement plans and outcomes (Michigan Legislature, 1990). The accreditation process varies depending on the accrediting association, but generally involves a commitment from the school district to meet the requirements of the accreditation organization through a series of stages. Requirements include, but are not limited to, maintaining the condition of the physical resources (school building) and allocation of those resources, meeting standards for technology and the

information system, providing professional development opportunities for staff members, achieving adequate levels of parent involvement, development of a vision and mission statement, conducting building-level decision making and leadership/governance and development of continuous school improvement teams and plans (North Central Association, 2003). The accrediting association schedules regular site visits; sending a team of individuals to evaluate each school against these standards.

One of the procedures scrutinized closely by the accrediting organization is the development and robust nature of the individual school improvement plans. According to the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (2003), schools must develop plans that emphasize student learning and exhibit commitment to school improvement that must be pursued continually and aggressively. Following this guideline, most elementary schools develop anywhere from 2-5 school improvement plans, each lasting from 3-5 years. This process involves development of a student profile drawn from the school's information system, whereby a challenging set of goals that focuses on enhanced learning for all students is developed (McTighe and Thomas, 2003; North Central Association, 2003). From this stage, improvement plans are developed that detail the changes to be made and an assessment system is developed to document increased student success on the goals identified. To achieve accreditation status to meet the mandate for Public Act 25 schools must be able to document, in a variety of ways, that student performance goals are met. In planning for school improvement, Public Act 25 requires schools and school districts to include stakeholders such as families, community representatives, and students in the process (Michigan Legislature, 1990).

The State of Michigan and North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement both believe that the value of pursuing accreditation far outweighs the time commitment constraints of the process. The North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement asserts:

A four-year study of schools actively engaged in NCA CASI's process revealed that 79% made verifiable gains in student achievement. ([www.ncacasi.org](http://www.ncacasi.org))

Claims are also made that the accreditation process eases the transition for students who transfer from one accredited school to another as well as facilitating the credit transfer process. The North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement similarly argues that accreditation is a cost-effective way to engage all of the schools in a district in a coherent school improvement process while aligning local, state and federal requirements. There are benefits for teachers involved in the process as well, such as access to a network of school improvement professionals and a given process for raising their students' achievement (North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, 2003).

In addition to the requirements for accreditation and school improvement, Public Act 25 requires school districts and individual buildings to publish an annual report. The annual reports have subheadings as proscribed by Public Act 25 and include the following: (1) accreditation status of each school, the process by which pupils are assigned to particular schools and a description of specialized schools; (2) status of school improvement plans and the continuing process; (3) a copy of the core curriculum and a description of its implementation; (4) a report of the aggregate student achievement based upon test results (local, state, or national); (5) the district membership retention report for current and previous years; (6) number and percentage of parents, legal

guardians, or persons in loco parentis who participated in parent-teacher conferences; and (7) a comparison of numbers 1-6 above, with the preceding school year (Michigan Legislature, 1990). Building and district annual reports must be made publicly accessible through board meetings, PTA meetings and other dissemination vehicles (Michigan Association of School Boards Accountability Taskforce, 2000). District administrative staffs spend a great amount of time collecting the information that goes into these annual reports and classroom teachers are often asked to provide input involving "points of pride" or "challenges we face" sections of the report.

Another section of Public Act 25 requires the development of a core curriculum with objectives and performance standards. The wording of Public Act 25 strongly encourages local districts to align their core curriculum with recommended model core curriculum outcomes as developed by the state (Michigan Department of Education, 2003). The core curriculum must define outcomes to be achieved by all pupils and be based upon the school districts' mission statement, long-range student goals, and student performance objectives (Michigan Legislature, 1990). Districts accomplish this task through the organization of curriculum study committees comprised of administrators, teachers, and parents. Together, these teams review the state standards and develop core curriculum and performance standards that align tightly with the state. The committees also author performance indicators to establish concrete examples of success at each performance standard level for teacher use (Vars, 2000). This committee activity requires classroom teachers to be absent from teaching time to attend curriculum development meetings. Additionally, teachers are often asked to complete tasks for the committee outside of their scheduled meetings and have to complete other committee-



related work on their own time (Stephens, 1994; Eastwood and Tallerico, 1990). Since the core curriculum is considered a "living and dynamic document", these committees still exist to initiate change as required.

The areas of Public Act 25 that cause reallocation of elementary teacher instructional time have been detailed in the previous section. There are other sections of Public Act 25 not discussed, such as development of high school proficiency exams and requirements for non-certified personnel, because they do not directly influence the teaching time of elementary instructors. To attain school accreditation, elementary school teachers work within a school improvement committee to analyze needs based upon student performance criteria (North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, 2003). Developing goals of improving learning and increasing student achievement requires an extensive time commitment by the individuals involved. Currently, many elementary schools schedule "school improvement days" during the school year, whereby students come to school for a half day in the morning and the afternoon is used by teachers for school improvement meetings and planning (Odden, et. al., 2002). Because the school improvement process revolves around a prescriptive timeline, these half days may not provide enough time to complete all the work required the plans. It then falls to the classroom teachers to finish the work during their individual preparation time or outside of school (Stephens, 1994). In addition to the time spent planning and developing school improvement goals, elementary teachers are also required to administer assessments to collect baseline data for the plans (Eastwood and Tallerico, 1990). Baseline data collection may consist of pre and post-assessments, writing samples or written anecdotes comprising a learning log.

No matter the type or form of baseline data collected, it may be argued that elementary instructional time is being reallocated to meet these legislated requirements and others involving the school improvement/accreditation process.

The annual reports that elementary school buildings publish are a visible result of Public Act 25. Elementary principals spend significant time authoring these reports, but not without staff support. Most principals undertake the writing of the individual building annual report by asking teachers to sit on committee to draft sections together. Principals use email and memos to the staff soliciting ideas for "points of pride" and "challenges we face" portions of the annual report. In her study regarding the implementation of Public Act 25, Stephens (1994) observed core school improvement teams spending 2½ -3 hours at a time preparing the building's annual report. The teams of teachers in Stephens' study worked collaboratively with the building principal to author the annual report as mandated by Public Act 25. Additionally, staff meeting and block planning agendas are often written to include time to discuss the annual report. While the value of the information contained in a building annual report, as mandated by Public Act 25, may be useful and constructive, the time spent authoring and going over the reports definitely reallocates elementary teacher activity.

Public Act 25 requires the development of an individual district core curriculum, modeled after the Michigan Model Core Curriculum Outcomes of 1991 (Michigan Department of Education, 2003). In theory, this objective is a worthwhile undertaking to promote equity between and among schools in what is being taught in the State of Michigan. The time spent by elementary teachers, away from their classrooms, to develop this core curriculum would logically reduce teaching time in the classroom.



Additionally, the time spent outside of curriculum committee meetings preparing materials and completing necessary requirements for the next meeting would again modify elementary teacher instructional activity.

Public Act 25 is a valuable and meaningful piece of legislation designed to improve the quality of Michigan's public schools. Two years after the implementation of Public Act 25, Shine (1992) surveyed Michigan public school superintendents and noted that superintendents felt reform conditions and indicators were of sufficient strength in Michigan public schools to allow educational reform to continue under Public Act 25. It can be argued that the opportunity costs of meeting the reform requirements of Public Act 25 involve a tremendous shift in elementary teacher activity from the classroom and a change in the organizational structure of the school.

### No Child Left Behind

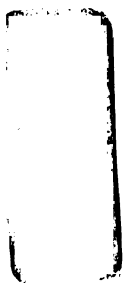
The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), titled No Child Left Behind, was signed into law on January 8, 2002. The objective of No Child Left Behind is to close the achievement gaps between students of different demographic groups. To better understand the sections covered under the No Child Left Behind legislation, Friedrich (2002) dissects it into four reform principles: accountability for students' academic achievement, local control of federal education dollars, parental involvement, and the implementation of scientifically proven programs and teaching methods.

At the start of the 2002 school year, No Child Left Behind legislation mandated that **each** state was responsible for creating their own academic standards determining

what every child in grades pre K-12 should learn in reading and mathematics for elementary, middle and high schools. Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, states must add science standards to those established for reading and math. Students' progress in these subject areas will be monitored by standardized tests as chosen by the state. By the end of the 2002-2003 school year, assessments must be administered to each student at least once in grade spans 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12 for reading and math; with science assessments following the end of the 2007-2008 year (US Department of Education, 2003b).

Results of these assessments must appear in annual state and district report cards, another requirement of No Child Left Behind. The purpose of these report cards is to give parents a vehicle by which to measure their school's performance and their state's progress. School administrators, teachers, policy makers, and state and local leaders will also be scrutinizing this critical information (Friedrich, 2002). The long-term goal of these report cards is to disaggregate the data and identify and close achievement gaps among the various demographic groups previously mentioned. From these annual district report cards, individual schools are responsible for improving the academic performance of all students leading toward making adequate yearly progress (AYP) by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

The adequate yearly progress section of the No Child Left Behind legislation appears to be the aspect of the legislation that has school districts concerned the most due to potential sanctions being imposed for failing to meet AYP. Adequate yearly progress is measured with a complex formula based upon improvement goals established by individual schools. AYP for schools and districts is based primarily on the required



assessments such as MEAP tests, however the United States Department of Education claims that the goal is for 100% proficiency for all students by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. The Office of the Secretary claims that the goal is ambitious, but achievable and anything less than requiring 100% proficiency means that children will be left behind (US Department of Education Office of the Secretary, 2003). Schools that fail to meet state academic performance standards face sanctions contingent on the number of years that AYP is not achieved. If a school does not meet AYP for two years, the No Child Left Behind legislation permits students to transfer to another school in the district that is not failing and the district must pay all transportation costs. The failing school must also receive technical assistance from the district. Schools failing to make AYP for three consecutive years face the prior penalties and parents of students at the failing school may take advantage of Title I money for tutoring or other supplemental educational services. Should a school fail to make AYP for four consecutive years, it will endure the previous sanctions and must do one of the following: replace staff relevant to the failure, implement new curriculum, provide staff development, decrease management authority at the school level, appoint an outside expert to advise the school, extend the school year or day, or restructure the school. After five years of failure to make AYP the school must significantly alter its governance method by either allowing a state takeover, hiring a private management company, or converting to a charter school (US Department of Education, 2003c). The severity of the sanctions alone causes the No Child Left Behind legislation to demand the immediate attention of superintendents, school board members, principals, teachers and other members of the educational community.

When President Bush signed No Child Left Behind into law, he noted that education is a national priority and a local responsibility. That statement is reflected in the legislation as states and local communities now have more flexibility to direct federal education dollars toward the programs that will best serve their students and teachers (Friedrich, 2002). Flexible funding and spending of federal education dollars is something new for recent legislation. No Child Left Behind combines and simplifies programs, so that schools do not have to go through as much red tape to get and use the federal funding needed. The reauthorization of the ESEA allows states and districts to transfer up to fifty percent of funding from any of the major federal programs (Teacher Quality, Education Technology, Safe and Drug Free Schools, and Innovative Education Programs) to pursue strategies for improving student achievement without receiving advance approval (US Department of Education, 2003b).

The No Child Left Behind legislation supports local control by requiring a "highly qualified" teacher for every classroom by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. A "highly qualified" teacher is certified or licensed by the state, holds a bachelor's degree from an accredited university or college and demonstrates competencies in their subject areas as determined by the state's requirements (Friedrich, 2002). Further support for local control of "highly qualified" teachers is provided by the No Child Left Behind legislation in terms of flexible spending for professional development and class size reduction grants. No Child Left Behind allocates \$2.85 billion for states to spend on training and recruiting teachers through Title II, Part A (Improving Teacher Quality State Grants). To receive this money, states are required to develop a local improvement plan detailing exactly what will be done to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified. Once



plans are developed, federal money can be used for recruitment and hiring, certification, licensure, mentoring programs, teacher testing and accountability efforts. No Child Left Behind requires that teachers be involved in the development of both the state needs assessment and local improvement plans (Friedrich, 2002).

No Child Left Behind was written to give parents more information about the schools their children attend and offer them alternatives, if their child's school is identified as chronically needing improvement. By the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, districts must be prepared to transfer students under unsafe school choice policies. Districts must notify parents of each student in a "persistently dangerous" school about the unsafe school choice option. The No Child Left Behind legislation also allows parents with a child enrolled in a school identified as in need of academic improvement the option of transferring to a better performing school in the district or neighboring charter school. The school district must also pay for all transportation costs associated with the transfer option. Parents with students enrolled in a school identified as failing to make AYP for three consecutive years may request \$300-\$1,000 in Title I funds for use in supplying supplemental services (tutors, after-school or weekend help, summer school tuition) for their child (US Department of Education, 2003c). Friedrich (2002) notes:

These stipulations will place competitive pressures on schools and educators that policymakers believe will lead to improved student achievement. (p.2)

As mandated by No Child Left Behind, parents will receive report cards about their school and school district each fall. These report cards will give additional information regarding the school's performance and Adequate Yearly Progress status to help parents make informed decisions about enrollment issues for their children.

The United States Department of Education will target No Child Left Behind education dollars toward research-based programs that have been proven to help most children learn. Schools and districts are expected to use scientifically proven practices to meet state standards for literacy and other academic areas, while taking advantage of increased funding efforts for federal programs such as Reading First, Early Reading First and Teacher Quality. Reading First and Early Reading First work hand-in-hand with the No Child Left Behind legislation to provide training for teachers in core literacy components, while supporting the age-appropriate development of children's oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabetic knowledge (US Department of Education, 2003a; US Department of Education, 2003d). Teacher Quality enhancement grants support the local control element of No Child Left Behind by providing funds for teacher preparation and recruitment, improving the State's teacher preparation programs and helping to reduce shortages of qualified teachers in high-need areas (US Department of Education, 2003e). A national clearinghouse is also planned to provide information to schools about a wide range of programs, tests, practices, and policies (Friedrich, 2002).

For the purpose of this dissertation, the No Child Left Behind legislation has been summarized to focus on the four reform principles as identified by Friedrich (2002): accountability for students' academic achievement, local control of federal education dollars, parental involvement, and the implementation of scientifically proven programs and teaching methods. The physical document itself includes more than 1,000 pages of legislative education mandates that would require extensive time to read and synthesize, not all of which may pertain to the nature of this research. A federal document

containing over 1,000 pages raises issues with regard to interpretation of the text. As Goldhaber (2002) notes:

...in the case of the reauthorization of ESEA, the devil is very much in the details, many of which are sketchy and left open for negotiation between states and the Department of Education. (p. 2)

No Child Left Behind legislation includes terms such as "high-quality" and "proficient" which are somewhat unclear and open for interpretation. Much research has been done indicating that each local school district plays a significant position in the local implementation of legislative reform (Firestone, 1989; Spillane 1996, 2002). Wenning, Herdman and Smith (2002) suggest that the implementation of No Child Left Behind is the key to its success, and the Department of Education should study the document and report in simple language how school districts should fulfill the responsibilities mandated within. The way in which the No Child Left Behind legislation is interpreted by state and district officials will determine how the legislation plays out in the elementary classroom and influences the activity of teachers. Spillane (2002) concurs:

Specifically, the manner in which state and federal policy proposals are understood and disseminated by the district office influences their classroom implementation. (p. 377)

Because the assessment and accountability sections of No Child Left Behind hold the threat of potential sanctions for schools and their districts, this portion of the legislation is likely to be given a great deal of attention. Goldhaber (2002) agrees:

Probably the most common critique of the accountability systems that are based on student performance on standardized tests is that they create incentives for teachers to focus their efforts on the assessments for which they (or their schools) will be held accountable. In common parlance, they will "teach to the test." (p. 4)

Focusing only on content for which students are held accountable can become dangerous in an educational enterprise that already contains an elementary curriculum bulging with

rigorous and challenging academic content tied to performance standards. Since accountability measures for science are not effective until the end of the 2007-2008 school year, elementary teachers may focus their efforts on the tested subjects; math and reading. Completely untested subjects such as social studies, problem solving and handwriting may end up taking a backseat should teachers determine that accountability measures demand a focus on the narrowed curriculum being assessed. Gulek (2003) suggests the dangers of this type of practice:

A teacher should not engage in instruction that addresses only those portions of knowledge included on the test. While this may raise scores, it will not build students' knowledge and skills in broader subject areas. (p. 42)

Other researchers (Goldhaber, 2002; Koretz, 1998; Schrag, 2000) suggest that elementary teachers may spend their instructional time merely teaching test taking skills. Jakupcak and Rushton (1992) found that when teachers in their study concentrated on time management and test taking skill lessons in class, all students, including those with disabilities scored at the proficiency level. Linn (2000) notes that certain legislative accountability systems have led some teachers to include test-taking skills and a narrowed curricular focus at the expense of other academic content that is deemed less important. Clovis (1999) and Loulou (1997) believe that test taking strategies and time management skills can be built into the daily curriculum to address the requirements posed by high stakes assessments. However, the argument can be raised that no extra time exists in the current school day, when elementary curricula are already filled to bursting with performance standards and benchmarks as mandated by the State and individual districts. Gulek (2003) concludes this argument nicely:

School practitioners need to adequately and appropriately prepare students for high-stakes testing without detracting from real learning. Teaching to the state standards and using various assessment approaches and formats constitutes appropriate test preparation practice. (p. 46)

Because the pressure for students to succeed is paramount under reauthorization of ESEA, elementary teachers may feel the need to focus on only certain types of students (Elmore et al, 1996; Goldhaber, 2002). Goldhaber (2002) goes on to elaborate:

The new ESEA legislation requires the use of a system, already in place in many states, whereby schools' performance is judged based upon the students who reach established benchmarks for proficiency. Under such a system, it is the pass rate that matters for school performance, so schools have an explicit incentive to push as many students as possible beyond the point where they are judged to be proficient. (p. 5)

A number of elementary schools in metro Detroit currently subscribe to Goldhaber's concept when they conduct "MEAP analysis sessions". The purpose of MEAP analysis meetings is for teachers to go over the most current MEAP results for their students and scrutinize the test items that students, barely missing the proficient cut-off scores, answered incorrectly. In an overview of data analysis, Darling (2002) describes this scenario as examining a grid of test scores horizontally, vertically, and diagonally to look for meaning in one and two-point differences. The elementary teachers decide how to better teach these concepts to get those students just missing proficiency, to succeed. The extremely high and low performing students are neglected in such a scenario so that more of the kids who just missed proficiency will succeed the next time around.

The No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002 requires all schools to make adequate yearly progress toward having students meet or exceed the standards in reading, math and science by the end of the 2013-2014 school year (US Department of Education, 2003b). This requirement may lead elementary teachers to focus on students with

disabilities or students learning English as a second language (ESL). In the past, disabled or ESL students have always taken standardized assessments with accommodations that are appropriate for their specific situation. The ambiguity of the No Child Left Behind document creates more room for interpretation as to how ESL and disabled students will take the assessments and what types of accommodations, if any, will be permitted. Should modifications be allowed for students with disabilities, will more low achieving students be identified as special education candidates so they will have a better chance of reaching proficiency on the assessments? If the answer to this last question is yes, one can only imagine the shift in elementary teacher activity preparing individual educational planning committee (IEPC) requirements for all of the newly certified special education students.

To accommodate the requirements of the reauthorization of ESEA, elementary teachers will most likely have to re-examine their teaching practices, techniques, and the scope of their curriculum. The No Child Left Behind legislation advocates the use of research-based, proven methods of instruction (US Department of Education, 2003c); yet fails to specify the established processes. Cohen (2003) suggests customizing instruction to create a unique and designated program for each individual child and he goes on to discuss his version of customized instruction:

Creating a differentiated program must begin with diagnostic assessments that clearly identify specific learning gaps. Learning styles must also be evaluated to determine how best to engage each student. While each child's program is designated to meet his or her own academic need, it must also be aligned with state standards and district learning objectives. (p. 35-36)

The concepts behind Cohen's plan for differentiated instruction sound very promising in theory. It can be argued that in practice, the time constraints and opportunity costs of

designing such an individualized program for each child are significant. Elementary teachers work very hard to accommodate each student's unique learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. It would be a demanding undertaking for elementary teachers to complete their existing job responsibilities and the designing of individualized instruction for each student in alignment with state standards and district learning objectives. Since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act, some elementary principals have required their staff members to include district and state standards in weekly lesson plans. These elementary classroom teachers scramble to author their lesson plans and upon completion, open yet another binder with the district standards to further annotate the objectives of their lessons. Clearly, the argument can be made that the requirements of No Child Left Behind will significantly affect the activities of elementary teachers in terms of opportunity costs and reallocation of teaching time.

The requirements mandated by the reauthorization of the ESEA call for immediate reform of many aspects of the educational enterprise. These changes are detailed and complex and probably have caught many districts off guard. Studies of reform and consequent teacher change indicate that through the district's interpretation of the legislation come policies and programs designed to guide teachers' instructional practice (Spillane, 2002, 1999, 1998). The serious sanctions proposed by No Child Left Behind have caused districts to rethink and modify their existing literacy, math and assessment programs. The Sienna Heights School District in metro Detroit is one of those districts revamping their literacy assessment programs. In the past, Sienna Heights Schools had been using the Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP) as their adopted assessment vehicle for elementary students. All elementary teachers have attended 6

days of MLPP training and certain assessments are conducted at each grade level as mandated by the district. With the reauthorization of the ESEA, the MLPP may not be enough to meet the literacy assessment needs of the Sienna Heights district. Two new assessment profiles emerged at the elementary level, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for grades K-3, and the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) for grades 4-5. Both programs are evaluation tools that assess word identification, oral reading, silent reading and comprehension levels of individual students. From these assessments, elementary teachers can identify an individual student's instructional and independent reading levels and make accommodations for literacy group instruction. The entire elementary staff of the Sienna Heights School District in southeast Michigan underwent several training sessions (both during and after school) for each assessment tool and spent numerous hours learning the programs. At the end of the 2002-2003 school year, the district mandated that each elementary teacher was to conduct the appropriate assessment (either DRA or QRI) for each child's exiting literacy level in May. This process took from 15 minutes to one hour per child and elementary teachers were expected to conduct these assessments during instructional time. For students whose literacy levels were vastly above or below the grade level norm, substitute teacher assistance was provided so that classroom teachers could either extend or retract the literacy level of the text being assessed. In order to successfully implement reform proposal changes, elementary teachers must face pressure from the district (Spillane, 2002). The Sienna Heights School District is mandating DRA or QRI testing in September, January and May for each student during the 2003-2004 school year. These



thrice-yearly assessments are to be conducted during classroom instructional time during the 2003-2004 school year.

In addition to the time spent learning and administering the new assessment programs, many elementary school teachers are expected to use grade level block-planning time discussing the implementation of new assessment programs (Odden, et al., 2002). Situations of formal and informal meetings regarding new reform efforts are a common occurrence when the district or state mandates new programs and policies. Spillane (2002) identified different situations where teachers spent time meeting and discussing new reform initiatives being used in their classrooms. Those discussions included grade level meetings, study groups, coaching/mentoring opportunities, informal and formal conversations, site observations and workshop study. The teachers in Spillane's 2002 study indicated that implementing new programs developed through reform efforts requires a process of trial and error facilitated by opportunities to discuss and evaluate the actual practice. Specifically, elementary school teachers require opportunities to enact reform plans in their classrooms, practice using the new programs, and have time for reflection and critique of the implementation with peers and mentors (Ball & Rundquist 1993; Schifter, 1996). The considerable amount of time elementary teachers spend meeting and discussing new reform programs as well as independently learning how to implement these new curriculum pieces and then the subsequent implementation would add support to the argument that the No Child Left Behind legislation will significantly influence teacher instructional activity and how classroom time is scheduled.

## **Education YES!**

At its March 2002 meeting, the Michigan State Board of Education approved Education YES!- A Yardstick for Excellent Schools in accordance with section 1280 of the Revised School Code and under its authority under Article VIII, Section 3 of the Michigan Constitution (Education YES!, 2002). To insure accuracy and avoid misinterpretation of the Education YES! document, the researcher has used certain verbatim citations directly from the Michigan State Board of Education's "Standards for Accreditation" manuscript (Education YES!, 2002) to describe this milestone legislative act. This state directive is designed to attain rigorous, challenging and focused standards. Many of the provisions of Education YES! align with the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The authors of Education YES! advocate a public education system that is intended to provide all students the following: (1) academic skills and knowledge to succeed in today's global, information age economy, higher education, the armed services, and other post K-12 opportunities; (2) an excellent grounding in the history, principles and form of our political system of self-government and constitutional liberty, and the ability to fully and thoughtfully participate in political activities and elections; (3) an excellent understanding of history, civics, political science and conflict resolution; (4) a broad cultural exposure, including comprehension of the arts, humanities, and the classics; and (5) the opportunity to participate in community involvement, including volunteering, social studies and character development, membership in community associations, clubs and organizations, athletics, student mentoring and similar activities (Education YES!, 2002) .

The Michigan State Board of Education means to accomplish their vision and purpose with what they describe as a fair, challenging, and supportive accreditation system to help all schools be good schools. The Michigan accreditation system, as described in the Education YES! document, is based upon the following three standards that focus on every school working with every child (the same premise as No Child Left Behind): (1) all Michigan elementary and middle school children will read independently and use math to solve problems at grade level; (2) all Michigan students will experience a year of academic growth for a year of instruction; and (3) all Michigan high school students, in addition to demonstrating high academic achievement, will have an individual education plan leading them to be prepared for success (Education YES!, 2002) . Because the focus of this research is the legislation's affect on elementary school teachers, only standards one and two will be addressed in this dissertation.

The three previously mentioned Education YES! standards will be used to analyze measures of a school performance and student achievement at the building level. In the Education YES! document, three performance indicators are used to measure school performance and include: (1) indicators of engagement that focus on engaging students in the learning process; (2) indicators of instructional quality that focus on the processes the school uses to improve the quality of instruction provided to students; and (3) indicators of learning opportunities that include direction, focus and opportunity for learning (Education YES!, 2002) .

Each respective performance indicator is presented in specific subsets, all of which may be given a score of 0-3 that adds to the composite accreditation score for individual buildings. The indicators of engagement are broken into three subsets,

performance management systems, continuous improvement and curriculum alignment. In the performance management systems subset, schools will be recognized for systems that indicate whether each student has attained critical skills. Schools will be encouraged to use these systems to follow the progress of particular groups such as economically disadvantaged students. Continuous improvement indicators will recognize programs that have a focus on consistent improvement, including monitoring of improvement activities, external support provided through professional development, visitation by peer reviewers and other selected continuous improvement programs. The curriculum alignment subset will measure a school's progress toward curriculum alignment in the school and across the district. Attention will be paid to the local curriculum standards for learning, problem solving, and decision-making to give students the tools to embrace the information age (Education YES!, 2002).

The performance indicators of instructional quality are separated into four subgroups, teacher quality and professional development, extended learning opportunities, arts education and humanities for all students, and advanced coursework. The teacher quality and professional development subgroup will measure both the preparations of teachers for their assignment and professional development undertaken to implement the school's improvement plan. The teacher quality indicator will align with the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Special attention will be paid to teacher preparedness to use the tools of the information age to enhance teaching and learning. Extended learning opportunities clearly state that schools will receive credit if early childhood programs are available for at-risk students in the district. Coordination between early childhood and kindergarten programs are encouraged. At the upper

elementary and middle school levels, extended learning opportunities may be provided before and after school. Other extended learning opportunities may be made available on weekends, through summer school or through virtual learning. Arts education and humanities for all students states that schools will be given credit for providing all children with a foundation in the arts; for offering ongoing education in music, drama, dance, and the visual arts; and for affording opportunities for high levels of achievement in the arts. The arts education and humanities indicator will also encourage programs that enrich cultural life by promoting knowledge of human history, thought and culture, including social studies, the principles of America's political system of self-government and constitutional liberty, and the classics. Finally, the advanced coursework indicator will recognize participation in dual enrollment and advanced placement provided face-to-face or through distance learning technologies. Evaluation of humanities will include vocational and technical college courses, as well as those in the sciences and liberal arts (Education YES!, 2002).

The last group included as measures of school performance for Education YES! are the indicators of learning opportunities. The indicators are divided into four sub-categories, family involvement, student attendance and dropout rate, four-year education and employment plan, and school facilities. The family involvement indicator will recognize a variety of forms of regular communication with parents, using both traditional and more modern channels, such as voicemail, e-mail, and web-based parent reporting. Schools will be asked to demonstrate the communication methods by which they attempt to involve every family in the progress of their student. Student attendance will be a measurable indicator of learning opportunities at the elementary and middle

school levels. At the high school level, the dropout rate will be used for this purpose. The four-year education and employment plan standard will recognize the development and use of individual four-year education and employment plans for each student. The four-year education plan is a document for students whether they plan to attend college, other postsecondary education, the military, or enter the work force after high school. The purpose of the plan is to provide each student with an ongoing, and periodically updated, record of individual career planning. The four-year education plan will build upon work already being undertaken by the Department of Career Development. School facilities will be inventoried through the School Infrastructure Database maintained by the State Center for Educational Performance and Information. This indicator will identify areas in which school facilities pose barriers to learning and embracing the information age (Education YES!, 2002). The indicators of engagement, instructional quality and learning opportunities align well with the Michigan State Board of Education's purpose for public education. Together, the three indicators and their subsets combine to form 33% of the Education YES! composite score weighting to determine accreditation status, described on page 63.

The remaining 67% of the composite score for accreditation based upon the Education YES! document is comprised of the measures of student achievement. Measures of student achievement are calculated based upon three areas: (1) achievement status to measure how well a school is doing in educating all students; (2) achievement change to measure whether student achievement is improving or declining; and (3) achievement growth to measure whether students are receiving at least one year of academic growth for each year of instruction. Reporting of achievement status will use

three years of scaled scores from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). At the elementary level, reading and mathematics scores will be used for this indicator. In future years, the new English Language Arts assessment will be used, including both reading and writing. Other test scores, not studied in this dissertation, will be used for middle and high school levels. School status will not only be assessed and reported on a schoolwide basis, but data will also be disaggregated to be sure that all groups are evidencing success. The achievement status subset is worth a total of 34 points until the end of the 2004-05 school year and beginning in 2005-06 and after it will count for 23 points. These points are used toward the composite score rating of which there may be 100 total points represented on page 63 in Table 2-1.

Achievement change will be reported on the basis of a trend-line computed from the data used to report achievement status. Measurement of change is consistent with the requirements of the new federal No Child Left Behind Act. Adequate yearly progress in the statute is defined as “continuous and substantial academic improvement for all students.” The starting points and definitions in achievement change will be consistent with the federal statute so that reporting for state and federal purposes will be the same. As with school status, trend-line data will be disaggregated as required by the new federal statute. The achievement change category is worth a total of 33 points until the 2005-06 school year when it will be reduced to a maximum of 22 points. These points are used toward the maximum composite score rating of 100 total points (Education YES!, 2002).

Scores for achievement growth are designed on the concept that all Michigan children should be guaranteed at least one year of academic growth for each year of instruction. Existing achievement data will be used to recognize those schools that are

“adding value” every year for every student. The Michigan State Board of Education feels this approach encourages curricular alignment from grade-to-grade and from school-to-school, particularly as students move from elementary to middle to high school. The authors of Education YES! claim it will reinforce the notion that effective education and student performance improvement requires a shared responsibility at all educational levels. Student growth will be measured by comparing the equivalent scores of the students on the fourth grade assessment with the equivalent scores for the same group of students on the seventh grade assessment (and seventh grade to high school). This comparison model will be used for all students who continue attendance within the same school district. The achievement growth component will currently be applied only to reading and mathematics achievement. As with status and change, the growth data analysis will also include disaggregated student achievement data by identifiable student groups. Based on the recommendation for the Accreditation Advisory Committee, the student growth component will be delayed until the MEAP is expanded to assess all students in grades 3-8. The expanded MEAP will include a cross-grade score scale which will allow the measurement of a student growth component. It is anticipated that the expanded MEAP will be first administered in the 2004-05 school year, and that measurement of student growth will begin in 2005-06. Achievement growth will be worth a total of 22 points, after the 2005-06 school year, toward the maximum composite score rating of 100 total points (Education YES!, 2002).



**Table 2-1  
Education YES!  
Composite Score Weighting**

Component	Point Value	
	Until 2004-05	2005-06 and After
School Performance Indicators	33	33
Achievement Status	34	23
Achievement Change	33	22
Achievement Growth		22
Total	100	100

Source: Weighting (Education YES!, 2002)

After Education YES! composite scores have been tabulated for each school, common letter grades (A, B, C, D, F) will be the labels used to report to the public on the three achievement and three performance indicators. The composite school grade will be derived from the individual school score and the school's status in terms of Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (Education YES!, 2002). Using adequate yearly progress status is another method by which the Michigan State Board of Education will align Education YES! with requirements mandated under the No Child Left Behind Act (see Table 2-2 on page 65). Accreditation is a measurement of quality based on a set of education standards determined by the State of Michigan. These standards incorporate Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test results in reading, mathematics and science as well as the responses to 103 questions that comprise the Education YES! School Self-Assessment Instrument for the Measures of School

Performance (Education YES!, 2003). The School Self-Assessment Instrument for the Measures of School Performance is completed on-line by district administrators and assesses categories such as the annual education report, school improvement plan, school improvement process, and curriculum. Administrators must cite evidence and verify every piece of data in each response category for the Michigan Department of Education's review. After evaluating the results and responses of the School Self-Assessment Instrument for the Measures of School Performance, the Michigan Department of Education assigns one of three levels of accreditation to each school; summary accreditation, interim accreditation or unaccredited. Schools receiving summary accreditation have met all standards established for accreditation and scored 66% or higher for two of the last three consecutive years on math, science, and reading story and information MEAP tests. Schools that are accredited on an interim basis did not meet all of the standards for summary accreditation, but are making progress toward meeting those standards. Additionally, interim accredited schools must score between 51%-65% for two of the first three consecutive years on math, science, and reading story and information MEAP tests. Unaccredited schools do not meet all of the standards for summary accreditation, are not making progress toward meeting those standards, and scored 50% or lower for two of the last three consecutive years on math, science, and reading story and information MEAP tests (Education YES!, 2002).

**Table 2-2**  
**Unified Accountability for Michigan Schools**

<b>Education YES! Composite Score</b>	<b>Did Not Make AYP</b>	<b>Makes AYP</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>D/Alert</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>Unaccredited</b>	<b>D/Alert</b>

Source: Education YES!, 2002

The Adequate Yearly Progress section of Table 2-2 indicates how closely Education YES! requirements are aligned with the federal No Child Left Behind mandate. The Michigan State Board of Education believes strongly that a school that fails to make AYP will not be given an "A". Furthermore, a school that makes AYP will not be listed as unaccredited (education YES!, 2002). The Middle Cities Education Association summarizes the use of adequate yearly progress:

While NCLB uses AYP to determine whether or not a school will be subject to sanctions, Education YES! uses AYP in determining a school's final letter grade only; there are no sanctions for failing to make AYP in Education YES! ([www.middlecities.org/PDF/eycomp.pdf](http://www.middlecities.org/PDF/eycomp.pdf))

Although schools may not face sanctions for failing to make adequate yearly progress, Layman (2002) indicates that schools unaccredited for three consecutive years or who fail to meet minimum standards as addressed in the Education YES! document may face sanctions under the Michigan Revised School Code. One sanction under Education YES!, similar to the No Child Left Behind Act, allows parents or legal guardians to transfer their children from unaccredited schools to any accredited school within the

**district. Another sanction included in the Education YES! document requires underperforming schools to align themselves with an existing research-based school improvement model or affiliate itself with a college or university. Under Education YES!, the Superintendent of Public Instruction can appoint new administrators to unaccredited schools until they become accredited or even close buildings as a final sanction (Layman, 2002).**

**The final section of Education YES! relates to providing assistance for underperforming schools. The Michigan State Board of Education pledges to use new federal resources available under the No Child Left Behind Act to provide substantial and meaningful improvement for low-performing schools. Funds will be available to promote literacy acquisition and training, improve teacher quality and maximize efforts to improve education in general. The composite grades shown in Table 2-2 above will be used to prioritize assistance to underperforming schools. Every public and charter school in Michigan will receive their composite score in a report detailing specific areas in which individual buildings require improvement and steps for achieving a higher Education YES! grade the following year. Private schools are exempt from Education YES! grading (Education YES!, 2002).**

**Education YES! is the State of Michigan's attempt to align requirements with the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Like No Child Left Behind, the mandates included in Education YES! are forceful and rigorous. Since two-thirds of the school's composite score rating for accreditation is based upon student performance on the MEAP, elementary school teachers have a direct responsibility to see their students succeed. The high stakes of MEAP scores may cause elementary teachers to become defensive of their**

instructional strategies and techniques. Hafner, Somers, Mojica, and Burns (2002)

comment on this phenomenon:

Clearly, teachers do not want to have their instructional effectiveness judged without taking into account the effects of noninstructional variables on the scores. Research shows MEAP scores to be influenced by a number of variables, including student mobility, non-English speaking home, parent income, parent education level, and ethnic status. (p. 10)

The emphasis on MEAP results determining a composite score may create a situation where elementary teachers feel a need to discard other portions of the curriculum in order to teach only the narrowed content for which their students must demonstrate mastery. The Michigan Federation of Teachers and School Related Personnel (2002) agrees, and notes that far too much emphasis is placed upon a single test. If teaching to the MEAP test and introducing new content areas to an already bulging elementary school curriculum become common practice, students' knowledge base and skills in broader subject areas will suffer (Goldhaber, 2002). Untested subjects such as social studies, problem solving and handwriting may get shorted due to accountability measures being focused on reading and math (Gulek, 2003). It can be argued that the amount of emphasis placed upon MEAP results to determine Education YES! composite scores will significantly influence elementary teaching activity.

The weighted emphasis of MEAP scores on Education YES! accreditation measures may also cause elementary teachers to spend precious instructional time teaching test taking skills in lieu of other content areas (Koretz, 1998; Schrag, 2000). Spending valuable instructional time on non-curricular areas is not a new phenomenon. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) reports that US students and teachers are victims of rigid and counterproductive school schedules.

Planning to teach test taking and time management skills will alter elementary teacher activity (Clovis, 1999) and create a negative spiral effect upon students' grasp of the elementary curriculum.

The Education YES! document requires school administrators to complete the extensive web-based School Self-Assessment Instrument for the Measures of School Performance each year, documenting and citing evidence to demonstrate compliance. In a memo from Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Superintendent of Public Instruction, to all local and intermediate school district superintendents (November 5, 2002), administrators were asked to review school performance indicators, with school improvement team members, parents, or the entire staff. In turn, some elementary principals asked their staff for assistance completing the School Self-Assessment Instrument done in committee work outside of the school day (Odden, et. al., 2002). Bernauer (2002) lauds this approach noting:

...any reasonable hope of sustaining a focus on improvement requires full realization of the critical role of teacher-leader. (p.89)

Including elementary instructors as teacher-leaders to document and plan for school improvement and accreditation is an admirable method for completing compliance requirements mandated by Education YES!. However, asking teachers to spend precious time to assist in these endeavors cuts into time needed for other professional tasks and will influence the activity of elementary instructors (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994).

Education YES! mandates that all Michigan students will experience one year of growth for one year of instruction. With proper implementation and support, this goal is achievable. To monitor students' academic growth throughout the year, new assessment

programs will need to be implemented. All three school districts participating in this study require their elementary teachers to administer the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to each student numerous times per year to assess reading progression. Other districts are using different assessment tools to monitor the development of their students' learning in reading, math and other core subject areas. These assessment options provide valuable information on individual students so districts can stay in compliance with Education YES! requirements. Administering assessments to students multiple times during the year adds substance to the claim that meeting the requirements of Education YES! influences elementary teacher activity due to the time required to administer frequent assessments.

#### Effects and Unintended Consequences of Past Legislation

Elmore and Fuhrman (2001) argue that recent legislative efforts subscribe to a common theory. The theory states that measuring student performance with standardized assessments and then coupling it to rewards and sanctions will cause schools and the individuals who work in them to perform at higher levels. The theory described above is widespread according to Elmore and Fuhrman (2001):

Such systems are now operating in most states and in thousands of districts, and they represent a significant change from traditional approaches to accountability. (p. 67)

The theory mentioned above applies to the legislation studied in this dissertation as student performance is measured using MEAP scores and increases in MEAP scores are met with rewards, while decreases in MEAP scores are met with sanctions. Application

of the theory through legislative mandates, as some other researchers indicate, may lead to unintended effects for schools, teachers and students.

McNeil (2000) studied a number of school districts in Texas that experienced school reform legislation subscribing to the standardized assessment theory. Similar to the MEAP assessment used in Michigan, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is the tool that holds teachers and administrators accountable for student achievement. The districts McNeil studied described the TAAS as the control mechanism used for decisions about student learning, teacher and administrator practice, and even whole-school quality.

The effects of the Texas legislation requiring administration of the TAAS were widespread among teachers and administrators. McNeil described a situation created by the Texas assessment and accountability system in which the bureaucratic controls had been strengthened at the expense of teaching and learning. McNeil explains:

...the testing of students increasingly drives curriculum and compromises both teaching and the role of students in learning. This prescriptive teaching creates a new form of discrimination as teaching to the fragmented and narrow information on the test comes to substitute for a substantive curriculum in the schools of poor and minority youths. (p. 729-30)

Fear of declining TAAS scores has caused Texas schools to substitute test-prep materials for the usual curriculum. One Texas elementary teacher participating in McNeil's study returned from lunch one day to find a stack of test-prep booklets with a note from her principal saying, "Use these instead of your regular curriculum until after the TAAS." The TAAS test was three months away. Elmore and Fuhrman (2001) agree with the findings of McNeil, noting that legislative accountability systems attract the attention of



teachers and administrators, sometimes forcing extreme instructional decisions to be made.

Texas teachers participating in McNeil's study reported that a large amount of instructional time was reallocated to prepare students to take the TAAS. Mitchell (1997) agreed with McNeil's findings, noting that preparation for traditional accountability tests takes time away from innovative instruction and meaningful learning. Texas teachers described spending time teaching students how to properly bubble in answers for the multiple-choice assessment. Lesson time was spent instructing children how to recognize distractor (obviously wrong) answers on sample TAAS assessments and learning the pep rally cheer, "Three in a row; no, no, no!" The cheer was designed to teach students that if they answered the same letter three times in a row, one of their answers is likely to be wrong. Respondents in the Texas study reported that the kinds of test preparations that are being done to raise test scores may actually hamper students' ability to read for meaning. McNeil (2000) explains:

Behind the test scores and the technical policy debates, however, is the growing reality that the Texas system of educational accountability is harming children, teaching, and the content of public education. (p. 731)

The Texas assessment reform influenced teacher instruction by reallocating large amounts of instructional time to prepare students for the standardized assessment.

Sandholtz, Ogawa and Scribner (2004) described a school district in Los Angeles that faced unintended effects of recent state and federal legislative mandates. California State content area standards were established by legislation requiring districts to adopt state standards and modify student instruction accordingly. To meet the requirements of the standards-based legislation, one Los Angeles district created time guidelines for each

content area. Teachers in the primary grades were expected to teach language arts for 3.5 hours and mathematics for 1.5 hours each day. To help assure compliance with the guidelines, teachers were required to label each of their lessons with the standard that was addressed by the lesson. Lessons not labeled were scrutinized by administration. Los Angeles teachers participating in the study described a push to cover more topics as addressed in the standards and a focus on breadth rather than depth. Other teachers reported teaching the minimum standards to get students up to par and letting go of enrichment activities to focus on skill-based lessons addressed in the standards. In the Los Angeles study, teachers faced the unintended effects of legislative mandates with changes in instruction and record keeping behaviors.

School administrators have also been influenced by past legislation that measures student performance with standardized assessments and then couples it to rewards and sanctions. Berteaux (2003) describes drastic measures taken by New York school administrators to fund reform requirements in a time of reduced state education dollars. District administrators made cuts in jobs, alternative education, dropout prevention, art, music, and special programs in order to provide the materials and training necessary to stay in compliance with New York reform legislation. Berteaux (2003) quotes New York State United Teachers president Thomas Y. Hobart Jr., explaining:

Cuts of this magnitude threaten to halt the progress public education has made and undermine the movement to raise academic standards. (p. 18)

McNeil (2000) describes the role of building principals as severely limited under recent school accountability systems. Principals have greater authority to allocate resources for activities aimed at raising standardized test scores, but less discretionary power to undertake other kinds of work in their schools or to have that work recognized. One

elementary principal participating in McNeil's study spent almost the entire year's instructional budget purchasing TAAS prep materials for the teachers. School principals have been influenced by legislation measuring student performance with standardized assessments. Administrators are spending larger portions of dwindling budgets to supply teachers with materials and training so that they may prepare students effectively to take the standardized assessments and increase test scores.

Schmoker (2004) describes the unintended consequences of comprehensive educational reform as causing fragmentation and overload in school districts. Schmoker (2004) explains:

System overload may be the biggest threat to genuine improvement. I've seen the upshot of this at close range: principals who must spend precious time assembling and then responding to the needs of committees and governance structures.  
(p. 429)

Certain legislative requirements exceed the capacity of schools and districts to implement them successfully. In this case, the district simply becomes overloaded and has no choice but to accept the sanctions of legislative non-compliance. Many times, urban districts fall prey to overload because the resources and personnel are not available to make the reform-based changes required for compliance. The result is system overload influencing teachers, administrators and students in a negative manner.

Although the research on past legislative influences on elementary schools and teacher behaviors is limited, several studies have demonstrated the effects clearly. Teacher behaviors have been influenced by legislative mandates in terms of reallocated instructional time. Teachers are spending large amounts of time preparing children for standardized assessments that will measure student performance and then couple it with rewards and sanctions. Increased record keeping is another unintended consequence of

legislative mandates upon teacher behaviors. Administrators are spending larger portions of the building budget on test preparation materials and training for teachers. The increased costs of legislative compliance in an era of reduced school funding have caused district administration to cut other programs, undermining reform efforts. The demands required to stay in compliance with educational legislation mandates may cause system overload for resource-challenged districts. Districts with low capacity do not have the resources available to implement reform-based practices as required and end up facing sanctions from state and federal authorities.

### Summary

When the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation At Risk* (1983), legislators, policy makers and the public took notice and demanded better quality from public schools in the United States (Stephens, 1994). *A Nation at Risk* set the stage for large government interventions to initiate school improvement and change. Hall and Hord (1987) describe school change as a process and not an event. The requirements mandated by Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind, and Education YES! set the scene for a process of school improvement that significantly influences schools and elementary teacher activity because it adds a greater time demand to the instructional day.

Fullan (1991) identified six major reform conditions, that when present, increase the probability for a successful intervention. These reform conditions include a lack of turmoil in educational practice, a lack of overload by local district staff, the presence of decentralized site-based management, a low rate of turnover in district staff and leadership, the responsibility of a local school person to aid in the implementation of the

reform, and a feeling of ownership by staff members regarding reform initiatives. Of these six reform conditions necessary for success, the lack of overload by local district staff members is of concern when reforms of this magnitude are legislated. When considering the daily job functions of elementary teachers and the expansive curriculum they are required to complete, the recent reform requirements directed by Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind and Education YES! create an educational enterprise that is endemic with new responsibilities and opportunity for overload. The argument can be made that the requirements mandated by the three legislative reform efforts being studied impinge on elementary teacher time and influence opportunity costs. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) describes the constraints of time on our educational system:

...our schools and the people involved with them- students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff- are captives of clock and calendar (p.1)

The school clock governs how families organize their lives, how administrators oversee their schools, and how teachers work their way through the curriculum. (p.2)

The description of recent legislative reforms Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind and Education YES! and how they have influenced schools and elementary teacher activity must be considered because of the significant demands made by each. Both teacher instructional time and opportunity costs have been influenced by these reform efforts. The data collection and analysis will establish whether local elementary teachers share these perceptions and if so, how the three legislative reforms studied herein specifically influence elementary teacher activity and the school organization. The researcher will make conclusions addressing reallocated teacher time and opportunity costs caused by No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. Due to the nature of the research questions, qualitative research methods were preferred over quantitative techniques. Qualitative research methods were selected because of their propensity to produce a rich, thick description of people, places, and conversations not easily handled with statistics (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Examination of various current qualitative research methods revealed that some form of personal interview would be best suited for this study because personal interviews are capable of providing inductive, descriptive data while drawing meaning in a complex subject matter.

Yin (1994) suggests that researchers conducting qualitative research employ a basic list of common research skills including asking good questions, being a good listener, being adaptive and flexible, having a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and remaining unbiased by preconceived notions. The researcher followed the guidelines suggested by Yin to develop interview questions that served as prompts and reflected the actual inquiry sought. The interview questions (see Appendix D) functioned to organize the data collected and help link recent policy implementation with policy influences on elementary schools and teacher behaviors.

## The Researcher

The researcher is a Michigan elementary school teacher with 12 years experience as a classroom teacher who has lived in Olympia County for 15 years and worked in several different districts in varying roles. As a local elementary teacher and Olympia County resident, the researcher has a basic knowledge of the three districts studied and has personal experience working with legislative reform requirements mandated by Public Act 25, Education YES!, and No Child Left Behind. Having personally worked with state and federal reform and being an elementary school teacher helped to facilitate the researcher's acceptance with study respondents.

In order to study the detailed perceptions of elementary teachers concerning their teaching behaviors, it was crucial to have each talk specifically about their experiences working with the reform legislation. To attain the detail necessary for the study, a narrative approach, in the form of a semi-structured interview, to the research was selected. Elementary teacher respondents believed the researcher was a "sympathetic observer", since the researcher was experiencing many of the same phenomenon as the study participants. Being privy to the common perspectives and professional concerns of elementary teachers frequently enhanced interview conversations between the researcher and participants and encouraged respondents to discuss reform issues that they may not have otherwise. The researcher asked participants to propose their own insights into certain study-related phenomenon and used the concepts mentioned as the basis for further inquiry. Yin (1994) explains the added value of respondents willing to provide personal insights to the researcher's inquiries:

The more that a respondent assists in this latter manner, the more the role may be considered one of an “informant” rather than a respondent. Key informants are often critical to the success of a case study. Such persons not only provide the case study investigator with insights into a matter but also can suggest sources of corroboratory evidence. (p. 84)

The comparative involvement attributes of subjectivity and compassion, while acting as a “sympathetic observer”, lend themselves naturally to the design of the study. In this study, using semi-structured interviews while acting as a “sympathetic observer” involved understanding how school and elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced by recent legislative reforms.

### **Design Tests and Biases**

A source of bias that researchers acting as a “sympathetic observer” must be aware of, is referred to as holistic fallacy. Researchers experiencing phenomenon similar to the study participants must be conscious to avoid this potential bias. Cooper (2001) describes this bias:

Holistic fallacy is the interpretation of events as more congruent than they really are, ignoring outliers in the data. This bias is particularly likely to occur later in the research project when the researcher has already analyzed a number of earlier cases. (p. 9)

To avoid errors of holistic fallacy, researchers acting as “sympathetic observers” must purposefully look for outliers in the data and explain them using information gathered from previous observations and interviews.

Maintaining construct validity can be problematic for researchers employing qualitative research methods while acting as a “sympathetic observer”. Construct validity involves establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 1994). To enhance claims of construct validity, multiple sources of evidence were



collected during the study. Sources of information included personal interviews with elementary teachers, personal interviews with elementary principals and review of building annual reports for additional data.

After analyzing study interviews and documents using the constant-comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), findings were written and a model was developed (see Appendix E). The researcher asked several key respondents to review the findings and model for accuracy. Elementary principals, Dr. Craig and Dr. Shea, agreed to review the model and findings and found both to be accurate and significant to understanding the influences of recent legislation upon elementary school and teacher behavior. According to Yin (1994), having key informants review a draft of the study report enhances construct validity and reliability claims.

### **Theoretical Sampling**

The study sample consists of 24 Michigan elementary school teachers and 6 elementary principals, drawn from three separate school districts in southeast Michigan. The current study was designed to develop a model that will describe and conceptualize the ways in which the school organization and elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced by Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind, and Education YES! legislation. To facilitate the study design, a theoretical sampling technique was chosen. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe theoretical sampling:

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal. The initial decisions for theoretical collection of data are based only on a general sociological perspective and on a general subject or problem area. (p. 45)

In addition to theoretical sampling, the constant comparative method of data analysis was employed. Using the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) involves studying each participant independently, then looking for common themes among participants. The interviews were used to identify the degree to which specific reform efforts have influenced elementary teacher activity and the organizational structure of local public schools. Glaser and Strauss describe the process:

In contrast to analytic induction, the constant comparative method is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems (e.g., the distribution of services according to the social value of clients). Some of these properties may be causes, as in analytic induction, but unlike analytic induction others are conditions, consequences, dimensions, types, processes, etc. (p. 104)

We shall describe in four stages the constant comparative method: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory. Although this method of generating theory is a continuously growing process- each stage after a time is transformed into the next- earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage until the analysis is terminated. (p. 105)

The focus of this study is not so much on theory development, but rather a thick description of legislative reforms influencing school and teacher behavior designed to create a deeper meaning of the phenomenon being studied. Use of theoretical sampling combined with the constant comparative method of data analysis facilitated the construction of a model (see Figure 4-1, Appendix E) depicting how schools and

elementary teachers make sense of their experiences related to the legislative reforms being studied.

### **Participants in the Study**

Study respondents included 24 elementary teachers and 6 elementary principals drawn from three separate public school districts located in southeast Michigan. Teachers were selected to participate by their respective principal. A variety of grade levels and years of experience was desired from respondents and participants ranged in age from the mid 20's to the mid 60's. The grade level and tenure of all respondents are indicated in the participant school district tables below. Prior to beginning the interview, study respondents reviewed and signed the required University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) consent form. As guaranteed on that form, the names of teachers, principals and school districts were changed to insure anonymity (See Appendix B).

Three separate school districts, Kelsey Creek, Somerset Community, and Sienna Heights, located in southeast Michigan's Olympia County were selected to provide a melange of organizational differences relative to the study. The three districts studied receive services from the same intermediate school district, Olympia Schools. Research in best practices suggested keeping the intermediate school district variable constant since the intermediate school district plays a part in legislative information dissemination. One structural variable used for district selection was the size of the district in terms of students serviced, teachers employed and the numbers of administrative staff available to support reform implementation. Each district represents different student and teacher

population sizes and was selected to rule out discrepancies related to district size or number of employees available to help with reform requirements.

The Kelsey Creek School District is located in the extreme north central section of Olympia County and contains approximately 55 square miles. Kelsey Creek has a total enrollment for the 2002-2003 school year of 3678 students with a 172 member teaching staff. The Kelsey Creek School District retains many rural qualities such as farms, large acre parcels, woods, fields, lakes, and dirt roads. For the purpose of this study, the Kelsey Creek School District is considered a small district in terms of student and teacher population. Within Kelsey Creek, two elementary schools were selected to participate in the study. The Interlake Elementary School currently serves 374 students in grades K-4. The principal of the school is Mr. Delk and 19 professional teaching staff members are employed there. Study participants from Interlake Elementary School are indicated in Figure 3-1 below:

Figure 3-1: Interlake Elementary School		
Respondent's Name	Grade Level Taught	Yrs as a Teacher/Principal
Mr. Delk	Principal	20
Mrs. Forrester	4 <sup>th</sup>	29
Mrs. Vaughn	2 <sup>nd</sup>	14
Mrs. Bowman	1 <sup>st</sup>	26
Mrs. Wetzel	3 <sup>rd</sup>	33

Ardmore Elementary School is the second school selected from the Kelsey Creek School District. Ardmore serves 329 students in grades K-4 and is a Title I school. Mrs. Duncan

is the principal of Ardmore and the professional teaching staff numbered 21. Study participants from Ardmore Elementary School are indicated in Figure 3-2 below:

Figure 3-2: Ardmore Elementary School		
Respondent's Name	Grade Level Taught	Yrs as a Teacher/Principal
Mrs. Duncan	Principal	11
Mrs. King	4 <sup>th</sup>	5
Mrs. Mayer	2nd	16
Mrs. Little	1 <sup>st</sup>	5
Mrs. Tobin	Reading Recovery	30

The Somerset Community School District is located in the middle of Olympia County and spans three smaller cities. Approximately 6900 students were enrolled in grades K-12 of the Somerset District for the 2002-2003 school year. Sprawling with neighborhoods, businesses and parks, Somerset is a typical suburban community. For the purpose of this study, the Somerset Community School District is considered a medium-sized district. Somerset became a school of choice district in 1997, meaning that students from neighboring districts are permitted to attend Somerset Community district schools; space allowing. Within Somerset, two elementary schools were selected to participate in the study. Eastgate Elementary School currently serves 434 students in preschool-grade 5, and is a Title I school. For reasons undisclosed to the researcher, the principal of Eastgate Elementary School withdrew from participation in the study subsequent to his interview, so no data will be available regarding that segment of Eastgate. No other Somerset elementary principals were available to participate in the study, so an additional

principal from the Sierra Heights School District was selected to maintain the continuity of the administrative perspective.

Eastgate Elementary School has 25 professional teaching staff members and houses the district's "Magnet Program", servicing gifted and talented students in grades 3-5. Presently 25% of Eastgate's population is school of choice meaning that students may attend from eligible surrounding districts. Study participants from Eastgate Elementary School are indicated in Figure 3-3 below:

Figure 3-3: Eastgate Elementary School		
Respondent's Name	Grade Level Taught	Yrs as a Teacher/Principal
Withdrawn	Principal	N/A
Mrs. Daniel	2 <sup>nd</sup>	5
Mrs. Lynch	3 <sup>rd</sup>	18
Mrs. Smith	1 <sup>st</sup>	3
Mrs. Blaise	4/5 Magnet	5

Newport Elementary School is the second school selected from the Somerset Community School District. Newport serves 518 students in preschool-grade 5. Mrs. Jordan is the principal of Newport and the professional teaching staff numbered 33. Study participants from Newport Elementary School are indicated in Figure 3-4 below:

<b>Figure3-4: Newport Elementary School</b>		
<b>Respondent's Name</b>	<b>Grade Level Taught</b>	<b>Yrs as a Teacher/Principal</b>
<b>Mrs. Jordan</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mrs. Turner</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Mrs. Ward</b>	<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Mr. Campbell</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Mrs. Lewis</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>7</b>

The Sienna Heights School District is located in southwestern Olympia County and services all or part of nine municipal units. Total student enrollment for the 2002-2003 school year exceeds 14,600 students, the largest in Olympia County. Sienna Heights Schools employ approximately 1020 certified teachers in 14 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 3 high schools, and 1 community high school. Sienna Heights boasts a community atmosphere brimming with neighborhoods, businesses and more than forty lakes. For the purpose of this study, the Sienna Heights School District is considered a large district in terms of student and teacher population. Within Sienna Heights, two elementary schools were selected to fully participate in the study and one additional elementary school was selected to replace the withdrawn principal from Eastgate Elementary School.

Woodridge Elementary School currently serves 507 students in grades K- 5, and is a Title I school. The principal of the school is Dr. Craig and Woodridge employs 37 professional teaching staff members. Study participants from Woodridge Elementary School are indicated in Figure 3-5 below:

Figure 3-5: Woodridge Elementary School		
Respondent's Name	Grade Level Taught	Yrs as a Teacher/Principal
Dr. Craig	Principal	16
Mrs. Wells	2 <sup>nd</sup>	16
Mrs. Albright	3 <sup>rd</sup>	7
Mrs. Dodson	1 <sup>st</sup>	9
Mrs. Frost	5 <sup>th</sup>	22

Highland Elementary School is the second school selected from the Sienna Heights School District. Highland serves 526 students in grades K-5 and has a teaching staff of 39. Dr. Lambert is the principal of Highland Elementary School. Study participants from Highland Elementary School are indicated in Figure 3-6 below:

Figure 3-6: Highland Elementary School		
Respondent's Name	Grade Level Taught	Yrs as a Teacher/Principal
Dr. Lambert	Principal	14
Mrs. Evans	4 <sup>th</sup>	8
Mrs. Burton	Kindergarten	30
Mr. Price	3 <sup>rd</sup>	10
Mrs. Stephens	5 <sup>th</sup> /Literacy Coach	23

Brookfield Elementary School is the third school selected from the Sienna Heights School District. Brookfield serves 496 students in grades K-5 and has a teaching



staff of 34. Dr. Shea is the principal of Brookfield Elementary School and was the only study participant from Brookfield Elementary School as indicated in Figure 3-7 below:

Figure 3-7: Brookfield Elementary School		
Respondent's Name	Grade Level Taught	Yrs as a Teacher/Principal
Dr. Shea	Principal	18

The Kelsey Creek, Somerset Community, and Sienna Heights School Districts were selected as study sites to ensure a representative sample of Michigan districts. Legislative reforms such as Public Act 25, Education YES!, and No Child Left Behind fall equally on all Michigan districts, however there may be regional differences in the methods and resources employed in response to these reforms (Peters, 1997). Since methods and resources used to comply with legislative reforms may vary depending upon the number of employees available to help with enacting reforms, three different sized districts were selected for this study.

#### Contact and Interview Procedure

The researcher initially made contact with the principal of each participating school via email or telephone communication. Contact letters (see Appendix C) were sent to interested principals and follow up telephone communications facilitated the scheduling of interview days and times. The researcher arrived at each participating school approximately 30-45 minutes prior to the first interview scheduled. Upon entering the school, the researcher introduced himself to central office staff members and asked for a copy of the most recent building annual report. Yin (1994) believes that

documentary information is likely to be relevant in all qualitative research studies and describes the importance of collecting documentary information:

...the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. First, documents are helpful in verifying the correct spellings and titles or names of organizations that might have been mentioned in an interview. Second, documents can provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources. ...Third, inferences can be made from documents. (p. 81)

The researcher found the building annual reports helpful in examining the student and staff population sizes, detailed school improvement plans, challenges faced by the school and recent MEAP assessment scores. The documentary information collected from annual reports played an explicit role in the data collection process and analysis provided the researcher with additional information from which to describe and explain how recent legislative acts have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior.

### Technique of Interviewing

The degree of rich description required by the research questions studied demanded a narrative focus for data collection. To facilitate the gathering of thickly descriptive data, the semi-structured personal interview technique was employed with each respondent. Patton (1988) suggests that the semi-structured interview format allows specification of topics and issues to be covered in advance, however the interviewer may decide the sequence and wording of the questions during the course of the interview. The use of an outline during a semi-structured interview increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection more systematic for each respondent. The format of the semi-structured interview remains conversational and situational, and logical gaps in data collection can be anticipated (Patton, 1988). A separate interview outline was used

for elementary teachers and administrators (see Appendix D). The flexibility and unrestricted characteristics of the semi-structured interview made it a good choice for the nature of the study conducted.

Elementary teacher and administrator participants were interviewed for approximately 60-75 minutes during the spring of 2004. Interviews were conducted in a meeting room at the respondent's school while a substitute teacher, provided by the researcher, instructed their teacher's students. Study respondents appreciated being able to conduct the interviews during normal business hours. All interviews, with the exception of one participant, were audio tape-recorded with the consent of the respondent. The participant and the researcher sat facing each other with a tape recorder placed on a table between them. Regarding the tape-recording of participants for qualitative research studies, Whyte (1984) notes:

Informants are likely to talk more for the record with the machine than without, even when they have been told that the interviewer is going to write up the interview later. Where the interviewer has strong rapport, informants may accept the machine with little hesitation, but in the early stages of the study its introduction may damage rapport. (p. 114)

The researcher began the interviews with several background questions regarding the participant's tenure and teaching responsibilities. The next sets of questions ask about current math and literacy instruction and their influences. The respondent's use of professional time was the subject of the next group of questions, followed by student testing requirements and their responses to testing. School organization and cultural changes were the focal point of another set of questions, however, this area of questioning was modified after several initial interviews failed to provide the required data. The researcher and committee chairman kept in close contact during the interview

process and developed new questions as required to achieve the research objectives. The final subset of questions was aimed at record keeping and other new requirements that schools and elementary teachers may experience as a result of the legislation studied.

Comprehensive fieldnotes were taken during interviews and, in following best practices in fieldwork research, expanded fieldnotes were added to the raw data upon completion of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Sanjek, 1990; Seidman, 1991). After being carefully coded, tape-recorded interviews were transcribed for further analysis using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Individual copies of transcribed interviews were e-mailed to respondents with a cover letter asking each to review the transcript for accuracy and to add any additional thoughts participants may have regarding topics discussed during the interview. Out of 25 teacher and 6 principal interviews, 5 teachers wrote back with corrections and additional thoughts. One elementary principal expanded the interview responses and rewrote several determined to be unclear.

The information collected through semi-structured interviews was repeatedly analyzed for identifying patterns and commonalties (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Wolcott, 1995). The data was scrutinized for evidence that supported or refuted existing assertions of the research subject and built toward overarching themes (Seidman, 1991) using the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While examining the uniquely descriptive data provided from interviews, preliminary arguments were constructed. Data was organized and collated as supporting evidence to the arguments written. Review and analysis of the interview data provided a deeper understanding of how schools and

elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced by the legislative reforms included in the study.

### Human Subjects

The dissertation involved the recording of elementary teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding the ways in which No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25 have influenced the organization and their own teaching behaviors. The largest risk for participants involved the loss of confidentiality concerning their interview responses. To reduce this risk, teachers were selected from a variety of elementary schools from the Kelsey Creek, Somerset Community, and Sienna Heights School Districts. Each elementary teacher respondent, their respective district and the name of the county were given a pseudonym; only the researcher and doctoral committee members know the study participants' actual identities. Interviews were conducted with one respondent at a time and the information collected was treated with maximum confidentiality. This assurance was discussed with all respondents prior to data collection, with an emphasis statement that guarantees are not possible. All subjects were asked to sign a copy of the consent form prior to data collection (see UCRIHS application in Appendix B).

Appendix A contains a copy of the application presented to the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). The application details aspects of the study and procedures for providing the protection of participants' confidentiality, addressing the risks the study might entail for participants and describing how those risks will be minimized.

## Units of Analysis

To accurately determine the influence of Public Act 25, Education YES! and No Child Left Behind on the school organization and elementary teacher behavior, indicators of behavior change must be determined. The research questions studied demand units of analysis that can be measured through participants' rich description of how teaching behaviors have been influenced. To accomplish this objective, teacher time and opportunity cost have been selected to measure the ways in which schools and elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced by the legislative reforms studied.

Time is often regarded as the "currency" by which teachers operate on a daily basis. Bruno (1997) describes this phenomenon:

At both the classroom teacher and the school organization levels, time is the currency of exchange and is, therefore, fundamental to both successful school reform design and its implementation in the classroom. (p. 4)

In short, because school time, teacher time, and school leader time are all interrelated in the school reform and change process, time is the common thread that joins teachers to school organizations and both to the reform and change process. (p. 6)

Raywid (1993) describes teacher time as the key issue that emerged in every analysis of school reform appearing within the last decade. In semi-structured interviews with the researcher acting as a participant-observer, respondents were asked to detail the ways in which their time and the school organization's time has been reallocated or modified because of the requirements imposed by No Child Left Behind, Education YES!, and Public Act 25. Respondents were asked whether or not teaching opportunities have been forgone due to legislative reform demands, and to describe those opportunity costs.

A review of the literature indicates that time in the school organization is a scarce resource that is fiercely competed for by all interested parties (Cusick, 1983; Flinders,

1989; Rozycki, 2001; Weber, 1946). When legislative reform mandates add new responsibilities to the already full schedule of elementary teachers, something must be forsaken. Bruno (1997) claims that time cannot be freely given by elementary teachers to promote school reform; rather time investments entail making choices and choices must reflect the goals, desired rewards and potential consequences associated with the teacher. Time is one of the most important and limiting resources in the management of schools and the reform process (Purnell and Hill, 1992), it is a significant unit of analysis, appropriate to meet the requirements of the study. Bruno (1997) sums up the magnitude of teacher time:

In the school organizational change and reform process, time is important to study because it affects teachers' behavior in the classroom and their willingness to participate in the "extra" time-consuming change and reform activities of the school organization. (p. 21)

### Summary

The study investigated the ways in which the school organization and elementary teachers' behaviors have been influenced by requirements mandated by Public Act 25, Education YES! and No Child Left Behind legislation. A qualitative research design was employed to conduct semi-structured interviews. 24 elementary teachers and 6 elementary principals, selected from three metropolitan Detroit school districts, were interviewed. Interviews were tape-recorded, coded and transcribed to detail responses from study participants. The interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to create rich, thick narratives describing the ways in which the school organization and elementary teacher activity has been influenced by the legislative reforms being studied. From the narratives, a model (see Appendix E) was

**created to depict the influence of No Child Left Behind and Education YES! upon elementary school and teacher behaviors.**



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

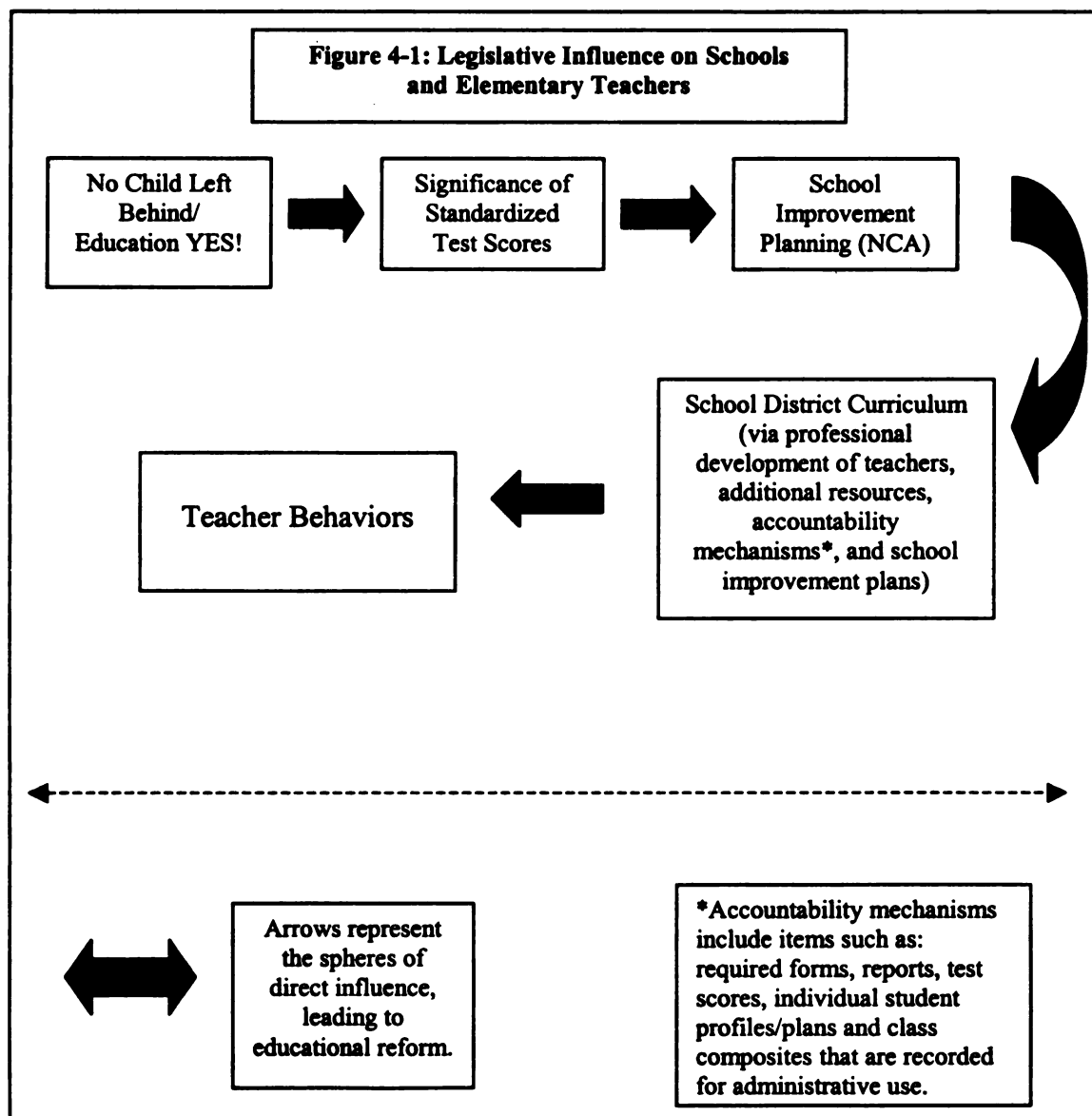
#### Analysis of the Data

The purpose of this study is to describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. Upon completion of 24 elementary teacher interviews and 6 elementary principals, the interview audio tapes were transcribed and printed out for review. Each interview transcript was reviewed by the researcher with the intention of locating spelling or grammar errors and checking the context of each interview to confirm accuracy. After the initial readings, interview transcripts were evaluated for detail using the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher designed a simple matrix to organize and code the data by phenomenon reported, category of respondent reporting the incident and direct citations of the phenomenon reported. This process was further defined as the matrices were rewritten to organize the data by subgroup areas. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon reported are grouped into 6 categories: instructional reform, elementary teacher use of time, teacher professional development, elementary testing/assessment reform, record keeping and other miscellaneous areas, and elementary school administrative reform.

#### The Model

To track the influence of recent legislation on schools and elementary teacher behaviors, a model was developed to demonstrate the spheres of influence leading to

educational reform. Figure 4-1 illustrates the two most recent legislative pieces studied, No Child Left Behind and Education YES!, having a direct influence on the level of significance that schools place upon standardized test scores. For the purpose of the study, the Michigan Educational Progress Profile (MEAP) scores is the standardized test referenced. As detailed in chapter two, scaled MEAP scores weigh heavily on the grade that is assigned to each school from Education YES! legislation. In addition, adequate yearly progress is determined through a formula that includes improvements in building MEAP scores, ultimately leading to a level of accreditation.



The increased significance of MEAP scores has directly influenced school improvement planning through item analysis of past MEAP tests. Planning for school improvement goals involves analyzing past MEAP assessments and determining areas where students need the most improvement. Through this process, formal school improvement goals are written and procedures are determined for implementing school improvement goals in all classrooms.

Implementation of school improvement plans directly influences the way in which curriculum is delivered. For example, the staff at Highland Elementary School wrote a school improvement plan requiring teachers to teach expository writing using the process writing format at least three times per week. The writing curriculum was directly influenced by the school improvement plan that required all teachers to be trained in process writing, have access to process writing materials and reallocate instructional time. In this manner, the school curriculum is directly influenced by the school improvement plan.

The change in curriculum directly influences elementary teacher behaviors in terms of instruction, materials used and time allocated for instruction. The school improvement example mentioned at Highland Elementary School required that teachers attend training sessions for writer's workshop and allocate at least 45 minutes, three times per week for expository process writing instruction. Teachers received new process writing materials from school improvement leaders and were expected to use the materials for writer's workshop instruction. Elementary teacher behaviors are directly influenced by changes in the school curriculum as mandated by school improvement goals.

The path of influence from recent legislation to school and teacher behaviors is indirect, but robust. It is clear that elementary school and teacher behaviors have been influenced by Education YES! and No Child Left Behind mandates in an indirect manner. The following sections will detail the changes reported by teachers and administrators and correlate the relationship of the reform described to recent legislative acts.

### **Instructional Reforms**

The first major theme to emerge from analysis of the data is that elementary teacher instructional practices have changed significantly over the past several years. The majority of lower elementary (grades K-2) teachers interviewed reported teaching reading using a balanced literacy approach. Most lower elementary teacher respondents believed that the integration of core literacy components including reading, writing, spelling and word study into a balanced literacy block is the most appropriate method to instruct today's students. This balanced literacy approach takes from 2 - 3 hours and is generally taught during the morning hours each day.

In past years, most teachers were supplied with a basal textbook series from which to instruct students on reading, writing, listening, speaking and spelling skills. All students, regardless of their instructional reading level were taught using the same materials with varying degrees of differentiation. The balanced literacy approach to teaching involves assessing all students to determine exact instructional and independent reading levels as well as determining literacy skills individual students have mastered and need to learn. Students are then placed into homogeneous guided reading groups of 2-6 students reading at similar instructional and independent levels. Advanced readers are

placed with other advanced readers and struggling readers are placed with similar-leveled peers. Homogeneously clustered guided reading groups are instructed with materials appropriate for the instructional level of the students within the group and lessons are individualized to instruct students in the skills needed. Reading, writing, listening, speaking and word study skills are taught together as part of a literacy block and are correlated to allow the maximum content coverage during the balanced literacy block time. The balanced literacy approach also provides opportunities for students to move into flexible groups for alternate literacy activities such as shared reading, choral reading and heterogeneous partner reading.

Mrs. Little, a first grade teacher from the Kelsey Creek School District, teaches using the balanced literacy approach from 9 until noon daily. She describes her reading workshop program:

In reading workshop we start the structure, under the umbrella of reading workshop, the structure is usually a mini-lesson, guided practice, independent practice and then we come back and share. During independent practice, this is the time when I'll pull groups for guided reading or we will do some strategic reading types of activities to help them with their fluency or expression. If they are in another group, we might work on building words, word chunks, depending on where each child is. During the block of reading workshop, there is time set aside for word building once a week.

Mrs. Dodson, a first grade teacher from the Sienna Heights School District, uses the same balanced literacy approach. Mrs. Dodson was one of the first lower elementary teachers to pilot literacy instruction in this way and was instrumental in helping to train her lower elementary colleagues. When asked to describe the components of her balanced literacy instruction, Mrs. Dodson notes:

...I usually start with a shared reading where I take a big book of some sort, where we are reading it with the students and by the end of week they are reading it on their own. Then I usually follow up with a poem, which is also another form of shared reading then we go into the word study component, a read a loud component and then they go into literacy centers where they are independently working on a concept that we have already learned or they are working on phrasing, inference, or reading of familiar text. Then I will pull guided reading groups, which is small group instruction, with students, anywhere from one to six students, and working on a book that's at their level.

Teachers and administrators believe balanced literacy instruction is the best way to teach students at their instructional level. Advanced readers are challenged with higher level literacy skills and text appropriate for their higher reading level. Students reading at grade level expectations or struggling with basic reading concepts can be instructed with materials designed to meet their individual needs. Lower elementary teachers explained the balanced literacy approach came about as an initial push from their districts to move in the direction of best practices for literacy instruction. Mrs. Bowman, a first grade teacher, describes her exposure to balanced literacy instruction from a more traditional whole group teaching:

I used to do more whole group instruction. I always felt comfortable with it but it was pointed out to us (by district administration) that we were not, maybe focusing enough on the children who had difficulty in that whole group situation. I agreed that that made sense.

A preponderance of the other lower elementary respondents had similar experiences during the recent period. Dr. Craig, the principal of Woodridge Elementary School, explains how the balanced literacy approach evolved in the Sienna Heights district:

When I first came to Woodridge, it was the first year that the school was in existence. We did not understand what a literacy library was. Teachers were teaching using the Harcourt Brace basal (to teach whole group instruction) which would have been approved in '88 for our district, and not using it very effectively because their complaints were that the students in the first grade or second grade, many could not read that book so they were frustrated. We did not know how to level and how to test and assess and put our kids in appropriate reading materials. That really sparked an intense interest on the part of the lower elementary teachers to say that we are not going to be intimidated anymore. We are going to get ourselves smart. That sort of was the very beginning we had at that time.

The balanced literacy approach was implemented into the three districts studied prior to Education YES! and No Child Left Behind. District administrators believe balanced literacy instruction is a best practice and lauded the literacy growth of students, at all reading levels, taught using balanced literacy instruction. As MEAP reading and writing assessments became more significant under mandates from No Child Left Behind and Education YES!, school administration endorsed balanced literacy instruction as the preferred method by which all elementary students be taught.

Despite the success the majority of lower elementary teachers indicated from the move to balanced literacy instruction, only half of the upper elementary teachers interviewed reported such a change in their literacy instructional practice. Many upper elementary teachers were still using a basal or generic trade paperback for whole group reading instruction. Mrs. Forrester, a fourth grade teacher tells about her literacy instruction:

I do a literacy reading, a novel group type of thing. This is whole group and we actually all read the same novel.

When asked why upper elementary teachers have been more resistant to this significant instructional change, Mr. Delk the principal of Interlake Elementary School responded:

...not everybody changes, change is constant and slow, but I think we now focus more on the individual student rather than the whole group instructed. Guided reading groups take place at our lowest levels (K-2) and a couple years ago started with guided reading groups for our at-risk readers in third and fourth grade. Now we are moving towards doing that at all grade levels and looking at a reader's workshop and writer's workshop concept and I think that will be in our future.

Some upper elementary teachers explained that they knew a balanced literacy approach was a better way to teach, but they have not yet had the formalized training and guidance comparable to that provided lower elementary teachers, in order to initiate such a transformation in instruction.

The Somerset Community, Kelsey Creek and Sienna Heights School districts all like what they have seen with respect to the reading scores of lower elementary students who have experienced the shift in literacy instruction. All three districts have agendas that include training each elementary teacher to use a balanced literacy approach to teaching.

Dr. Craig explains:

...we have made full circle and our teachers in third, fourth and fifth grade are now experiencing that same angst that the lower elementary teachers were five and six years ago and trying to figure out how to handle this. Now we see it as something that is doable. Fourth and Fifth grade teachers aren't quite there yet but they are seeing it and starting to do it.

One third grade teacher from the Sienna Heights School District piloted some of the upper elementary training and is now teaching using balanced literacy instruction. She reflects on her significant instructional change:

Literacy instruction lasts about two hours every morning. It has changed a lot over the past three years. I start off with a shared reading lesson, which tends to be about 15 to 20 minutes. Then we break into our reader's workshop where the children are working on independent activities, which can vary. The kids work independently while I pull guided reading groups, which lasts about 15 to 20 minutes per group. Then at the end we come back together and review over independent work, go over answers, discuss word work that they have been working on and kind of pull the group back together again. Then we move into writer's workshop.



Because of the increased significance of MEAP scores due to Education YES! and No Child Left Behind, the districts studied are currently providing professional development on balanced literacy instruction for upper elementary teachers. Administrators expect elementary teachers to instruct students using balanced literacy instruction and anticipate the significant literacy growth seen in lower elementary students who have already experienced balanced literacy instruction.

The movement from whole group teaching of reading to a balanced literacy instruction reflects an awareness by teachers of the success achieved from individualized instruction. Study respondents indicated that individualized instruction is not a new concept. Teachers have been differentiating lessons for individual students for many years, however, the emphasis and degree of individualized instruction has been increased significantly. When reflecting on literacy instructional changes, lower elementary teachers respond that they now plan and direct their instruction to meet the individual needs of each student. Planning involves a process whereby individual students are assessed to determine their independent and instructional reading levels. Learners are then placed with other students of like reading ability to form a flexible guided reading group and are taught using materials at their instructional level. Mrs. Duncan, the principal from Ardmore Elementary School defines the individualization of the balanced literacy approach used by teachers:

They actually write a program for each child. Not a lot of the children have the same program because you know, groups of children go through school that are alike but with our MLPP they write up a plan for each child.

Somerset Community, Sienna Heights, and Kelsey Creek districts all require their lower elementary teaching staff to administer the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), which is an assessment tool designed to ascertain a child's independent and instructional

reading levels as well as their level of comprehension. Mrs. Dodson explains how knowing a child's exact reading levels facilitates the individualization of literacy instruction:

I take a running record on a student with a familiar text that they have read once, just to see if I am picking appropriate text for that student. From there I get a good handle on if I am picking appropriate books for those students. I look for at least a teaching point from the running record that can help me with the next guided reading lesson.

Mrs. Vaughn, a second grade teacher from Interlake Elementary, believes that individualizing literacy instruction allows for greater student growth during the school year and more appropriate literacy skills teaching. She explains:

We always knew if they were above or below grade level. But now I can say that this child is at a level 28 and his comprehension is good. Or, they are reading at a level 28, but comprehension is only at a level 24. That has helped that we can truly get a picture of that child, a whole picture of the child.

Lower elementary teachers report that they have been individualizing their reading instruction through the balanced literacy approach for several years; however, upper elementary teachers reflect that this is a relatively new concept for them. This paradigm shift indicates that balanced literacy instruction is accepted by teachers and administrators as a best practice and is now a standard practice for the districts participating in the study. The increased focus on individualized literacy instruction is a direct influence of the change in the language arts curriculum of the districts studied. Administrators recognize individualized literacy instruction as one of the vehicles that will improve reading and writing MEAP scores, which have increased significance under recent legislation.

Teachers in each of the three districts agreed that in addition to the transformation to the delivery of literacy instruction, the skills taught have changed significantly. Teachers claim they have gotten smarter about what to look for and emphasize during

smaller guided reading group instruction. Dr. Lambert, a principal in the Sienna Heights District, explains the trend he sees at Highland Elementary School:

I think that there is a lot more, focus on individual kids. There are a lot more professional decisions about where we go with instruction. There is a lot less almost generic teaching. I think that the staff as a whole, has gotten real good at looking what skills a child has, what skills the kids need next and planning instruction around that.

Mrs. Wells, a second grade teacher at Woodridge Elementary, remarks that balanced literacy instruction is a time to individually look for specific reading skills and see if the children are applying them appropriately. She explains:

I stop them in between and ask them questions. Ask, "What do you think is going to happen?" and during their talking and our communication, I see if they have been using any strategy. When reading out loud is there a fluency problem. When they came to a word that they were unsure of, what strategy did they use? When I ask them to make an inference, could they do that, could they draw any conclusions about what might come next or why this happened? Are they able to give me any retelling? Are they excited or bored with that book? Through that, most of the time I can get something that they need work on...

Mrs. Turner, a third grade teacher at Newport Elementary gives each student a kit that includes bookmarks with specific reading strategies explaining their applications. Students take these kits home nightly and part of their homework is to apply a specific strategy in their evening reading with their parents. Mrs. Bowman remembers a time, years ago, when she had to tell a parent that their child was having trouble with reading; but couldn't explain why. Now she believes that she can clearly explain to the parents what reading skills their children may be missing and how to address their needs.

It is clear that elementary teaching practices regarding literacy have changed dramatically in recent years. Elementary teachers are no longer teaching reading to an entire group of students using the same text. Instead, teachers are using balanced literacy instruction to integrate reading, writing, word study and spelling into a literacy

instructional block of time. Although some form of individualized instruction has always been in place, individual students are now being assessed using the DRA or QRI multiple times each school year to determine students' independent and instructional reading levels. Students are now grouped with other students of similar reading ability and taught at their instructional level to achieve maximum reading growth. Elementary teachers have become smarter about emphasizing crucial reading strategies and skills and giving students multiple opportunities to apply those skills at home and in school. The era of generic reading teaching has evolved into a complex instructional literacy block where students' learning needs are being individually met. The shift to balanced literacy with individualized instruction is designed to enhance student learning with the secondary objective of improving MEAP scores that have increased in significance due to recent legislative mandates.

Balanced literacy instruction has been reported by study participants to take from 2-3 hours each school day. Most school days average approximately six hours, not including lunch, special classes and time passing in the halls. With balanced literacy instruction requiring such a large portion of the day, it would seem as though other subject areas are being shortchanged. Several teachers feel as though science and social studies get the "short stick", because these subject areas are not tested as heavily as reading, writing and math. Some innovative teachers have found ways to integrate other subjects into the balanced literacy instructional block to maximize the time students spend on social studies and science. Dr. Craig clarifies:

If you don't integrate social studies and science into that reading instruction, then you are dead. There is no time in the day to do it all. There is not a simplistic response that I can give you. It is very net worked. It's very integrated as a ball and that has been the biggest challenge for upper grade teachers. Lower elementary have got it pretty well identified. They have a real good solid handle on the literacy. The upper grades are still working through it.

Teachers are finding resourceful ways to integrate social studies and science into literacy instruction. Several teachers described spending time studying mammals through an animal research unit that spanned reading, writing, word study/vocabulary building, speaking and science-related skills. A first grade teacher explains how she incorporates all the subject-area teaching in her classroom:

Social studies I really try and integrate because I feel that's the best way and most efficient now a days, with all the pressure coming down on teachers and this is what we have to teach, and this is all the assessments we have to do, we have fit everything in. In order to do that, the best way is through integration. For example, our unit right now is science, so I am taking a lot of time finding resources like big books and poems that have to do with science themes with insects and integrating that with my shared reading or my read along.... The same thing with social studies. Finding books that have common good to teach that concept to the class. That's how I am integrating science and social studies.

Elementary teachers are also beginning to integrate math into the balanced literacy block in addition to time already allotted for mathematics instruction. Elementary teacher respondents believe that when science, math and social studies can be integrated into the balanced literacy block, students are receiving a double exposure to subject-area concepts. "Doubling up" on science, social studies and math concepts allows for maximum exposure to both subjects without sacrificing the large amount of time required to successfully teach only reading skills using balanced literacy instruction. Students are taught using integrated instruction to increase student learning with the anticipation that MEAP scores will improve. Improved MEAP scores correlate into better school grades administered through Education YES! and a stronger opportunity for schools to attain adequate yearly progress.

In addition to “doubling up” on math concepts through balanced literacy instruction when possible, teacher respondents discussed a recent significant change in mathematics instruction. Study respondents report that parents and school administrators have encouraged teachers to individualize their math instruction and differentiate lessons to meet individual students’ needs. Currently, a number of elementary teachers use pre-assessments to determine which skills individual students have mastery of as they teach math units. Students who do well on the pre-assessment are often given extensions to the regular lesson or the lessons are differentiated to be more challenging. Students in the Sienna Heights School District who demonstrate mastery of most grade-level concepts are permitted to attend math lessons in the next higher grade during regular math instruction. A third grade teacher from Sienna Heights explains:

...there is a lot of differentiation within the work itself. I have kids at various levels and from a student who has skipped third grade math and goes up to fourth grade math. I also have a lot of students that are very high academically and their work needs to be compacted so I work closely with Mrs. McMann from the Gifted and Talented Office this year and have different materials for those kids to use. They have pre-tested out of certain units in the beginning and move onto independent activities.

A second grade teacher from the Kelsey Creek District reported that she also individualizes her math instruction, but with a different focus. Mrs. Vaughn has a group of children who have high aptitude for math concepts, and she describes her challenge group:

I have a group of children that I call the challenge group that meet together after lunch. It is more problem solving instead of rote things. It has a real strong concept base, and they are a little more capable than some of the other students. We meet for about 10-15 minutes and we do some problem solving, we do 5 of them a week, 1 each day and there are 2 challenge problems for them to try.

Mrs. Blaise, a 4/5 Magnet teacher from Somerset Community Schools believes very strongly that differentiation in math instruction is the only way to go:

I always pre-assess. If you are already secure in five of those (learning objectives), I'm not going to make you sit through five more days of instruction on something that you already get. But, I am going to make you do these two or three mini-activities so I make sure that you are practicing that skill and that you have really got it and it wasn't just a lucky guess on the test kind of a thing. Then I have a series of games and things that they will work on and I'll pull them into small groups just like guided reading.

Woodridge Elementary School recently purchased a computer program called ALEX, with the goal of individualizing math instruction for high-achieving students. The ALEX program allows teachers to individualize lessons within the program to meet the needs of students who have already mastered the grade-level goals and have been advanced to the next grade level for math instruction. Differentiated and individualized math instruction are believed to be current best practices designed to raise student math achievement which translates into improved MEAP math scores. MEAP math scores are crucial in determining whether or not individual schools will make adequate yearly progress and play a part in the formula used to determine school grades under Education YES!.

Differentiation and individualized instruction have taken a significant role in the three districts studied. The Somerset Community School District offers a special multi-age program, referred to as the Magnet Program, to further meet the individual needs of the top 80 percent of third, fourth and fifth graders. The Magnet Program is hosted at Eastgate Elementary, but includes approximately 100 students from all Somerset Community schools. Students in the Magnet Program are continually assessed in reading and math throughout the year. The students are grouped with others of like ability to maximize their learning and growth. There are extra costs incurred by the school district to operate the

Magnet Program including testing (the IOWA test of basic skills given as an indicator of ability for acceptance into the program), transportation, and administrative costs. In an era of reduced school funding, the Somerset Community School District has demonstrated a commitment to differentiated instruction by continuing to fund the Magnet Program.

Districts that are in the market for a new math curriculum scrutinize potential textbooks for high levels of lesson differentiation and individualization. Twenty-two of the twenty-eight districts in Olympia County are now using the Everyday Math program developed by the University of Chicago. Sienna Heights and Somerset Community Schools are already using the program and Kelsey Creek is seriously considering the Everyday Mathematics program for adoption. Mrs. Jordan, the principal of Newport Elementary School, claims that Everyday Math was adopted by Somerset Community Schools because it met all of the district and State benchmarks, prepared kids well for the MEAP assessment, and includes a spiral curriculum that allows for individualized lessons with adjustable levels of differentiation. Mrs. Lynch, a third grade teacher from Eastgate Elementary explains:

We used to have a math program that taught every strand of mathematics separately. The fact that Every Day Math spirals and you are able to revisit throughout the course of the year, often times when it came to the MEAP, we did very poorly on geometry and that was because nobody ever got to chapter 12. They would be hung up on that.

It is clear that districts are choosing math materials based upon the differentiation ability of the program. Lesson individualization is an important characteristic, thought by teachers and administrators, to lead to increased student learning and improved standardized test scores.



Teacher respondents are also describing a change in mathematics instruction from pencil and paper to a more hands-on, manipulative-based program. Mrs. Evans, a fourth grade teacher from Highland Elementary School explains the difference:

It's like you teach geometry and you get out the three dimensional shapes and count the sides and then you teach volume and it's just constantly changing and they are learning something new every couple of days. When you introduce something new, it's always best to do hands on visual so they can see it and understand it. Since it's like that kind of a program, we are doing hands on quite a bit.

Elementary teachers and administrators believe a hands-on math program that lends itself to differentiated instruction has made a significant difference in their schools' MEAP math scores. Ninety three percent of fourth graders at Ardmore Elementary School scored satisfactory or higher on the 2002-03 MEAP mathematics assessment. When asked how her students achieved such a milestone, the principal of Ardmore responded:

I think it's the approach they (the teachers) are using. They went to classes on their own time after school because the school did not endorse either Math Their Way or Chicago Math or any of those types of programs. When you do something on your own and you make it a goal in the building, and you are using your own time, you really want to learn it and you use it. Our teachers have a lot of colleague support amongst each other. What one learns they come back and teach each other.

Although the Kelsey Creek School District has not formally adopted the Everyday Math program, teachers in the district have taken it upon themselves to learn about the program and to individualize their math instruction through a manipulative-based approach. Mrs. Jordan, a principal in the Somerset district, has noticed a significant increase in Newport Elementary School's fourth grade math MEAP results over the past 2 years. She reports:

I've also seen a difference in the kids' math performance as a result of Everyday Math. ...As a result, when they (teachers) turn the quarterly reports into me, there's a definite line on math achievement where the kids who have had it this whole time are doing amazingly well where the kids who haven't had it as long are still struggling in different areas.

The concrete teaching of math skills through programs that encourage differentiation and hands-on applications for students has been a significant instructional change for all three of the districts studied. Elementary teachers and administrators are feeling pressure to improve MEAP math scores and teaching using new programs and methods involving the differentiation of mathematics curriculum are meeting the need. The days of teaching the entire class using one concept with paper and pencil practice have evolved into a new approach which includes pre-testing, use of manipulatives, individualized instruction and differentiated math goals for students.

It is clear that both literacy and math instruction have recently undergone significant change. The catalyst for the change appears to be a commitment to move towards accepted best practices in teaching along with a goal of improving standardized test scores. Although the stakes are high for individual student achievement and academic programs are prescriptive, elementary teachers report they still have a fair amount of flexibility with which to deliver instruction. Mrs. Lynch describes herself as a deviator when explaining her flexible instructional practices:

I may deviate from it (the program) and don't tell anybody about this, I'm a deviator. I deviate from it because either I don't think the lesson was appropriate enough for the particular chemistry of my classroom with the concept I cover, so it would normally be a large group instruction time. Then we break up into small cooperative groups, working with a manipulative, from that point more of an abstract and that would be page in there in their Every Day Math series, their math journal for example.

Mrs. Smith, a first grade teacher at Eastgate Elementary, remarks that her principal allows her the discretion to use what she needs from their balanced literacy instructional program. Mrs. Smith details the flexibility she experiences:

Instead of just doing absolutely everything, in the exact order for day one of my reading program, I pick and choose what I think is applicable to the students in my room at that time because, every year you have a different group of students. So, I appreciate the fact that my principal respects us as educators and let's us pick and chose and differentiate instruction. Maybe I still have kids that need Orton Gillingham right now and maybe I have kids that need very high-level Compass learning computer literacy ideas right now or assignments. So, I differentiate knowing that I am respected as an educator and I don't feel that I am a slave to the curriculum. I pick and chose what is appropriate for my students.

Several elementary principal respondents discussed the notion that as long as teachers can achieve the end result of high-level individualized achievement for students, they may deliver the curriculum as creatively as they wish. The pressure for students to achieve was reported by nearly all of the study participants. Although the level of anxiety has risen, teachers recounted numerous experiences that allowed them to use their discretion to make flexible instructional choices within academic program parameters. The level of flexibility is indicative of the degree of professionalism teachers exhibit when planning and conducting individualized instruction for students of differing abilities.

The first major theme to emerge from analysis of the data is that elementary teacher instructional practices in literacy and math have changed significantly over the past several years. A common conclusion resulting from a review of recent research on educational policy implementation indicates that for teachers to meet the requirements of new policies, teaching practices must change fundamentally (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Spillane & Jennings, 1997; Cohen & Barnes, 1993; Weiss, 1990). Policy makers strive to attain a change in teacher practices through policy initiatives that focus on manipulating

various aspects of instruction including teaching practices, assessment methods and curriculum. It is clear that elementary teacher instructional and assessment practices have undergone significant change.

The significant change in teacher instructional practices is an indirect influence of mandates from No Child Left Behind and Education YES!. Recent legislation has increased the significance of the MEAP test as results of the MEAP assessment are used to calculate school grades and factor into the formula for determining adequate yearly progress. The thrust to improve MEAP scores has caused schools to design school improvement plans, which directly influence the content and delivery of literacy and math curriculum. The change in literacy and math curriculum has directly influenced teacher behaviors in the manner in which instruction is delivered. Although the course from No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates to the change in teacher behaviors is indirect, it is clearly a significant factor directing current educational reform.

### Assessment Reform

A second major theme to emerge from the analysis of data is that elementary teacher assessment practices have recently experienced significant change. The policy makers objective was to attain a change in teacher practices through new policy initiatives. The policy was designed to influence the diverse features of instruction, including student assessment and curriculum, which logically follows the development of individualized and differentiated instructional practices. To assist with individualized instruction, elementary teachers are administering the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) or the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) to individual students several times per year. The QRI and DRA are on-going assessments that allow the

classroom teacher to pinpoint students' exact independent and instructional reading levels as well as comprehension scores. Mr. Delk, the principal of Interlake Elementary School explains the process:

The focus has been on the developmental reading assessment which helps and is based on level texts that we are utilizing with the students. This is initiated primarily through our work with our reading recovery program and the successes we have had there, and our ability to focus instruction on the student's needs so that we could more accurately tell parents where their child is and where they need support. You know, we didn't want them teaching new concepts but wanted them enforcing concepts at home and I think that type of assessment allows us to give them appropriate things for them to do with students at home. So, we have done a variety of assignments and learning strategies in the past but, the days of end of unit tests and things of that nature we find are not as valid as a more in-depth use of strategies that allow us to assess if the student has the ability to self correct if they are using appropriate strategies and if they are going to be self sustaining readers. These types of assessments give us a better picture of that.

Study participants report that the DRA and QRI assessments give them detailed information that illustrate exactly which reading skills students have and which skills must still be learned. With this diagnostic information, teachers can differentiate lessons for use with guided reading groups and better monitor individual student growth. Mrs. Evans describes how the QRI details individualized student reading skills on which she can focus balanced literacy lessons:

It's (the QRI) a packet with the different stories at their level and it's like a reading inventory, it's mis-que analysis the first part and then comprehension questions and we write down their responses. It gives a grade at their comprehension level and their reading ability, word recall level and it also helps you to understand if they are having trouble with inferences or questions that are right there in the text.

In addition to the QRI and DRA assessments, study respondents discussed administering the Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP), another form of literacy assessment, to their students. The Michigan Department of Education developed the MLPP in conjunction with classroom teachers. The MLPP is a kit to be used by trained educators to determine and

document student growth in the areas of literacy development for the purpose of improving student learning opportunities for students. Mrs. Burton, a kindergarten teacher at Highland Elementary School, is required to administer the MLPP to each of her students. She explains the benefits of MLPP testing:

Now that we have the annual MLPP testing and you know where the kids are, its just so much easier to plan your lessons, it's not just one lesson for every body. There is much more going on and what I noticed about it that was so significantly different, I was not sitting home making plans all the time and preparing materials as much but when I was here, I was teaching a lot harder.

Prior to 2004, the MLPP was designed to be used with lower elementary students only. An upper elementary MLPP kit has been recently developed, and will be administered by teachers in grades 3-5. Several upper elementary study respondents have been trained to use the new version of MLPP and believed it was a beneficial assessment to determine individual literacy skill levels. Mrs. Stephens, a fifth grade teacher at Highland Elementary School describes her experience with the upper elementary MLPP:

I think I keep a much closer eye on kids. Through my MLPP training, I've received a lot of like informal assessments that I'll do, there's a big word out there, profundity. Right now I'm doing an expository profundity with the kids and it's to see if they get the gist of expository text. I've also done it (MLPP assessments) with narrative text.

Analysis of the study data indicates that elementary teacher practices involving literacy assessments have changed significantly in the past two to five years. The increased focus on individualized and differentiated literacy instruction requires that teachers conduct on-going literacy assessments to determine student instructional reading levels. To this objective, study respondents indicated that they now conduct either the DRA or QRI assessments at several times during the year for each student. Additionally, some respondents are required to also administer the MLPP assessment for each student once per year. The change in the amount and frequency of individualized literacy assessments is an indirect influence of No

Child Left Behind and Education YES! legislation. The districts studied conducted analysis of MEAP reading and writing scores and determined that improvement was needed in these content areas. School improvement plans were subsequently written for reading and writing that required more frequent individualized assessments to target teachers' balanced literacy instruction. The increased significance of reading and writing MEAP scores generated from recent legislation was the catalyst for the change in the amount and frequency of individualized literacy assessments.

Elementary teachers report that maintaining a high level of individualized instruction for students requires a significant change in mathematics assessment practices. Teachers describe the process of pre-testing the students prior to beginning a new unit. Students who have mastered the skills on the pre-test, are given advanced differentiated lessons while the teacher instructs the rest of the class on the basic objectives of the unit. Students are also given post-tests to demonstrate and confirm their level of learning on the unit just taught. A first grade teacher from Ardmore Elementary School explains the process:

Today we were doing our math assessments and they are mostly all hands on because some children aren't reading the math books, or the assessments. I have a rubric and I individualize it and I have each student come sit next to me. We were doing interpreting graphs so I had a graph out. I had the child read it and I read it with them or if they could read it, they'd read it individually and I'd say now interpret this graph and they will give me the answer.

Upper and lower elementary respondents expressed a need to keep abreast of individual student learning during mathematics instruction. To facilitate this process, many teachers give informal assessments during each unit of math instruction. Informal assessments may involve students writing answers to oral questions on a slate or teachers taking anecdotal assessments while watching students work through some of the hands-on math games and explorations. Study participants indicated a significant change in assessment

practices in recent years extending primarily into literacy and mathematics instruction. Teachers noted an increase in the amount of math assessments administered during each instructional unit. The pre and post assessments are administered to assist with the differentiation of mathematics instruction for individual students. The change in the quantity of individual math assessments is another indirect influence of recent legislative acts. Administrators and teachers believe that individually assessing students in mathematics content and differentiating math instruction to meet the personal needs of students will result in student learning and improved MEAP math scores. Increased MEAP math scores translate into to a better school grade and adequate yearly progress achievement under Education YES! and No Child Left Behind.

Elementary school teachers specified that assessment practices have recently changed significantly as opposed to those of past years. In addition to assessments that detail students' individual skills in reading and math, districts have developed core subject area tests that monitor individual progress through the district's subject area benchmarks and standards. The Sienna Heights District developed a series of benchmark assessments in reading, math, social studies, and science that are administered quarterly. Benchmark assessment tests are administered to the whole class and are electronically scored and sent to central administration. Teachers review their students' results and are able to determine which benchmarks or curricular standards need reteaching. Mrs. Frost, a fifth grade teacher from Woodridge Elementary School explains why teachers administer the benchmark assessments:



...so that everybody in the district is teaching the same things. So we have a way of tracking kids, not tracking them as putting them in a track but tracking them from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Sometimes I pre-test, to me the efficient use of a BA is to pre-test and post-test and that's not a very efficient use of time because we have four BAs every quarter, we would be testing these kids forever.... I think that's why we have BAs and I think the district really wanted a way of holding teacher's accountable, having specific skills that the kids needed to know and having a way of seeing if they were being taught.

A third grade teacher described administering the quarterly benchmark assessments as similar to final exams week in high school because all of the tests fall within a week of the end of the marking period. Dr. Lambert, the principal of Highland Elementary, defended the benchmark assessments:

I think it was the district's belief that for a curriculum, teach what to test and test what you teach. I think to just write a curriculum and not have some way of making certain that it is being taught and seeing how it is being taught, nothing ever changes. I think it was put into place to make certain that we are doing what we are supposed to be doing. I think it also is a situation where it allows teachers to be able to see what they have been successful on and what they have not been successful on.

The Somerset Community School District created the English/Language Arts (ELA) assessment; a test designed to monitor how well students were learning the district's language arts benchmarks. The ELA assessment is administered quarterly to all students in grades 1-5 and individualized scores are reported to the administration. Teachers believe that the benchmark assessments and ELA assessments add an enhanced degree of accountability to their instruction. Mrs. Stephens explains:

One thing that we have talked about at common planning, and we do know that they (the administration) are kind of watching teachers. If my class was the only class that was failing, failing, failing all the time on the benchmark assessments, I'm sure that would be a red flag that would go up in the district and they would be "Okay, what is she doing over there?"

A fifth grade teacher from the Somerset Community School District agrees that the level of accountability has been raised because of the significant change in assessing students.

Mrs. Lewis adds:

... with that No Child Left Behind, I think a lot of State standards are coming down on us and you know, administrators ask us where are your children? We have to be able to show them where our students are and really keep an eye on their progress or lack there of.

Teachers participating in the study describe a new level of accountability for individual student's learning as reported through assessments such as the DRA, QRI, MLPP, benchmark assessments and ELA assessments. Scores from the assessments described are reported out for individual students as well as class composites. Administrators regularly review the results of the assessments to determine the level of progress for individual students. The assessments mentioned above are in addition to standardized assessments that may be administered at various grade levels such as the Michigan Educational Assessment Profile (MEAP) or the IOWA Test of Basic Skills. The significant change in the amount and frequency of assessments administered in elementary grades has positively influenced the level of teacher accountability.

Through semi-structured interviews, elementary teachers and administrators were asked where the push originated to assess students with increased frequency. Respondents indicated that the level of accountability for individual student learning was lacking, and districts needed to mandate increased assessment to satisfy reform expectations. An upper elementary teacher from Newport Elementary gives her interpretation of the origin of new assessments:

...you know, a lot of it is from our district. A lot of it is from the No Child Left Behind. MLPP is administered to the younger grades and the DRA is really going to start tracking where our students are and hold accountable the level of achievement for each one.

The principal of Newport Elementary requires her teachers to provide assessment reports on a quarterly basis. The quarterly reports contain a class composite of scores including individual progress on the DRA, MLPP and ELA assessments. When asked what the catalyst for the quarterly reports was, Mrs. Jordan replied:

...No Child Left Behind and Education Yes here in Michigan. When we were filling out our performance rubric for Education Yes, one of the things that we count our building down for was for a method being in place to monitor children's growth throughout the year. ...So this year, we do the quarterly reports and quarterly meetings where they turn in their quarterly information and I go through and highlight any concerns or at risk appearances and trends and then sit down and talk about what services we are giving and if they are responding to those services. Then we decide what we need to do differently if the current interventions are not working.

Teachers describe a change in the frequency and amount of assessments required as well as an increase in accountability for individual students' learning. Administrators are asking teachers to compile and submit class composites indicating individual students' test scores for on-going assessments. The change in assessment practices is reflected in the teacher behavior section of model 4-1, which clarifies the relationship between recent legislation and significant reforms influencing elementary teacher behavior. The changes in instruction and assessment are an indirect outcome of mandates required by No Child Left Behind and Education YES!. The increased significance of MEAP scores has prompted changes in the school curriculum and as a result has influenced teacher assessment practices. Districts participating in the study designed the benchmark and ELA assessments to have accountability measures in place, ensuring the sanctioned curriculum is being taught and students are prepared to take the MEAP assessments.

Study respondents indicated that school improvement plans are heavily tied to current assessment practices. MEAP test scores contribute a large portion of the letter grade schools receive from Education YES! legislation and MEAP scores also contribute significantly to the formula by which adequate yearly progress is determined for No Child Left Behind and Education YES!. The strong emphasis on MEAP scores is a driving force behind assessment reform, which in turn influences the way school improvement planning is conducted. Mrs. King, a fourth grade teacher from Kelsey Creek, explains the way assessment and school improvement are connected:

...at our last meeting, we went through all our MEAP scores and the IOWA test scores for our students in this building last year. We are setting up our three goals based on those scores. ...Our social studies goal stems from the fact that our social studies curriculum has changed three times in the last year and a half. So, that goal is just to become more familiar with our social studies and to prepare our students better again for the MEAP test.

The second major theme that has emerged from analysis of the data is that elementary teacher assessment practices have recently experienced significant change. Reform of assessment practices involves teachers administering multiple assessments at more frequent intervals. Teachers described this phenomenon as the administration of on-going assessments for the individualization and differentiation of mathematics and literacy instruction. The three districts studied require their teachers to administer either the DRA or QRI assessments to each student several times during each year. Additionally, study participants discussed administering additional tests such as the MLPP as well as district-created assessments including the benchmark and ELA assessments.

The assessments mentioned are administered in addition to standardized tests required at specific grade levels such as the MLPP and IOWA Test of Basic Skills.

Teachers and administrators conveyed a strong relationship between the change in assessment practices and the way school improvement planning is managed. The relationship, demonstrated in model 4-1, confirms a direct connection between the development of school improvement plans and changes in the school district curriculum to accommodate the plans. Districts carefully examine the data provided from assessment scores to plan school improvement goals. The reform of elementary assessment practices is a logical outcome of the significant change in teacher instruction required to satisfy legislative compliance. One reform cannot be successfully implemented without the other.

#### Changes in Use of Time

A third major theme to emerge from analysis of the data is a change in the way elementary teachers use instructional and professional time. Reform involving elementary teacher instruction and assessment practices has caused a significant change in the way teachers are using time for instruction, assessment, planning and collegial meetings. Teachers report the shift to balanced literacy instruction requires more planning time than for past reading instruction. Balanced literacy instruction requires multiple reading groups of varying ability, and teachers must plan appropriate lessons for each guided reading group. A third grade teacher from the Sienna Heights district explains the time it takes her to plan for balanced literacy instruction:

I spend a lot more time planing literacy now. As I mentioned before, before it was more of a whole group thing, you plan it and it's for everybody and you're done. Now, I have four groups in my room right now as far as reading level goes and they each have their own lesson plan. They have a shared reading lesson plan. If you are doing some word study for the week, I plan that. Writing is a separate plan. Before, it was kind of reading and writing and you plan and you're done. Like I said, reading was for everyone and it did not take very long. Now you are giving individualized attention as to what this small group needs to focus on this week.

Teachers agree the time they spend planning is well worth the result in terms of the reading growth kids at all reading levels are experiencing with balanced literacy instruction. Study respondents were very positive about the extra time spent planning for balanced literacy instruction, but some remarked they could not get all of the planning done during the school day. Mrs. Dodson from Woodridge Elementary School describes the time she spends planning for balanced literacy instruction outside of school:

It's usually at night, every night, that I figure out okay, "Guided reading, what guided reading groups am I going to meet with next, what books am I going to pick, what is their focus going to be, where am I headed?", and that takes little bit longer. So, I'd say the average time I spend preparing for the week is at least five hours, outside of school.

Teachers report an average of three to six hours spent planning outside of the school day, with some teachers spending more than six hours to complete their individualized lesson plans. The additional time required to plan for balanced literacy instruction is an indirect result of recent legislative acts. When teachers made the transition to balanced literacy instruction, the differentiated lessons took longer to plan as teachers are working to meet the needs of individual students.

New testing requirements such as the DRA, QRI and MLPP assessments must be administered individually to each student. Individual assessment and standardized testing requirements, such as MEAP and the IOWA Test of Basic Skills, are causing a reallocation of teacher time in terms of lost instructional time. Fourth grade teachers in

the Kelsey Creek School District reported that they administer the DRA to each student at least twice per year, the MEAP reading and math tests, and the IOWA Test of Basic Skills once per year. Standardized tests such as the MEAP and IOWA Test of Basic Skills can be administered to the entire class in 1-2 hour increments over several days. DRA, QRI and certain sections of the MLPP assessment must be administered individually and can take 15-20 minutes per child for each level of reading assessed. When teachers were asked how they facilitate individual testing requirements in the classroom, teachers described a variety of techniques. Mrs. Albright had strong feelings about the loss of instructional time during individual QRI testing. She explains:

It stunk! I felt like I was ripping off the rest of my class to be honest with you because I basically, I'm almost ashamed to say it on tape, but that was in lieu of guided reading groups. So my class went through and did their independent work, their center work, while I pulled kids for QRI but I felt like at least they are doing something that is educational learning. They did not get to meet with me and we did not have guided reading groups for the entire week.

A first grade teacher expressed concern at having to conduct the DRA and MLPP assessments for all students at the end of the year. She describes the loss of instructional time and its effect on her as a professional:

I have to stop guided reading teaching instruction in order to do assessments. That's really hard for me right now. That's what I am dealing with personally because, my gut says, that I'm done teaching these students. I have a whole five weeks left. They are not done. I need to teach them in order, I want to move them in their teaching so that I feel better with them leaving me. Now, I feel like I have to stop at the beginning of May, to start assessments. I am kind of nervous about getting it done because all our data is due at the end of the month on the 27th. It's frustrating because I feel like I am done teaching these students because now I have to assess. When actually, I feel like I need to keep teaching them.

Teachers communicated dissatisfaction with the amount of "face time" they were losing in front of their students by having to conduct so many on-going assessments. Several teachers remarked that although they had conducted all of the assessments and gathered

the data, they did not have enough time to analyze all of the information to make quality instructional choices. No Child Left Behind and Education YES! requirements have indirectly reallocated teacher instructional time due to the amount and frequency of student testing required to teach students at their instructional level. The reallocation of teacher instructional time can be observed in model 4-1 as the change in district curriculum having a direct influence on teaching behaviors; the individual assessments required by the district.

Elementary school administrators are aware of teachers' frustration with loss of instructional time. Administrators in the Sienna Heights and Somerset Community School districts provide a substitute teacher for two days each year so that teachers may conduct their individualized assessments and not omit important instruction. The principal of Newport Elementary School describes administration's view regarding loss of instructional time:

You know something has to be omitted when you add something (new assessments). I think time in front of their classroom period is being omitted because we do provide subs as a district for them to get that (MLPP/DRA) done. So, they are sitting outside their room with a sub in their room and anytime you lose face time with your certified teacher with that classroom, everything is suffering at that point. Every subject is suffering... Now, if I were still in a classroom I would tell you that it was a huge detriment and I would really be bothered by it and seeing things from a different perspective now, I see how valuable it (assessment) is. I see that it can make the time in front of your kids more quality therefore, it feels like an evil but I think it's a necessary evil that improves what we do when we are with them then if we were with them all the time with mediocre information.

Teachers from Somerset and Sienna Heights appreciated having substitute teacher coverage to administer MLPP, DRA and QRI assessments, but indicated that two days was not adequate to accomplish the volume of individualized testing required.



Reallocation of teacher instructional time due to individualized assessment has caused teachers to be creative about ways to accomplish the assessments without losing “face time” with their students. Four of the twenty-four teachers interviewed reported having a student teacher helped to alleviate lost instructional time due to testing requirements. Mr. Price, a third grade teacher from Highland Elementary, explains:

I was very fortunate this year because I had an intern and next year I'll have an intern as well. So, that was very easy for me to pull out (students to test) the last couple of years. If I did not have the intern, that's where it would be a little more challenging.

A fifth grade teacher in the Sienna Heights district agreed that having a student teacher intern helps to alleviate the testing burden, adding:

Well, for the last three years I have had an intern from Michigan State so that has helped. However, that doesn't, if I don't have one, what do I do then? The district this year gave us a sub for one day and that was something but the problem is, is that in fifth grade I have some kids reading some pretty long passages. I can't get through some of my kids in 20 to 25 minutes. So, with my intern it works, without my intern, like I know my colleagues, they had a difficult time getting through them and they have some lower kids but, I had some kids that it took me that long to get through. I can't say hurry up.

Testing requirements indirectly influenced by recent legislation caused teachers to find different means for administering individualized assessments in ways that reallocate the least amount of instructional time. Teachers in the Sienna Heights and Somerset districts receive two days of substitute teacher coverage each year to complete testing requirements. Some teachers have students work independently on projects or centers while individually pulling students for MLPP, DRA and QRI assessments. Student teaching interns have helped maintain instructional time, while classroom teachers conduct individualized testing. Regardless of which methods elementary teachers employ, individual and standardized testing requirements indirectly influenced by No

**Child Left Behind and Education YES! have resulted in reallocated and reduced teacher instructional time.**

**Standardized tests such as the Michigan Educational Progress Profile and the IOWA Test of Basic Skills have cut heavily into instructional time. In addition to the time spent administering the tests, teachers spend large blocks of time preparing students to take the tests. MEAP is a high-stakes assessment in Michigan and scores from the test are reported in local media outlets and used to determine Education YES! school grades as well as whether or not schools have achieved adequate yearly progress. The increased significance of MEAP scores, caused by recent legislation, has required classroom teachers to provide additional time instructing students on test-taking strategies, and MEAP-content lessons. Mrs. King administers the MEAP reading and math assessments to her fourth graders at Ardmore Elementary School. She describes the instructional time that is used for MEAP preparation:**

**Every morning we have our morning math, until the MEAP test. When the kids come in the morning they have either DOL, daily oral language, which helps them with their MEAP test as well as their writing score, and then we start our math lesson with what I call, again, morning math. I have a sample MEAP test question on the board and we work it out together and talk about how to get the answers. That's just to get started. Then my instruction every single day is basically based around the MEAP. As I teach something, I will give them sample questions, okay, this is something that they might ask you on the test. We talk about having four choices, there's the great answer, there is a good bad answer like it's almost right but they are trying to trip you a little bit and then there are two ridiculous answers usually. So we talk about that all the time. A lot of times when I do my assessments I will give MEAP-like tests, you know maybe with just like 10 questions on it where they have to show their work but then still chose the best answer. So, it's on going.**

**To prepare her fourth graders for the MEAP reading assessment, Mrs. Evans claimed her guided reading groups fell to the wayside. When MEAP testing was over, Mrs. Evans was able to return to balanced literacy instruction and see her guided reading groups**

daily. Mrs. Mayer, a second grade teacher at Ardmore Elementary, asserted that even though she did not have to prep her students for the IOWA Test of Basic Skills, administration of the test required 90 minutes per morning on each of four days.

Teachers indicated that standardized tests such as the Michigan Educational Progress Profile and the IOWA Test of Basic Skills have required reallocation of instructional time. Testing preparation and administration requirements have caused instructional time to become scarcer than ever before. Elementary teachers regard every minute in the day as a valuable resource not to be squandered. A fourth grade teacher in the Sienna Heights district sought help in maximizing her instructional time:

I went to see the Gifted and Talented Coordinator a while back and we were trying to coordinate some ideas. She gave me some pointers of how to make more use of your time. Just little things like the kids using the bathroom when they need to as long as you are not teaching as opposed to taking whole group bathroom breaks and things like that. Unfortunately, we don't have bathrooms in our classroom.

Mrs. Frost, a fifth grade teacher, claims that she carefully plans instruction to the nearest ten minutes to avoid loss of teaching time. It is clear that the administration of standardized assessments, as required by recent legislative acts, has caused teachers to reallocate and conserve instructional time more than ever before.

School improvement planning is directly related to assessment through analysis of individualized and standardized test scores. Teachers describe the school improvement planning process as a method of analysis by which low scoring content areas are addressed in a school improvement plan. Plans are developed and incorporated into teachers' instructional practices to be emphasized and assessed. Despite the structured process through which school improvement plans are developed and incorporated, teachers reported no instructional time was reallocated to administer the plans. Teachers

described a formal school improvement planning process that has existed for 14 years under Public Act 25, and thus has been incorporated into teachers' daily instructional plans. The fact that assimilation of school improvement plans does not reallocate instructional time is significant because teachers have incorporated the mandates of Public Act 25 into their daily routine. It can be argued that, given a period of time for teachers and administrators to modify instructional and assessment practices, the mandates legislated in Education YES! and No Child Left Behind will become a regular component of a teacher's daily instructional plans.

The Somerset Community and Sienna Heights districts incorporated collegial block planning periods for elementary teachers. Collegial block time involves releasing teachers by grade level for a common period of one hour once per week. The Sienna Heights District has formal parameters for collegial block planning periods mandated in their teachers' contract. Grade level teachers must meet for at least 45 minutes of the one-hour block to discuss professional education issues. Sommerset Community provides a one-hour block for grade level teachers, but has no limitations as to how the time is to be used. Collegial block planning periods have influenced the way in which teachers use time at school. Teachers from the Sienna Heights School District, where block planning meetings are mandatory, claim they have more professional discussions with their colleagues because of block planning periods. Mr. Price reviewed the points third grade teachers at Highland Elementary discuss during block planning time:

We do some common planning. We go over our benchmark assessments when we do tests. We pull them out and say, "Here, most kids missed A, why did they miss A? What can we do to differently teach it so we use that data to better our instruction?" The bulk of our time though is mainly spent, other than exam week and going over benchmark tests, common planning. Just really getting curriculum together, make sure we are all on the same page with reading and meeting the benchmarks that we are suppose to hit.

Third grade teachers from Woodridge Elementary School report they also spend a majority of block planning time analyzing assessments and reviewing literacy standards.

Mrs. Albright defines the use of block planning time by stating:

(During block planning time) we are not checking papers, we are not work booking, it is the whole big picture every time we get together. There are other issues that come in to play, but it's the same thing... literacy instruction and benchmark assessments.

The first grade teachers at Woodridge Elementary also work through literacy planning issues, but do not have benchmark assessments to analyze. Instead, first grade teachers spend a portion of their collegial planning time discussing professional reading using a book study format. Mrs. Dodson explains:

What we are currently doing is a book study on *Shaping Literate Minds*. We each took a chapter and we read it and come back together to summarize the important key concepts of that chapter. ...You can say, let's take this book, let's break it apart, let's share a chapter and then like later on in the summer I can say, okay, I really liked this chapter, this chapter in *Shaping Literate Minds* and I am going to go back and read those. I have found, through our book study, that it is really interesting, and I am going to go back and dig deeper.

Teachers from the Sienna Heights School District reported that mandatory block planning periods provide a structured time to talk professionally with grade level colleagues. Some teachers attend inservice training from the building reading recovery teacher, counselor, or media specialist. Teachers describe block planning time as an opportunity for conversing with colleagues about student progress, communication issues, school improvement planning or future assessments. Sienna Heights teachers participating in

the study regarded collegial block time highly and indicated that the building principal was frequently in attendance at grade level meetings. It is observed that regularly scheduled professional discussions with grade level colleagues have significantly influenced the time-use behaviors of Sienna Heights teachers.

Teachers from Eastgate and Newport Elementary schools in the Somerset Community district have collegial block planning periods once per week for approximately an hour. Block planning schedules are facilitated by the building administrator and vary in time and frequency from building to building. In comparison with teachers from Sienna Heights, non-mandatory block planning periods are used differently by teachers from Somerset Community Schools. Mrs. Lynch, a third grade teacher, describes block planning time at Eastgate Elementary:

During my block time, I'm either calling back parents or getting a lesson prepared for the next, after the kids come back from specials. I don't really utilize the time for planning. The only time that I can actually sit down and plan is when the room is quiet and I have the whole place to myself with no time constraints. I'm also math coordinator for the building so I run around here and there getting things from other people or meeting with my building principal. I just never find a time for sitting down and planning.

Numerous Somerset teachers reported activities similar to that defined above during block planning time and claimed that they could do whatever they needed to because it was their planning time with no constraints. Mrs. Turner stated that her third grade team at Newport Elementary uses a portion of their block time for collegial grade level planning:

We do (have block planning time) and we are not as always good about using it as we should be. Our planning times have been scheduled so that they match up pretty nicely. We meet often casually like, "Did you do this? Are you doing this? This is what I typed up for the science test, let's look at it. Let's see if this is what we like and I'll make changes, here's copies for everybody." We share a lot. We are not as good at the let's sit down for a half an hour to an hour together. I know we are really being moved in that direction.

Mrs. Jordan, the principal at Newport, claims she got the idea for collegial block planning periods from reading a book titled *Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Due to teacher contractual issues, Mrs. Jordan cannot require her staff to meet during the common time, but she asserts that she is slowly moving the staff in that direction. Few grade level groups from Newport and Eastgate Elementary schools use their block planning period for meeting as a group to discuss professional topics. Teachers maintain that since block time is not mandatory, the time allotted may be used at the teacher's discretion. It can be argued that block time has not significantly influenced the time-use behaviors of Somerset Community teachers.

Teachers from the Kelsey Creek School District have no common planning times at grade level, other than a common lunch period. When asked if teachers spend time analyzing assessment data as a grade level group, Mrs. Little replied:

We would love to but, like I said, three days a week, 35 minutes, it's so hard. It's just; there's no planning time. There is no block time to plan. There's no planning time period. Like I said, we do our own recess. We have a 40 minute lunch period but we have to eat lunch too so that's when we get to talk at lunch.

Kelsey Creek teachers claim they try to meet with grade level colleagues either before or after school, but conflicting schedules often hamper their efforts. Common lunch periods are the only times that grade level colleagues can meet without students during the school day. Mrs. Wetzell, a third grade teacher from Interlake Elementary, spoke candidly regarding lunchtime discussions with colleagues:

We don't do a lot of talking about school (laughing). We talk about my new condo and what color I should paint it. We don't do a lot of talking about instruction. If you want to say we talk about school, we talk about specific students. I think kids that we are worried about, concerned about how we, what I am doing to do about so and so, that type of thing.

Teachers from the Kelsey Creek district do not have scheduled block times to meet with grade level colleagues for professional discussions. It is acknowledged that time-use behaviors of Kelsey Creek teachers have not been influenced through collegial block planning periods, but the absence of block planning time may be detrimental to development of teacher best practices.

New testing requirements, more extensive lesson planning, and collegial meetings may have reallocated teacher instructional time and influenced the ways in which teachers plan for instruction. Time is regarded as a scarce resource by most educators and teachers attempt to use instructional time as efficiently as possible. When teachers are required to administer individualized assessments to all of their students or spend time preparing students for high-stakes standardized tests, instructional time is probably diminished. Teachers described instances of testing taking two to three weeks during multiple times each school year. During testing periods, teachers report that some form of instruction was omitted and other instructional time reduced. Teaching using balanced literacy instruction has required reallocated planning time for elementary teachers participating in the study.

A guided reading approach involving numerous reading groups at various reading levels requires more planning time, which includes individualized lessons. Study participants claim that they now spend more time planning for individualized literacy instruction than ever before and frequently need to complete planning outside of the school day. Teachers from the Somerset Community and Sienna Heights districts have block planning times incorporated into a weekly schedule. Sienna Heights teachers are contractually required to meet at grade level once per week for forty-five minutes during



their block time for professional discussions involving assessment, instruction and common planning. Somerset Community teachers do not have to meet as a grade level, but do so infrequently. Block time discussions for Somerset teachers ranged from professional to personal issues with varying degrees of frequency and length of meeting time.

Kelsey Creek teachers have no common block planning time and meet occasionally before and after school and during lunch to discuss professional issues. It can be anticipated that teachers who regularly participate in collegial block planning meetings with grade level colleagues have experienced a change in time-use behaviors. Elementary teachers have encountered a reallocation of their instructional and professional time due to a change in collegial meetings, lesson planning and required assessments. The current reform of instructional and professional time for elementary teachers has most likely created a change in the performance, behavior and learning of teachers.

To fundamentally change teacher practices, educators need frequent opportunities to connect policy and practice via professional learning (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Spillane, 1999). The Sienna Heights and Somerset Community districts provide teachers with block planning time designed to facilitate professional learning. The reallocation of teacher time due to scheduled block planning periods can be indirectly linked to recent legislative acts. In order to initiate instructional and student assessment reform, instigated by No Child Left Behind and Education YES! legislation, teachers require opportunities to practice and scheduled block planning periods afford teachers that opportunity.

### Professional Development Reform

The recent change in elementary teacher instructional practices created a need to train classroom teachers how to effectively implement new techniques such as balanced literacy instruction, individualized assessments and differentiated mathematics instruction. A fourth major theme to emerge from analysis of the data is that elementary teacher professional development behaviors have recently experienced considerable change. Teachers report that professional development regarding best instructional practices is delivered through a variety of different vehicles. Several novice teacher participants received their instructional training while finishing their undergraduate degrees and during student teaching experiences. Teachers commented that instructional in-service training was conducted at out-of-district workshops, either during or after the school day. The majority of teacher respondents indicated that they had received training on instructional change from colleagues or other indistrict experts.

The concept of using indistrict experts to train instructional staff members is not a new idea, but is happening more frequently for a variety of reasons. The principal of Highland Elementary School explains the current trend in instructional training:

...for things to change, people have to buy it. One of the things that is happening here is that we have some really talented people and when these people are the ones that are showing other people what it is that has been successful for them and that they truly believe it, we are a lot better off.

There is one math coordinator for every elementary school in the Somerset Community district. The math coordinator is paid a stipend in addition to being a salaried teacher. In addition to normal classroom teaching duties, the math coordinator is responsible for training staff members in current mathematics instructional techniques, new materials

and new assessments. Mrs. Lynch is a third grade teacher, who is also the math coordinator for Eastgate Elementary and explains the benefits of using inside experts:

When you empower our own staff members, your own peers, you are more willing to listen. They have earned that respect and have gotten into those positions for a reason. It's not somebody cold or somebody you do not know coming in from the outside, who may have taught in a classroom 10 years ago. They understand that you know your stuff because you live it every day. So, I think it is better received when you call on those who are actually staff members because they are looked up to by their peers because of their positions and they got there for a reason.

Study respondents value the training received from colleagues that understand the daily routine of a classroom teacher as well as school demographics, student population and other intimate working details of the school.

The Sienna Heights and Kelsey Creek districts have indistrict experts called literacy coaches, while the Somerset Community district has a similar position, Reading Coordinator. Classroom teachers, having had extensive literacy training outside of the school day, staff these positions. Administrators remark that literacy coach and reading coordinator positions were designed to get classroom teachers on the same page with respect to accepted best practices and balanced literacy instruction. Reading coordinators and literacy coaches coordinate and model a variety of activities to help classroom teachers become better individualized literacy instructors. Mrs. Stephens is a fifth grade teacher and one of the literacy coaches at Highland Elementary. She explains the job responsibilities of a literacy coach:

We (the 2 lit. coaches) would go into classrooms sometimes and sometimes help teachers. Other times someone might come to me saying I need a really good idea for some writing things so I would pull out all the writing materials I had and give it to them. Sometimes I would model something that I would say that I want you to try this and I would come back in and see them and discuss that. The other coach and I also took apart the rubric for writing and we made a file for every teacher in the building. So if you were teaching the concept of content and ideas in writing, they had a file already made for them and we have all the books all ready in the media center. ...We facilitated a lot of book studies. What we decided is to use the ones that we already had from the district so we did *Words Their Way*, which is the whole word study book, and this year we spent a lot of time with *Guided Readers and Writers*.

Classroom teachers shared positive experiences regarding the training received from indistrict experts such as reading coordinators and literacy coaches. Mrs. Forrester, a fourth grade teacher from Interlake Elementary, describes her encounters with the building literacy coach:

We have a reading specialist that I have worked with and she is wonderful. ...She comes into my room and models with the children. I took what she showed me and just kept growing on it. Along with the MLPP, I saw some good modeling there. The children enjoy it and I think it is very worthwhile.

Mrs. Evans had similar experiences with the literacy coaches from her building; she shares:

They would meet with us during one of our prep times and then during class time they would teach a lesson with us or first they would do it for us to kind of model different strategies and help us to kind of drive the kids towards certain things that we needed them to learn to do like the cross text and the questioning. I really liked it. Plus they were right here in our building where we could talk to them and they were sharing all kinds of stuff that they did in their classroom and always make extra copies for us. It was very useful and we could use it again the next week.

Using indistrict experts instead of sending teachers out of district for in-service training may allow the districts to save money while providing quality professional development.

The districts studied showed a commitment to training teachers with an emphasis on teacher-accepted best instructional practices and assessments. Although use of indistrict

experts saved money for the districts, an initial expense was charged to districts for literacy coach and reading/math coordinator training, release time for teachers as well as extra duty pay and the purchase of current professional development materials. The amount of new teacher training necessary, as an indirect effect of Education YES! and No Child Left Behind legislation, requires school districts to provide professional development that is effective and cost efficient. The use of indistrict experts to provide the professional development required, evoked a positive response from elementary teachers and saved districts the added expense of sending teachers out of district for training.

Study participants have been trained in some form of literacy assessment, either DRA, QRI, and/or MLPP assessments; and some have been trained in more than one assessment method. A majority of teachers who have been trained in the Michigan Literacy Progress Profile attended a six-day preparation program. Mrs. Stephens recalls the training involved to become certified for MLPP, grades 3-5:

We did 40 hours last summer and then we've done five extra days this school year so another 40 hours and a case study and lots of trying in the classroom, keeping track of things and turning those kinds of things in to the intermediate school district.

Education YES! requires each school district in Michigan to administer a standardized test at each grade level as a measure of accountability. Many Michigan districts are using the MLPP to fulfill the accountability requirement. The accountability requirement involves having all classroom teachers trained to use the program and the extensive training program can be quite costly. Dr. Lambert comments on the cost of MLPP training:

...when we sent our lower elementary staff for MLPP training, I mean literally I don't know how much money we spent but it had to be a fortune. We were pulling lots of people out and sending them over and bringing people (trainers) in.

Elementary teachers and districts have shown a commitment to professional literacy instructional development as confirmed by the teacher attendance and considering the cost of the training and the time spent required to completing the training. Literacy assessment training for study participants, needed as an indirect influence of recent legislation, is ongoing and is conducted by both indistrict and outside experts. Administrators in the districts studied indicated the objective is to train all elementary teachers in balanced literacy instruction and assessment to insure continuity of instruction.

Elementary teachers remarked that professional development for new instructional and assessment practices was delivered in a variety of ways. Some teachers were sent to in-services outside of the district for training, while indistrict experts at the building level trained the majority of classroom teachers. Study participants indicated that a third method of professional development delivery was accomplished through professional reading done in collegial groups. The districts studied require certified teaching staff to complete professional development hours each year outside of the school day and to provide administration the professional development confirmation for required hours completed. Collegial discussions facilitated through professional reading is one way of accumulating professional development hours and study respondents have participated in reading groups. The Sienna Heights district provided elementary teachers with eleven texts with which to guide professional development. Elementary principals from the Kelsey Creek and Somerset Community districts report purchasing professional

reading materials for staff members to use for professional development. A first grade teacher from Sienna Heights reflects upon new professional reading materials supplied by the district:

They (the district) are giving us more teacher resources to read, which is wonderful, because I think that's where it starts, your move. Getting teachers to read text that move their thinking along and forwards. They are thinking, "Oh, I could do it this way, oh I can change this".

Book study groups are popular with teachers because of the opportunity to discuss professional reading materials with colleagues and compare how others are using the new techniques or methods. Mrs. Albright tells about her experience with book study groups:

With receiving the new materials last fall, we formed book study groups and we have learned more about them. Our administration actually started us on a Fountas and Pinnell study group with other principals and have used our block planning time to have us discuss certain chapters. She (the principal) has been the coordinator to pull people in to show us the right way it should be done.

Teachers report significant changes in instructional practices due to professional reading done independently or in collegial book study groups. Mrs. Turner recounts how a professional book study changed her literacy instruction:

*Strategies that Work* really puts it into play. *Mosaic of Thought* I think is more of philosophy, a really valuable book but *Strategies that Work* is a book that I've really gotten, and taken and taken away the meat. I'm also reading Fountas and Pinnell *Guided Readers and Writers*. I've gotten through a lot of that but not all of that. I'm trying to implement some of those things. When I did my graduate work at Michigan State, I really got some great ideas and some really good literature that just gave me ideas of how to be a better literacy teacher. I think I started out with a lot of energy and excitement about it and that kind of helped guided my kids in that first year and now I think I have become a more informed teacher about ways to more effectively use their time.

The fifth grade teachers at Newport Elementary read *Professional Learning Communities at Work* as a grade level team and now incorporate the strategies discussed into weekly block planning time. Teachers enjoy the freedom offered though professional

development book study groups. Collegial discussions of professional texts provide teachers the opportunity to review current teaching practices while examining the practices of colleagues in a professional development setting. It can be stated that participating in collegial study groups has influenced the professional development of teachers, and having frequent opportunities to discuss and practice techniques learned in study groups is helping to facilitate the reform objectives of recent legislation.

The fourth major theme to emerge from analysis of the data is that elementary teacher professional development behaviors have recently experienced significant change in the amount and frequency of training as well as the delivery of professional training. The significant change in teacher instruction and assessment, influenced by No Child Left Behind and Education YES! legislation, has created a need for teachers to attend professional development activities. Teachers are asked to use balanced literacy instruction, differentiated math instruction and individualized assessments to design a professional learning community that meets the needs of each student. Implementation of new instructional methods and testing demands that teachers are trained to employ new techniques and assessments effectively. Although some teachers reported that in-service training was delivered at the university or through off-site workshops, the majority of study respondents indicated attendance at professional development sessions conducted by indistrict experts at the district or building level.

Each district studied has some form of indistrict expert at the building level to assist in the professional development of teachers involving literacy or math instruction and the respective assessments that accompany each content area. Teachers believe that training delivered by colleagues, who have credibility, provides instruction that is quickly



accepted. Study respondents discussed participating in collegial book studies using professional texts that focus upon current instructional and assessment reform. Teachers believe that participation in collegial book study groups facilitated instructional and assessment reform to a high degree while fulfilling obligations to complete professional development hours at the district level.

The districts studied demonstrated a commitment to teacher professional development by the use of indistrict experts, substitute teachers for release time, opportunities to practice new instructional and assessment techniques and current reform materials and supplies. Changes required in math and literacy instruction and individualized assessments create an environment in which teachers are given multiple opportunities to learn and apply reform practices as influenced by recent legislative acts.

#### Record Keeping and Other Reform

It is clear that reform of instructional practices, assessment, use of time and professional development requires an accountability component to confirm that change is actually occurring. A fifth major theme to emerge from analysis of the data is that elementary teacher record keeping behaviors, related to accountability, have recently experienced significant change. Teachers report keeping new detailed and more frequent notations in records for individual children and are required to submit increased paperwork to the administration. The Kelsey Creek School District requires all elementary teachers to keep a profile binder for each student. Mrs. Mayer details the contents of the profile binder:

We keep a section on each child so we have materials from starting in kindergarten with MLPP and DRAs that they might do in kindergarten, first and second grade and that is passed on from teacher to teacher. They have the entrance and exit DRAs, a writing rubric and writing sample and various works throughout the year that we put into the binders. We have a major sheet that we fill out based on everyone's scores and we will go to our curriculum director this year. That includes other information for grant work and if they're Hispanic, Caucasian, male, female, and their scores.

Kelsey Creek teachers described updating profile binders as a lengthy and time consuming activity, but they value the contents of the binders. Mrs. Tobin, a reading recovery teacher as well as literacy coach, described the importance of keeping such detailed and accurate records for each child:

...those (profile binders) are big important things. They have recurrent DRAs plus, they have a lot of information that each teacher gathers before hand. This is what's going to go to the teachers next year plus individual information on each kid. They are going to know the level that they were and observational survey. Every single thing that you will need to know, here's DRA, here's the OS (observation survey) that they need plus a writing sample. This is all coming to them in a notebook. So the first thing they are going to do is look at this child and read where they were.

Sienna Heights and Somerset Community school districts also require record keeping procedures for individual elementary school students. The record keeping instruments have different names, such as profile binders, literacy portfolios, and assessment collections, but each serves a common purpose as an accountability instrument. The amount of required record keeping for elementary school teachers has increased significantly since the inception of recent instructional and assessment reform influenced by No Child Left Behind and Education YES!.

Woodridge Elementary School in the Sienna Heights district is a Title I school. Being a Title I school demands additional record keeping procedures that teachers describe as cumbersome. Lower elementary teachers at Woodridge are required to

administer the entire MLPP assessment to all students regardless of the child's needs.

The data assembled from the MLPP assessments is used to fulfill a Title I requirement, but teachers question the validity of the extra testing and paperwork requirements.

Mrs.Dodson comments:

I've always done OS (Observational Survey) on all my students. But, I have six children reading at a level 30. I don't need to do concepts of print with them because they already know that. I don't need to do letter ID with them, they already know it. I don't need to do sight word list with them because they already know it. Yes, they are going to be fast to do this assessment, but why do I need to do that assessment if they already know it? Meanwhile I am sitting here in the back of my mind going, "I've got these at risk kids. I've got 11 at risk kids I need to be teaching, not assessing right now." It's hard for me because then if I say, I'm going to teach them guided reading and still assess, then the math gets pushed or I don't do the math or I don't do the science or the social studies.

Regardless of personal beliefs, teachers reported administering required assessments as scores are recorded in students' literacy portfolios and also submitted to administration for review. The amount of required record keeping has significantly increased as reported by teachers participating in the study. Teachers describe keeping more detailed records for individual students' assessment scores and specific literacy and math skills mastered. Some study participants believe the extra record keeping requirements take time that could be used to prepare lessons or plan with colleagues. Mrs. Vaughn describes problems caused by increased record keeping requirements:

There is less common planning time because there is so much paperwork that we have now. A lot of my current planning time is spent completing paperwork and trying to be prepared for the next day. You know, having all of your ducks in a row.

Teachers consider the increased paperwork requirements a burden, but do not question the importance of the information. Mrs. Bowman clarifies:

I have devised my own system to keep track of the running records and things. It is helpful to me, but now we have kind of a lot of paper work required that we have to do. A lot of it is duplicate information and I think they are beginning to bog us down and having to keep track of all their scores because they have to prove to the state and federal government that we are improving all along. I think that it takes away from our prep time and teaching time.

Accountability mandates from recent changes in student instruction and assessments require teachers to keep detailed records for individual students. Keeping records of student assessment data, individual math and literacy skills learned, and literacy profiles is now standard practice in the school districts studied. Teachers believe the new paperwork requirements provide valuable information, but question the time demands of completing new record keeping directives. Upon review of record keeping requirements, modifications may be initiated to delete duplication of record keeping entries.

Teachers described providing administration with detailed records regarding each student's progress and being held accountable for maximum individualized student growth. The accountability level of record keeping and assessment requirements has created a heightened degree of anxiety among classroom teachers. A first grade teacher from Sienna Heights describes the tension felt from accountability mandates:

...the pressure I think for teaching has gotten more so throughout the years. I think we are much more accountable for our students moving, our students' progress. A primary example is that assessment wall. You know, if I have a student that is not moving on it, am I held accountable for that child's learning or unable to learn? The pressure is much more now a days then it was five years ago. Not to say that it was all fluff, it wasn't, but you are held a lot more accountable for students. Just getting these children to learn how to read and write and add and get them ready for the MEAP and getting them reading by third grade and what are going to do with a student whose not reading. I'm struggling with that right now.

The additional pressure related to new accountability issues has increased professional growth in teachers. A third grade teacher from Woodbridge Elementary Schools explains the changes she experienced as a result of additional tension related to accountability:

When I say that I am more stressed it's because maybe I care more, maybe I know this is serious business. When I went into teaching I had no idea that it was going to be like this. We do have a job to do and it's tough. Another way I am stressed is because I feel like we still have so much to learn. Kind of like when you are getting it all and then there is something else.

Teachers feel additional stress and tension now more than ever due to increased accountability and record keeping requirements indirectly influenced by Education YES! and No Child Left Behind legislation. The additional pressures felt have caused teachers to review teaching and assessment practices in order to maximize individual student growth. A case can be made that the significant change in record keeping and accountability requirements, as needed by recent instructional and assessment reform, has caused positive professional development for teachers participating in the study.

In addition to significant changes in teacher record keeping, there have been other changes that influence the behaviors of elementary teachers. These additional miscellaneous reform issues do not fit in any of the prior categories, so they will be discussed in this section as independent miscellaneous changes. Teachers participating in the study report new reforms in areas of instruction, student assessment, and use of time have elevated the required level of performance for individual students. Mrs. Vaughn explains the increased level of expectations for second graders in the Kelsey Creek district:

In math, there are a lot more expectations, even the reading they are expecting a lot more of the children than they did 5 years ago. It is much more rigorous and difficult and I feel that has come from the state, the benchmarks and such. I would say that probably we have to take them a lot farther and that is the biggest change that I can see. Some children are ready for it and some are not.

Teachers believe the increased amount of testing and heightened student expectations has caused a sense of urgency for teachers as well as students. A third grade teacher from



Newport Elementary School describes the increased student expectations and demands for efficiency in the Somerset Community School District:

I think that there is more and more of that demand and that expectation that you will produce every moment of the day. We will be efficient. We will use our time well, which I think has positives, but also there is that constant feeling of urgency. Sometimes I wish that we could step back and let them be kids a little bit more and that's why I try and incorporate things like multiplication facts and they go down the slide. You know, it's purposeful learning, but make it as fun as possible because we don't get time off for just meaningless breaks.

Overall, teachers believe that the increased student expectations are a positive change, but the change has come too quickly. Teachers agree that students must be challenged and taught at their instructional levels to maximize student learning. The changes in instruction, assessment, and use of time have caused an increase in the expected performance level of students and influenced the behaviors of elementary school teachers. It is evident that the increase in student expectations and stress level is a direct effect of instructional and assessment changes. In turn, the assessment and instructional changes are facilitated through the school improvement process which has been directly impacted by the increased significance of MEAP assessments caused by recent legislation. The path from No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates influencing teacher behaviors, as shown in Figure 4-1, is indirect yet powerful and bears a certain level of responsibility for the increase in student expectations and stress level.

Newly increased student expectations have caused an indirect effect in the way certain programming is selected at the elementary level. Teachers describe instruction as being very purposeful and geared towards meeting performance standards and benchmarks. In addition, school assemblies are now being scheduled to meet

benchmarks and performance standards. A fourth grade teacher from Sienna Heights explains how assemblies are scheduled at Highland Elementary:

...a lot of times they (assemblies) seem to tie in with our benchmarks very well. We had a storyteller who told stories about Michigan history. She was very good and it just kind of brought to life all the things that we had been learning in the unit. Then we had Core Democratic Value assembly and some others that seem to tie in really well. No more fun and frilly assemblies and no more Frisbee throwing assemblies.

In addition to benchmark-oriented assemblies, teachers report that evening events at school are now designed to meet benchmarks and further develop student learning objectives. Mrs. Vaughn tells about literacy celebrations held at Interlake Elementary School:

In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade we have an author's day where the children share their pieces. As they write their stories, they share them in my room with the other kids and this excites the other kids to write their little chapter books. We used to have literacy fair, but that was before we had the science fair. Now we are doing spring exhibit. All of these things are tied into the reading and writing, research and this is a celebration of all of those things pulled together.

Teachers report that assemblies and evening celebrations are now being scheduled as purposeful events that supplement classroom instruction. The days of school carnivals have been replaced with literacy and math fairs. Carefree school assemblies are gone in favor of assemblies designed to reinforce district benchmarks and standards. Study respondents believe the change to more subject-oriented assemblies and programs aids in the delivery of individualized instruction and supports the increase in student learning expectations. Teachers report that once on track, benchmark-oriented assemblies include the fun of past assemblies but now reinforce classroom instruction in a positive way. The change in the content of school assemblies and evening celebrations can be correlated



with current reform of the school district curriculum; an indirect influence from Education YES! and No Child Left Behind legislation as shown in figure 4-1.

Study participants indicated that mandates from No Child Left Behind and Education YES! were the catalysts for reform involving teacher instruction, student assessment, use of time, record keeping, and teacher professional development. Although listing recent reform as a vehicle of change, teachers exhibited misconceptions and confusion regarding the requirements mandated by Education YES! and No Child Left Behind. Reading the local newspaper, union emails and information on the internet were the approaches most selected by teachers when asked how they learned about the requirements of No Child Left Behind and Education YES! Teachers indicated a general lack of professional training regarding how recent legislation may influence teaching job duties. Mrs. Frost explains her professional indoctrination to recent legislative acts:

The Assistant Superintendent came in and gave us a power point presentation (on No Child Left Behind and Education YES!) at the beginning of this year or at the end of last year, I can't remember. So that is very confusing. He also came to our PTA and did the same thing. That's how I got to see it twice. Our principal has helped us a little bit but it is very confusing to all of us. Things keep changing on us. Other than that, (I learn about the legislation from) probably just whatever we read.

Mrs. Dodson has had a similar experience to Mrs. Frost and relates her experience:

...I've seen a nice power point presentation. Overall, I don't think that there has been too much except for at staff meetings where our principal has talked a lot about this is this part and this is that. She has talked about different components but not overall. I have not had any professional come in and say, "Okay, this is it. This is what you have to do."

When asked what the district has done to help align math and literacy instruction with recent reform initiatives, one administrative respondent had no idea. The principal claimed that all of the curriculum alignment work had been done at the committee level, and since he was

not on any of the committees, he had no clue as to how the curriculum had been aligned with No Child Left Behind or Education YES!.

The lack of professional development for teachers regarding the details of recent legislation has caused teachers to have a variety of misconceptions about Education YES! and No Child Left Behind. A fourth grade teacher from Interlake Elementary relates her interpretation of recent legislation and its influence on education:

I find it kind of interesting how NCLB has been on the docket for so long and now it is in the forefront. I believe the accountability piece is important. The local control, I'm afraid that we are going to lose that. I almost feel as though this is why YES Michigan is coming around, to break the local control. This bothers me. Doing what works is good, but not the same thing works for every child. I don't believe that every child learns the same way and every child is going to progress at the same level.

A kindergarten teacher from the Sienna Heights district is not concerned about the requirements of No Child Left Behind as she describes her understanding of the legislation:

What I think is beautiful about this, is that if you got the NCLB requirements, then you just have to show a year's growth. So when my colleagues would say to me, "Oh you know we can't...so what". You test them in the fall and test them again the spring and if you show a years growth no problem. And of course a years growth is going to looking from child to child but...you are always going to see growth.

Administration spends time during staff meetings and other professional venues to disseminate the details and mandates of recent legislative acts. Despite the time spent talking to staff members about legislative issues, teachers report feeling confused and demonstrate misconceptions about Education YES! and No Child Left Behind. Teachers participating in the study believe that recent legislative mandates contribute to the changes in teacher instruction, professional development, student assessment, use of time

and new record keeping requirements, but cannot pinpoint which act has been a catalyst for which reform effort.

A fifth major theme to emerge from analysis of the data is that elementary teacher record keeping and other miscellaneous behaviors, related to accountability, have recently experienced significant change. Teachers describe keeping new detailed and more frequent records for individual students as required by school administration. The records are kept in individual binders or portfolios and provided to administrators for review at multiple times during the year. Study respondents indicated that the information collected is valuable, but the rate of testing incidence and subsequent record keeping is cumbersome. Teachers believe that the scheduled amount and frequency of assessments and record keeping have taken time away from instruction and caused instructional time to become an even more coveted and scarce resource than ever before. Study participants report an increase in the expected level of student performance with regard to core academic subject areas. Increased accountability for individual students coupled with increased student performance expectations and the scarcity of instructional time has created an increased level of anxiety for teachers. Respondents indicated that the increased tension has been a positive mechanism for professional development and growth, although teachers reported that the stress level is often uncomfortable.

Figure 4-1 demonstrates the indirect, yet prevailing, influence of No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates on elementary schools and teacher behaviors. Recent record keeping and other miscellaneous changes reported by teachers and administrators can be traced back to current legislative acts through a series of indirect

spheres of reform influencing school district curriculum, school improvement planning and the increased significance of MEAP assessment scores.

### **Administrative Reform**

Significant changes in teacher instructional practices, student assessment, use of teacher time, professional development and record keeping and other lesser changes direct the final theme to emerge from examination of the study data. The sixth major theme to emerge from data analysis is that school administrative behaviors have experienced significant change. Changes in teacher instruction and student assessment have caused a shift in the focus of the elementary principal. Elementary principal respondents indicate a decreased emphasis on school management and increased focus on curriculum and instruction. Mrs. Albright explains how the principal of Woodridge Elementary is focused on curriculum:

I feel that our administrator has had a lot of stress on her therefore she has brought it down to us and made it quite serious that we have a lot of work to do and we have a tough job ahead of us. She has really stayed on top of every grade level. I can only speak of third grade because I am not in the other groups block planning but I would say that she is in ninety percent of our block planning time. That does not say that she runs the meeting but she sits in and listens. She is a coordinator as far as making sure that everybody is there ... but she is a facilitator once a month along with our literacy coach to help us stay focused with our goals.

The new administrative focus on curriculum demands that elementary principals stay abreast of current best instructional and assessment practices. This is a challenge for most elementary principals as they are learning along with their teachers while conducting administrative duties. Dr. Craig describes the curriculum and instructional learning demands of elementary administrators:

I am learning as we go and I think that the feeling in this building is very much so. When we had a book study on *Strategies That Work* last year and *Yellow Brick Road* this year and on Fountas and Pinnell guided reading, what we are all doing is learning together. It's developed trust in many ways because when you are learning with someone else, you are very open to your own weaknesses where you are deficit. So, we are all learning together and I think that there is openness in that which I really do appreciate it in this building.

Principals indicated that administrative time has been reallocated to attend professional development training with the teaching staff. Mr. Delk attends most professional development sessions with the teachers from Interlake Elementary as he explains:

I have been trained in MLPP, and attended various other workshops and trained in cooperative learning. General activities that are either for school improvement process or goals that we have set for the building and teachers are trained in it, I take the training as well.

As the significance in MEAP and other assessment scores increases because of Education YES! and No Child Left Behind legislation, administrators are finding it beneficial to attend training with teaching staff members. Principal Duncan relates why she needs to attend school improvement and instructional inservice sessions with her staff:

...we can reinforce what we need to do. When I go in observe I know what to look for and what to expect. They can also depend on me, for things that they need because of the training. Our NCA, how can we put something together if the administrator doesn't really know what you have to do? I just have a dynamite staff and I have keep up with them.

Elementary administrators are staying up to date with current instructional practices, paperwork requirements and student assessment by attending training with staff members. Principals believe teachers respect administrators who understand what is going on in the classroom and support instructional and assessment reform with professional development, materials and knowledge. In a time when MEAP scores and school improvement planning dictate curriculum decisions, administrators need to stay

abreast of current assessment and instructional practices in order to successfully function as the instructional leader for the building. Additionally, the new legislation has had an indirect effect on administrative professional development due to the increased significance placed upon MEAP scores.

Teacher and principal respondents report an increase in the amount of resources that districts are providing to support recent educational reform. Somerset Community and Sienna Heights teachers appreciate release time, using substitute teachers, twice per year to conduct various individualized student assessments. The districts studied also supply each teacher with their own DRA or QRI and MLPP assessment kits so that teachers can assess students when necessary without having to search to find the appropriate materials. Providing substitute teachers twice per year and providing assessment kits for every elementary teacher demonstrates a strong financial commitment towards supporting student testing reform influenced by the new legislation.

When asked what the Somerset Community district had done to help support literacy instruction reform, teachers and administrators were very positive. Mrs. Jordan comments on the district support that Newport Elementary received to facilitate literacy instructional change:

They (the administration) give each principal funds and sub-days, kind of a split pot, for special projects. And for each faculty member you have you get two sub days for professional development and they allow us to use those however we see fit, and in our building we have used those to gear towards literacy. So, we were able to go as a whole staff to go to the intermediate school reader and writer workshop training. But then any time we do book talks during the day, and different things, then we can use sub time for. So, they (the administration) have just really given the principal the resources we need to do professional development and we've chosen as a building to look at literacy this year.

Administrators in the districts studied are purchasing materials to help their teaching staff members make the transition to new instructional and assessment practices. The Sienna Heights district purchased reference books for each elementary teacher and provided an inservice for staff members regarding how to utilize the new materials. Mrs. Stephens gave her opinion concerning the new resources provided by the district:

We have received a lot of reference books and then, it's called the Blue Book from the district, and several people have spent a lot of time on it. Once it was explained to us, it has become very useful. What it does is it takes all the parts of the literacy wheel and explains what you can do for comprehension, what reference book to go to, and what are some things you can do (to solve the problem).

The Somerset Community School District purchased COMPASS, a software program, which is a computer-based series of basic skills assessments developed by the American College Testing Company. Teachers explain that the COMPASS program allows them to individualize instruction for students in core content areas, a resource to implement instructional reform. The purchase of reference texts and relevant software programs for teachers in the district demonstrates two methods by which districts are supporting reform in student instructional, record keeping and assessment.

In addition to changes in the amount of substitute teacher time and materials provided, the districts studied are supporting schools with reform initiatives by developing new standards in the form of policies and procedures. One such procedure was the initiation of an instructional support team (IST) to assist classroom teachers with students who were not successfully learning using new instructional techniques. Mrs. Wells explains the responsibilities of the instructional support team at Woodbridge Elementary:

...the instructional support team has been implemented in the three Title One buildings. We have seen it is a team of nine people that meet on a weekly basis and teaches can refer a child if there's a problem. If they have exhausted all of the classroom resources, they've done guided reading, they have done the literacy block as it is supposed to be implemented and the child is still experiencing difficulty, they can bring the child to the team and we all brainstorm. We have psychologist, speech teacher, and resource teachers, who can say, "How about trying this for six weeks?", and we put it right back on the teacher and say, "This is what we would like you to try for six weeks. We will check back in six weeks." We have a contact person who is always in communication with that teacher. The district has supplied us with a lot of stuff to help us implement that.

The increased significance of the MEAP test and attaining 100% student achievement on the MEAP reading subtest, as required by No Child Left Behind legislation, caused the administration of Kelsey Creek Schools to adopt a retention policy for students who do not achieve grade level expectations for reading. The policy states that students who do not read at grade level expectations by the close of the school year are to be retained in the same grade for the next year. Administrators believe that students who are not performing at grade level expectations for core literacy standards cannot be promoted to the next grade. Kelsey Creek teachers have strong feelings regarding the recent retention policy as explained by Mrs. Mayer:

I think we are hurting some children and requiring that they are at a special limit or a certain level, when developmentally they are not quite there yet. I'm not saying we don't teach it, I'm just saying we shouldn't be requiring mastery to the point where we are going to retain them or make them feel like failures because they all are going to learn at their own rate.

Kelsey Creek parents who have students who do not read at grade level expectations may request that their child be placed rather than retained. Students who are not reading at grade level expectations are then "placed" into the next grade, but not officially promoted. The increased significance of MEAP scores due to mandates from recent



legislative acts is a catalyst for implementing of the new retention policy of Kelsey Creek Schools.

Recent legislative mandates have indirectly influenced significant changes in the school district curriculum and classroom teacher behavior. To facilitate instructional and curricular reform, districts have adopted new policies and procedures that support student learning. Teachers and parents have viewed some policies, such as the development of the Sienna Heights Instructional Support Team, as a positive change. The Kelsey Creek retention policy is considered a negative, yet a necessary, change in school policy. No Child Left Behind legislation requires 100% student proficiency on MEAP assessments by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. The NCLB mandate has influenced administrators to implement policies and procedures that will increase the probability of attaining 100% student proficiency as required by the legislation.

The districts studied developed benchmarks and student performance standards that reflect current state benchmarks for learning. The State of Michigan benchmarks are the foundation for the development of questions from MEAP assessments. Administrators participating in the study report an increased emphasis on student instruction that meets district benchmark and performance standard goals. Mrs. Lynch explains how increased administrative emphasis on instruction that meets benchmark requirements has influenced her instruction:

...if you stick to the standards and benchmarks, you realize that you won't have to do all these other things that you felt like you had to in third grade even though it's your passion. I really wanted to do something on the Underground Railroad, do this major theme on black history. Now before I plan, I make sure I go to my benchmarks and see what is it exactly that I need to cover.

Teachers can no longer ignore content that is covered by district benchmarks as students are being assessed on benchmark standards and teachers are held accountable for student achievement. Mrs. Forrester describes the change in instruction for 4<sup>th</sup> graders due to an increased emphasis on benchmark lesson content:

I can remember when I first started teaching I thought I didn't want to be bothered by these story problems (as required by Kelsey Creek benchmarks). They are just too hard for the kids. I would ignore them. ....It is not a choice with MEAP and IOWA Test of Basic Skills in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Teachers were generally positive when reflecting on how instruction is more focused on benchmark content. Some teachers complained that there was not enough time to include non-academic activities because of increased emphasis on benchmark content. Mrs. Albright tells about the change in her lesson focus:

I don't do any more "fun", cutsie projects. I don't do art in my room or draw pictures. ...Everything that I do now in the classroom is totally has to do with the (district) benchmarks.

The development of MEAP questions comes from current State of Michigan benchmarks and performance standards. The process by which MEAP questions are created has caused district administrators to accentuate instruction of benchmark content and encourage teachers to omit instruction that does not meet performance standard objectives. Teachers believe the increased emphasis on benchmark content has driven instruction in a positive manner, but some teachers miss the days of arts and crafts projects.

District administration recognizes the challenges that classroom teachers experience during significant instructional, curricular and assessment reform. Principals report that administration is working to align current assessments and changes in curriculum with reform initiatives by providing professional development and program

materials to teachers impacted by these changes. Mr. Delk, the principal of Interlake Elementary, describes the work that Kelsey Creek administrators did to align reform initiatives with recent changes in instruction and curriculum:

...we did that (rewrite curriculum) to initially align ourselves with the state's bench marks. That was the purpose so our curriculum would be aligned. We accomplished that and once our curriculum was aligned then we went out looking for materials that were going to best match or meet what we developed.

The Sienna Heights and Somerset Community districts created their own assessments, the benchmark assessment and English/Language Arts assessments respectively, to align teachers' instruction with benchmarks and performance standards. In addition to aligning curriculum with state and district benchmarks, the districts provide instructional materials for teachers to facilitate the change to balanced literacy instruction. Mrs. Bowman explains how the Kelsey Creek district provides new materials to shape her literacy instruction:

... we have more curriculum materials. When I started out in first grade, we did not have reading books. I provided some kind of reading activity that used a lot of rhymes that I would type out and give to the children. They would make their own books. I did a lot of teaching off of that, like find the site words, find the chunk and I was very content doing that. Through the last five to six years, they (district administration) have provided us with a lot of (literacy) materials and so I feel that those need to be used.

The literacy coach at Ardmore Elementary School noted that administration provides guided reading materials for each teacher at the point of instruction, in the classroom. Providing multiple leveled texts for each teacher to use in the classroom demonstrates a significant financial commitment to aligning changes in instruction with the reform initiatives from No Child Left Behind and Education YES!

Elementary principals participating in the study describe significant changes in administrative spending practices as a result of curricular, instructional and assessment

reforms influenced by recent legislation. Building administrators report spending more of their budget on leveled guided reading books for the school literacy library. The principal of Interlake Elementary relates the changes in spending practices:

I might be providing more money towards support materials and resource materials for teachers to enable them to do to guided reading or buying books in groups of 6 or 8 of level texts for them to use. I think from that stand point, instead of focusing on a basal theory or anything of that nature, I have directed my additional funds from my own building funds for consumables or miscellaneous supplies and things like that to augment and provide materials that the teachers can use for some new strategies that we are asking them to do.

Dr. Craig claims that the days of spending building funds on balls and benches for the playground has been replaced by money spent on materials and training that support the curriculum and instruction. Instructional, assessment and curricular changes influenced by recent legislation have caused significant changes in district spending practices and administrative support of reform efforts. The objective of district administration is to align and support teacher instruction with benchmarks for learning. The districts created assessments to align teacher instruction with performance standards and have rewritten curriculum to better support benchmark instruction. Building principals are spending more of the budget on materials to support mandated instructional changes in addition to the extra materials already provided at the district level for instructional reform.

Elementary principal respondents indicated that hiring practices have changed due to mandates from Education YES! and No Child Left Behind. Instructional and assessment reform initiatives have principals looking for teaching candidates that are already trained in balanced literacy instruction and administration of current assessments such as DRA, QRI and MLPP. Dr. Shea, the principal of Brookfield Elementary, elaborates on current hiring standards for teaching candidates:

I think first and foremost you are looking for somebody that is very skilled at literacy (instruction) and has a good understanding of what good literacy and balanced literacy is. Then I also look for the willingness to put in the extra time. They really have to realize, especially if they come to Sienna Heights, there are great demands. Our citizens expect so much. They want the best education for their child and so we have high expectations from our parents and our communities so we have to maintain that.

Mrs. Jordan recognizes the importance of MEAP assessments and looks for candidates that understand the significance of MEAP testing:

Some people have already been trained in MLPP and DRA, but just at least a knowledge based on that so they can talk about it and understand the importance of assessment. A big turn off is you talk about the MEAP test in a conversation or any kind of assessment in a conversation and they (interview candidate) act like it's evil or a burden. If they already think it's an evil and a burden, then I don't want them on staff.

The concentration on literacy and math instruction has changed the focus of interview questions used for teacher candidates. Principals describe current interview questions based around literacy and math instruction and assessment practices. Mrs. Duncan regularly asks her building literacy coach to sit in on teacher interviews to get a better perspective on candidates' answers to literacy-based instruction and assessment practices. Recent legislative mandates have also influenced the hiring practices of elementary principals. Elementary principals participating in the study maintain that teacher candidates are now being scrutinized for knowledge of reform initiatives in curriculum, assessment and instruction.

It has been reported that elementary teacher record keeping practices have changed significantly as a result of legislative acts. Elementary principals assert that administrative record keeping practices have changed substantially as a result of No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates. Principals' must complete the school performance indicators requirement of Education YES!, which is a self-assessment of

eleven different school success indicators. The school performance indicators section of Education YES! is a requirement that increases elementary administrator record keeping requirements. Principals indicated that a large amount of administrative time was reallocated to complete the school success indicators requirement of Education YES!, as Dr. Lambert explains:

...the first time we did it probably took, I would guess each principal had 8 to 10 hours on it. It was a huge project even with all the help we have from the district.

Other principals indicated a similar amount of time was spent completing the school success indicators section. Central office administration is credited by building principals as playing a supporting role in completing new record keeping practices as required by the legislation. Mrs. Jordan tells about the supportive role the Somerset Community administration played in completing new form requirements of No Child Left Behind and Education YES!:

...we have our curriculum director last year who really walked us through as principals, what it was we were supposed to do. Then she made herself available if we had questions and then last year at crunch time when it was due and I was still trying to get it all put together, I was able to go sit over at the district office and their computer lab and they had helpers that were stationed around to help those of us who were scrambling. I feel like our district has supported us in every way that they can.

Elementary principals describe a significant increase in the volume of record keeping required by No Child Left Behind and Education YES! Central office administrators are recognized as a supportive and knowledgeable staff that collaborate with building principals to facilitate new reporting requirements.

No Child Left Behind and Education YES! have also increased elementary principal record keeping practices based on reporting now required by central office administration. Building principals say that central administration requires principals to complete additional

record keeping procedures to satisfy directives of the legislative acts. Principals are expected to compile and provide central office with detailed assessment records for all students in the building. Dr. Shea describes the paperwork provided quarterly to central office:

We are only required to (submit to central office) anything dealing with Education Yes, that type of stuff. So, we have paper work and there are other things. All of my literacy, I keep track of all the data now and we have it on Chancery ( a computer data base) and we track of every student. I do pass that along to the Student Services Director who likes to know where our kids have gone from the fall growth to the end of the year and mid-year, different measuring gauges. We do testing in March and January and also in May, so we keep that data. Sometimes we will put graphs together so they can visually see the growth and I'll take the time to do that.

Other principals participating in the study described similar changes in record keeping practices as required by central administration.

Elementary principals report that administrative time has been reallocated due to the amount of time required to analyze information in report form, submitted by classroom teachers. Class composites, MEAP test scores, and benchmark assessment results are a few of the records that building administrators collect and analyze from teachers. The compiled reports are provided to central administration and are used to complete the school success indicators report required by Education YES!. It is clear that elementary principal record keeping practices have increased in volume and time due to the legislative mandates. Completion of the school success indicators report as a requirement of Education YES! is an example of the direct impact that the legislation has upon elementary principal record keeping practices. Principals describe an indirect influence of legislation being the record keeping procedures central office now requires

on individual students' math and reading achievement as a condition of compliance with No Child Left Behind and Education YES!.

Significant record keeping changes have increased the elementary building administrators' accountability for student learning. Principals report that the amplified level of accountability generated by new record keeping requirements has increased the stress accompanying an elementary administrative job. The principal of Interlake Elementary School compares completing the paperwork required for legislative compliance similar to shooting at a moving target. Mr. Delk describes an increase in his anxiety level because he is never quite sure if the school has demonstrated progress sufficient to make adequate yearly progress as specified by No Child Left Behind and Education YES! Dr. Shea describes the increased pressure felt from new accountability mandates:

I think there has been a higher level of stress put on us because now the No Child Left Behind makes us accountable. If you have a failing school that's over three years, I could be fired and the state will take you over and place somebody else in your position. I think no matter what your good intentions are as an administrator, if you don't show performance, it doesn't matter.

Principals talked about the increased tension felt trying to stay abreast of current best instructional and assessment practices and acting as the instructional leader for the building. Attending teacher professional development sessions and understanding reform of teacher practice provides another demand on administrative time and creates additional stress for building principals. Dr. Craig describes the increased pressure felt from legislative mandates just before the MEAP scores are released:



...it's (No Child Left Behind and Education YES!) caused a certain amount of unease, just before the MEAP scores come out. It's knowing that they are coming out is stressful. It's very stressful even though, to our credit, our district has not tried to make it a big deal. They don't get on you if your scores are bad. You know that the public is looking at that and it's a very worrisome thing.

Elementary principals believe there has been an increase in the amount of stress created by legislative acts. No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates demand increased accountability for student learning from teachers and administrators. Building principals are concerned that they may be replaced if the school they administer does not make adequate yearly progress as defined by current legislation. Principals believe increased record keeping, as required by the district, state and federal government, has created an elevated level of accountability for student learning and increased the job-related pressures for administrators.

When asked from where principals receive information regarding the mandates and requirements of No Child Left Behind and Education YES!, elementary principals gave differing accounts. Building principals from Somerset Community and Sienna Heights districts report that the district central administration staff disseminated the majority of requirement information mandated by legislation. Mrs. Jordan relates how she learned about requirements stemming from No Child Left Behind and Education YES!:

I know that our curriculum director and our curriculum coordinator have gone to a lot of the meetings that the intermediate school district has put on. Then they present it to the building administrators and directors in the district and then we then give whatever information is needed to the teachers. But myself, I've not gone and sat through all those No Child Left Behind meetings.

Dr. Craig also credits the district administrative staff with dissemination of important mandates regarding legislation:

**We have great leadership in this district. Our Assistant Superintendent is a visionary and he is right there at the top. The Director of Student Services reports directly to him and she has been a real visionary in this (reform planning). They have been wonderful in helping us as a district to form a vision and then to make it happen.**

**Building administrators from Sienna Heights and Somerset Community districts report that the local intermediate school district had a small and indirect influence on dissemination of legislative reform requirements.**

**Elementary principals from the Kelsey Creek School District claim that the intermediate school district played a much more direct role in their learning about No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates. Mrs. Duncan describes her education on recent legislative reforms:**

**We (building administrators from Kelsey Creek) went to two or three conferences. ...This year, Olympia Schools (the intermediate school district) did a No Child Left Behind (workshop) and that tweaks it all for you and then when you go to read things, you have some prior knowledge.**

**Principal Delk had a similar experience learning about requirements of recent legislative acts and how to stay in compliance with mandates.**

**...being in Olympia County obviously, we have a very good resource system, not only within our own districts, but in our intermediate school district. We had an ISD consultant come out and she has worked with us. Our district provides us with release time, as best they can given the economic tender of the times that we are in, and so we do receive support from those areas.**

**Due to its smaller size, the Kelsey Creek School District does not have the personnel resources in the central district office that Sienna Heights and Somerset Community schools do. Principals from Kelsey Creek indicated that the intermediate school district had a direct influence on their understanding of recent legislative requirements. Kelsey Creek principals acknowledged the district's central office staff as providing some**

information regarding mandates of No Child Left Behind and Education YES!, but not to the degree that Sienna Heights and Somerset Community district administrators did.

Elementary principals indicated that No Child Left Behind and Education YES! mandates have influenced administrative practices and the operation of elementary schools. Recent legislative acts have directly influenced administrative professional development, as principals are attending instructional and assessment reform training sessions with teachers to stay current as an instructional leader. Principals report that spending and hiring practices have been directly influenced by Education YES! and No Child Left Behind as administrators need to support reform efforts with new materials and hire staff members based on credentials related to legislative requirements. The volume of administrative record keeping has increased as a direct influence of legislative acts, and principals describe reallocating significant amounts of administrative time for paperwork analysis and submitting record keeping requirements to district officials. Building administrators explained that new school district policies and procedures are created to facilitate instructional reform while staying in compliance with mandates from No Child Left Behind and Education YES!. Central administration has significantly increased the amount of resources, including new materials, teacher release time, and technology, allocated to teachers to assist with the increased demand of assessment and instructional reform, while aligning instruction with district benchmarks. Reform efforts influenced by legislation have increased the level of student accountability at the elementary administrative level and increased accountability for student learning has created more job-related tension and pressure for elementary administrators.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this study is to describe current federal and state legislation and to describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. Upon analysis of 24 elementary teacher and 6 elementary principal interviews, Figure 4-1 was developed to depict the spheres of elementary education influenced by No Child Left Behind and Education YES! legislation. It is clear that the influence of recent legislation on elementary teacher behavior is very powerful, yet indirect. The result is indirect because the mandates of Education YES! and NCLB must travel through a series of influential spheres in the school organization before reform efforts actually influence teacher behaviors. The impact of recent legislative mandates is also experienced directly and indirectly by administrators, who channel the reform efforts into vehicles that influence elementary teacher behavior.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those legislative efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. The researcher believed that the mandates included in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Education YES! legislation would influence instructional practices, student assessment, record keeping, professional development and administrative behaviors in elementary schools and of teachers.

Previous chapters discussed the details encompassing the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), titled No Child Left Behind, the subsequent development of Education YES! legislation and the tenure of Public Act 25. Michigan's Public Act 25 was passed in 1990 to establish a legislative framework for statewide school improvement. PA 25 requires schools and school districts to develop formal annual school improvement plans, a core curriculum aligned with state standards, attain accreditation from an established accrediting association, and publish an annual report to communicate the reform efforts. The Sienna Heights, Somerset Community and Kelsey Creek districts work with the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA) to maintain compliance with the four requirements of Public Act 25. Building administrators and staff members complete an annual report and the district has adopted a core curriculum designed to align with the State of Michigan standards and benchmarks.

NCLB and Education YES! are the two acts that were central to the study and were written to include several common reform principles. The reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), titled No Child Left Behind, was signed into law on January 8, 2002. NCLB was designed to close the achievement gaps between students of different demographic groups. To achieve the objective, NCLB is organized around four reform principles: accountability for students' academic achievement, local control of federal education funding, parental involvement, and the implementation of scientifically proven programs and teaching methods.

At its March 2002 meeting, the Michigan State Board of Education approved Education YES!- A Yardstick for Excellent Schools. Many of the provisions of Education YES! align with the requirements of the federal NCLB Act. The Michigan State Board of Education means to accomplish their vision and purpose with what they describe as a fair, challenging, and supportive accreditation system to help all schools be good schools. The Michigan accreditation system, as described in the Education YES! document, is based upon the following three standards that focus on every school working with every child (the same premise as NCLB): (1) all Michigan elementary and middle school children will read independently and use math to solve problems at grade level; (2) all Michigan students will experience a year of academic growth for a year of instruction; and (3) all Michigan high school students, in addition to demonstrating high academic achievement, will have an individual education plan leading them to be prepared for success (Education YES!, 2002). Since the focus of this research is the legislation's influence on elementary schools and teachers, only standards one and two were addressed in the study.

### Research Questions

The study was designed to include four research questions: 1. What influence does legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25, and Education YES! have upon elementary teacher behavior?, 2. What influence does legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25, and Education YES! have upon the school organization?, 3. Has elementary teacher instruction changed fundamentally because of requirements mandated by NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES!?, and 4. How do local district support, teacher practice, teacher professional learning and testing requirements work together to advance reform policy at the elementary school level? Chapter five will discuss the four research questions indicated above and provide answers to the questions supported by the study data collected.

### Question One Discussion

The first research question asks; What influence does legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES! have upon elementary teacher behavior? Study data supports the fact that the three legislative acts have influenced elementary teacher behaviors. The degree to which elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced varies contingent on the specific legislation and the time teachers have worked with the mandates of the legislation.

The school improvement process effects of PA 25 were evident in the interviews conducted for the study. Elementary teacher and administrator respondents indicated that no time was reallocated to complete requirements of Public Act 25. Teachers describe school improvement requirements of PA 25 as a structured process by which the school

day is planned. School improvement goals are incorporated into teacher lesson plans as explained by Mrs. Albright:

...I plan it (school improvement plans) in with the science or reading. In science I go way ahead and usually plan out the whole unit or at least half of the unit and I plug in those (school improvement) questions with science. I plug them into the unit wherever, after we have learned about these things. Usually it is towards the end and I use them as part of my daily lesson plans. For reading and expository text, that's just something that we do basically every week.

Elementary principals explain that writing the annual report, as required by PA 25, has become a routine administrative task completed each year. Shine (1992), determined that the reform conditions and indicators were of sufficient strength in Michigan public schools to allow educational reform to continue under PA 25. The study data indicates that reform conditions initiated by Public Act 25 are still at work, continuing the school improvement process.

Because PA 25 directives have been in effect in Michigan public schools for the past 14 years, teachers and administrators have become comfortable working within the context of the mandates. Respondents indicated that no time was reallocated for PA 25 mandates and transaction costs were minimal. However, classroom instruction and materials have been modified to meet school improvement goals. Data from participant's interviews indicate that PA 25 directives do influence elementary teacher behavior despite reports from respondents that no time is reallocated to meet school improvement mandates. Respondents described planning instruction to include school improvement goals, conducting assessments based upon school improvement objectives and working closely with colleagues to stay in compliance with PA 25 directives.

Study respondents believe the indirect influences of NCLB and Education YES! have caused a significant reallocation of instructional time, while requirements of PA 25



require no reallocation of instructional time. The reallocation of teacher instructional time is due to changes in elementary teacher instruction, assessment and record keeping, influenced by NCLB and Education YES! Participants discussed the extensive professional development undertaken by elementary teachers to integrate balanced literacy and manipulative-based mathematics instruction into the daily curriculum. Lesson planning and assessment analysis designed to individualize instruction require additional time and often reallocated instructional time for study respondents.

Respondents indicated that literacy and math assessment practices have also been modified significantly to keep up with the changes in instructional practices. Instruction has become more differentiated and individualized and teachers are administering different assessments to obtain the individualized information necessary to make good instructional decisions. Elementary teachers, in the study, confirmed the requirement of administering individualized literacy and math assessments, such as the DRA, QRI and MLPP, to students several times during the school year. The individualized assessments require additional record keeping procedures for each child. The changes in assessments and record keeping, as an influence of NCLB and Education YES!, have required a reallocation of elementary teacher instructional time.

The change in instructional practices is a result of the NCLB and Education YES! legislation. In attempting to stay in compliance with the directives of NCLB and Education YES!, the districts studied have adopted instructional approaches to teach core literacy and mathematics skills. The result of the changes in instruction is a reallocation of elementary teacher instructional time to learn and implement the new approaches, conduct individualized assessments and maintain detailed records for each student.

## Question Two Discussion

Research question two asks: What influence does legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES! have upon the school organization? Data analyzed from the study interviews verifies that the three legislative acts have influenced the elementary school organization. The three legislative acts studied have imposed transaction costs upon the elementary school organization. The first transaction cost incurred by the school organization is an increase in the amount of building resources that are expended to meet legislative mandates. The instructional changes influenced by the recent legislation involve the purchase of materials for successful implementation. Elementary principals report spending large portions of the building budget to supply balanced literacy support materials, such as books for the literacy library and professional development for teachers; as well as themselves. New assessment requirements such as the DRA, QRI and MLPP require the purchase of assessment kits for teachers and teacher release time so that individual assessments may be completed for every child several times during the year. The transaction costs incurred by the school organization as an indirect result of NCLB and Education YES! have caused elementary administrators to scrutinize budgets to find the funds necessary to successfully implement the educational reform goals of the legislation studied.

NCLB and Education YES! mandates have caused elementary building administrators to modify their hiring practices. Because of the push for instructional reform by recent legislation, elementary principals are now looking for teaching candidates with a portfolio of literacy and math teaching skills as well as knowledge of current best instructional practices. The costs of training novice teachers in the

techniques they need to teach balanced literacy instruction and manipulative-based mathematics increased in a time when money and time are less available. Teacher candidates who arrive with the skills and knowledge to implement hands-on math and balanced literacy instruction save school districts precious time and money.

PA 25, Education YES! and NCLB mandates have influenced the frequency and amount of record keeping and report writing required of elementary principals. Public Act 25 calls for the publication of an annual school report as well as other school improvement documentation. Principals report the completion of school improvement documentation is incorporated into daily administrative duties, however, the time spent completing the records and reports does require a reallocation of administrative time. NCLB and Education YES! legislative acts also contain record keeping demands that must be submitted annually to the school district, state and federal governments. The record keeping requirements of NCLB and Ed. YES! cause an additional reallocation of elementary principal administrative time. It can be argued that a third organizational transaction cost, influenced by recent legislation, involves a reallocation of administrative time due to increased record keeping and reporting requirements of PA 25, Education YES! and NCLB legislation.

The school organization has experienced an increase in accountability for individual student learning as a direct influence of the legislation studied. Education YES! and NCLB administer individual school and school district report cards. The grades schools and districts receive is determined by a formula which is heavily based upon students' past and present performance on the MEAP test. Parents now have access to more information about the schools their children attend and NCLB offers alternatives, if

their child's school is identified as chronically needing improvement. Schools identified as unsafe or in need of academic improvement under NCLB guidelines must pay for students' transportation to a better performing school in the district or a neighboring charter school. Parents with students enrolled in a school identified as failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for three consecutive years may request \$300-\$1,000 in Title I funds for use in supplying supplemental services (tutors, after-school or weekend help, and summer school tuition) for their child. As mandated by NCLB, parents will receive report cards about their school and school district each fall. These report cards will provide additional information regarding the school's performance and Adequate Yearly Progress status to help parents make informed decisions concerning school enrollment choice issues for their children.

Teacher participants describe reform initiatives involving differentiated instruction, individualized assessments and exclusive student record keeping that combine to increase accountability for student learning. Administrators discussed increased student record keeping, procedures for the calculation of adequate yearly progress (AYP), sanctions for not achieving AYP and public communication of assessment results as four changes which increase administrative accountability for student achievement. Increased parental involvement options, as provided by NCLB legislation, have added to the already heightened level of accountability elementary teachers and principals experience. Dr. Craig, an elementary principal from Sienna Heights, explains the stress felt when Woodridge Elementary's NCLB grade was published in a local newspaper:

We were listed as one of the failing schools. Parents went ballistic. When I came back they were very upset and had written a letter to the Superintendent with all their signatures complaining about what had happened and how come Woodridge was failing and what was going on. We had a huge meeting in August with the Superintendent and Curriculum Director, four board members and lots of parents. We tried to explain how the scores were determined and when they left that meeting, people understood very clearly that we are not a failing school.

Analysis of study data indicates that the first reform principle originating from NCLB legislation, accountability for students' academic achievement, is operating productively at the elementary school level and that it has influenced the way in which the school organization conducts business.

In response to the second research question which asks, What influence does legislative reforms such as NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES! have upon the school organization; study data indicates that the three legislative acts have influenced the elementary school organization. Instructional and assessment changes, influenced by recent legislation, require an increase in human and financial resource support from the districts studied. Elementary principals have changed the way they interview and hire teachers, selecting new staff members who have greater knowledge of current instructional and assessment techniques. Increased record keeping demands mandated by PA 25, NCLB and Ed. YES! have caused a reallocation of elementary principal administrative time. Accountability for individual student learning has been increased by the legislation studied causing a change in the ways elementary schools conduct business.

### Question Three Discussion

The third research question asks: Has elementary teacher instruction changed fundamentally because of requirements mandated by NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES!?

Study data substantiates that the three legislative acts have influenced elementary teacher instruction. However, the degree to which the legislation has modified instruction is, at this time, unclear. Elementary teachers and administrators gave conflicting information regarding the influence of recent legislation upon student instruction. The teachers interviewed reported that instruction has changed significantly over the past two years. Some lower elementary (K-2) teachers from the Sienna Heights and Somerset Community school districts indicated that they have been using at least a smaller version of balanced literacy instruction prior to the time the recent legislative acts were passed. However, the same lower elementary teachers claim professional development and materials for balanced literacy instruction have been greatly emphasized since NCLB and Education YES! legislation were enacted. Teachers in grades 3-5 describe a recent administrative thrust to train all upper elementary teachers in balanced literacy instruction and cite the catalyst as Ed. YES! and NCLB mandates. Although balanced literacy instruction is not a proven, research-based instructional technique, the districts studied believe that this instructional technique is beneficial to students and meets the requirements of recent legislative acts. It would be fair to say that NCLB and Education YES! legislation have influenced elementary teacher instruction, however, the extent of the influence is difficult to measure at this time.

Although the extent of NCLB and Education YES! influence on elementary teacher instruction is still being evaluated, the influence on student assessment is more clear. Education YES! and NCLB legislation have greatly increased the significance of MEAP scores. Both NCLB and Ed. YES! use MEAP scores in the formula to determine school grades and adequate yearly progress. Because of the increase in the significance

of MEAP scores, the districts studied implemented a variety of new assessment tools to improve student performance on the MEAP. The Somerset Community School District requires teachers to administer the ELA, a test designed to monitor how well students were learning the district's language arts benchmarks, to all elementary students. The Sienna Heights district designed benchmark assessments that are administered quarterly to students in grades 3-5 in each core content area. Teachers from both districts agreed that the purpose of their respective assessments is to provide elementary students more opportunities to practice MEAP-like assessments and for teachers to monitor the content being taught.

The instructional mandates of NCLB and Education YES! require that each student achieve a year of growth per school year and be taught based upon their respective individual needs. The mandates caused districts to begin examining assessment options whose design would provide the information required to make the best instructional choices, to maintain compliance with recent legislation. The DRA, QRI and MLPP are assessment requirements of each district studied and each are designed to collect individualized information concerning each student. Newport fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Lewis, explains:

You know, a lot of it is from our district. A lot of it is from No Child Left Behind. MLPP is administered to the younger grades and the DRA is really going to start tracking where our students are and hold accountable the level of achievement for each one.

Some teachers had been informally using MLPP, DRA and QRI assessments without consistent guidelines prior to NCLB and Education YES! mandates. To stay in compliance with the legislative acts, the districts studied created grade-level standards and time schedules for the assessments to be administered to each student several times

during the school year. Study data establishes that fundamental changes in elementary student assessment practices were greatly influenced by mandates from Education YES! and No Child Left Behind legislation.

The answer to research question number three, has elementary teacher instruction changed fundamentally because of requirements mandated by NCLB, PA 25 and Education YES!?, is not definitive at this time. The study data suggests that recent legislation has influenced teacher instruction, but the degree to which is still unclear. The districts studied experience a wide variety of internal and external stimuli that influence elementary teacher instruction. The claim that NCLB and Education YES! mandates have caused the fundamental change in teacher instruction is not able to be made at this time. It is reasonable to assert that the requirements of Education YES! and NCLB are the primary influences responsible for the fundamental change in elementary student assessment practices.

#### Question Four Discussion

The fourth research question asks: How do local district support, teacher practice, teacher professional learning and testing requirements work together to advance reform policy at the elementary school level? Study respondents reported that since Public Act 25 has been in operation for the past 14 years, the standards mandated therein have become systemic to the school organization. Elementary teachers and administrators were unable to describe the resources at work that advance the mandates of PA 25. Study data indicates that there are many sources currently at work to advance the reform principles advocated by Education YES! and NCLB.



Recent legislative acts require that all students must achieve one year of academic growth for every year in school, schools must implement scientifically proven instructional methods, and an increased accountability for student learning. The robust mandates of NCLB and Education YES! have encouraged districts to closely examine teacher instructional and assessment practices. The districts studied believe that requiring all elementary teachers to use balanced literacy and manipulative-based mathematics instruction fulfills the requirement to use scientifically proven instructional techniques. While the merit of balanced literacy and hands-on math instruction has yet to be proven, the participating districts believe each approach to be examples of best instructional practices and thus, in compliance with NCLB and Ed. YES! requirements. Implementation of instructional programs and the requirement of NCLB to administer a common assessment at each grade level has stimulated districts to adopt various assessment programs. The districts studied now require elementary teachers to test all students several times during the year using MLPP, DRA or QRI assessments. The assessments provide teachers with individualized information regarding each student's literacy progress and allow for better instructional choices during balanced literacy instruction. The changes in teacher practices and testing requirements in the areas of literacy and math combine to advance reform policy initiatives of NCLB and Education YES!

Olympia Schools, the local intermediate school district, supports the reform efforts of recent legislative acts by sponsoring workshops that define the mandates of NCLB and Education YES! Elementary principals from the Kelsey Creek School District cited Olympia Schools as the primary source of information on legislative requirements. The intermediate school district consultants work with central office staff and building principals

from the three districts studied. Although elementary principals from the Somerset Community and Sienna Heights districts claim that the majority of legislative dissemination comes directly from central office, the intermediate school district consults closely with the administrative staff to provide the most recent legislative updates.

In addition to supporting legislative reform on an administrative level, Olympia Schools offers professional development for teachers regarding new instructional techniques, assessment administration and record keeping related to NCLB and Ed. YES!. The districts studied indicated that they train elementary teachers using indistrict experts, a majority of the time. When asked where the inside experts receive their training, administrators responded that the local intermediate school district provides most of the professional development. The instructional, assessment and record keeping reforms advanced by Education YES! and NCLB require professional development for elementary personnel. It can be stated without reservation, that the intermediate school district works with local districts to support and advance reform policy objectives of NCLB and Ed. YES!.

Elementary teachers participating in the study reported that they had been trained in a variety of new instructional, assessment and record keeping techniques to stay in compliance with mandates from Ed. YES! and NCLB. Respondents described being trained to use balanced literacy and hands-on mathematics instructional programs as a result of recent legislation. Implementation of DRA, QRI, MLPP, and individualized math assessments necessitate elementary teacher training to correctly assess students on an independent level. Elementary teachers included in the study attended formal training sessions regarding record keeping requirements necessary to work within the parameters of new instructional and assessment techniques. The Sienna Heights, Kelsey Creek and

Somerset Community school districts demonstrated a dedication to recent legislative mandates by allocating sizable amounts of time and money to train elementary staff members. It is apparent that teacher professional learning plays an integral role in the advancement of NCLB and Ed. YES! policy at the elementary level.

Data from the study provides the answer to the fourth research question: How do local district support, teacher practice, teacher professional learning and testing requirements work together to advance reform policy at the elementary school level? The mandates of NCLB and Education YES! have changed the way in which local school districts conduct business. The districts studied are requiring teachers to use balanced literacy and hands-on math instructional techniques in lieu of past practices. The changes in instructional practices and mandates of recent legislation have influenced a change in student assessment practices and requirements. Changes in instructional, assessment and record keeping behaviors require teachers to be trained and have influenced elementary teacher professional development and new hire specifications. The districts studied are working with the intermediate school district and other professional development agencies to provide materials and training for teachers as required to maintain compliance. Local district support, teacher practice, teacher professional learning and testing requirements are interdependent variables that work together to advance the reform policy initiatives of NCLB and Ed. YES! at the elementary level.

Review of the four research questions provokes an essential question of the NCLB legislation that requires clarification; is the driving force behind recent instructional and assessment reform policy more bureaucratic necessity or pedagogical effectiveness? According to mandates included in NCLB, schools and districts are

expected to use scientifically proven practices to meet state standards for literacy and other academic areas. Through the adoption of a balanced literacy approach to teaching core language arts skills and the implementation of hands-on, manipulative-based mathematics programs, the Somerset Community, Kelsey Creek and Sienna Heights school districts believe they are meeting the mandates of the NCLB and Education YES! legislation. Internal reporting and analysis of Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), and Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP) assessments by the districts studied have shown favorable results. However, there are no longitudinal research studies that confirm the “best practice” status of using a balanced literacy or manipulative-based mathematics approach to teaching elementary school children. When asked if balanced literacy instruction has been proven as best instructional practice, Michael Pressley (2004), co-author of the latest Michigan literacy standards, responded:

Impossible question to answer. There are versions of all these labels that are filled with well-validated practices and versions that are filled with few to no validated practices. Also, if there is an important finding in the lit, the teacher matters greatly in reading. There is virtually no literature on any of the packages as wholes---So what does a year---let alone 7 years----of experiencing a well-thought out comprehensive reading instructional program that attempts to balance all the components that do in fact impact reading...What does that really do? We do not know. (personal communication)

Analysis of study data confirms that elementary teacher and administrator participants believe using a balanced literacy approach to teach core language arts skills and a hands-on mathematics program are examples of best instructional practices. However, manipulative-based mathematics and balanced literacy instruction have yet to be scientifically proven as best practices. A fundamental question is again raised; is the driving force behind recent instructional and assessment reform policy more bureaucratic

necessity or pedagogical effectiveness? Allington (2002) explains the connection between policy and practice:

If certain forms of pedagogical knowledge, instructional methods, and curriculum materials are mandated by policy, then 1) teachers will offer a particular type of beginning reading instruction that 2) will positively enhance student reading achievement in the both the short- and longer-term. (p. 4)

Although NCLB requires school districts to use scientifically proven instructional practices to achieve academic standards, the legislation does not advocate a specific form of pedagogical knowledge, instructional methods or curricular materials. It is left up to school district leaders to determine what scientifically proven best practices are and the three districts studied believe that balanced literacy and manipulative-based mathematics instruction fit the definition, despite the lack of longitudinal research supporting the claim.

#### A Framework for Explanation

Legislation intended to close the achievement gaps between students of different demographic groups and improve student achievement has influenced the behaviors in elementary schools and teachers. The Education YES! and NCLB legislative acts have imposed norms of rationality upon school districts in Michigan. The term “norms of rationality” is used to define the ostensible relationship that exists between organizational processes in the school bureaucracy and the intended outcomes of recent legislation. NCLB and Education YES! put pressure on schools and school districts to demonstrate increased rationality in the form of student achievement. The legislative acts demand compliance, because non-compliance with legislative mandates results in monetary and personnel sanctions. In an era of reduced school funding where every penny is

scrutinized, school districts had little choice but to respond to requirements of Education YES! and NCLB. The school districts studied responded by more closely defining instruction and assessment and more closely relating instruction to outcomes.

Elementary schools and teachers are demonstrating significant changes in school administrative behaviors, student assessment, instruction and record keeping as a result of the legislative imposition of norms of rationality. Elementary teachers and schools are exposed to the increased demand for rationality and demonstrate the increased pressure for rationality through changes in behaviors. Classroom processes, including instruction, assessment and record keeping, have become more ostensible and publicly scrutinized. Elementary teachers and administrators are allocating more time to common and organizational matters because of the increased demand for rationality in the school organization. Teachers are experiencing less autonomous time as instructional processes are becoming more defined and instructional time becomes an even more scarce resource due to increased assessment and instructional content requirements. In years past, elementary teachers could close their doors and remain isolated with the students for a majority of the day. Today, increased demands for rationality have caused teachers to work more in collegial groups discussing and working through professional issues. It can be argued that concerns for social and economic inequality led to NCLB and Education YES!, and the legislation led to a demand for increased rationality.

The increased demand for rationality caused by Education YES! and NCLB legislation has caused certain unintended consequences at the elementary school level. The focus on increased student achievement in math, literacy and soon science has caused less instructional time for other subjects. Teachers report squeezing in social



studies lessons when time permits and affective component instruction, such as conflict resolution and problem solving, have been nearly eliminated. Due to increased subject content, assessment requirements and the scarcity of instructional time, study respondents indicate that instruction is not as thorough or deeply covered as in past years. Teachers describe a situation where the increased volume of content causes some topics to be skimmed and the subject coverage is broader.

The increased pressure for rationality at the school organizational level demands a change in individual student assessment practices. The increased frequency and volume of individual assessment requirements in literacy and mathematics have reallocated elementary teacher instructional time. Elementary teacher instructional time has been reduced because students must be evaluated individually to administer assessments such as the DRA, QRI and MLPP, and less group instruction is taking place. Because of the increased significance of standardized test scores, teachers are using instructional time to prepare students for MEAP assessments; thus reducing instructional time even more. Reduced elementary teacher instructional time is an unintended consequence brought about by demands for increased rationality.

Elementary teacher and principal respondents indicated that the quantity of record keeping and paperwork requirements have increased as an unintended result of NCLB and Education YES! legislation. Demands for increased rationality require more frequent, individualized literacy and mathematics assessments. Each individualized assessment must be documented and the records saved for accountability measures. Testing each student at least twice per year for accountability using DRA, QRI and MLPP assessments involves writing and preserving volumes of new records. Teachers



are also required to compose and submit class assessment composites to building principals for analysis. Authoring class composites for administrative review is another example of the increased time demands elementary teachers encounter. Elementary principals describe a similar increase in administrative record keeping as individual teacher class composites must be compiled into a building report to be submitted to central office. Building administrators indicated other additional forms and reports must be turned into various state and federal officials as a requirement of Education YES! and NCLB. The school success indicators section of Education YES! is an example of the increased reporting requirements completed by elementary school principals. After reviewing elementary teacher and administrator interviews, it is clear that the increased amount of record keeping is an unintended outcome of recent legislative mandates.

Education YES! and NCLB legislation imposed norms of rationality upon Michigan school districts that caused significant changes for elementary schools and teachers. The changes manifest themselves by causing schools to demonstrate an ostensible relationship between organizational processes within the school bureaucracy and intended student learning outcomes. Data from the study documents administrative, instructional, student assessment, record keeping, and teacher professional development changes that have been influenced by NCLB and Education YES! legislative mandates and each requires additional time from an already busy schedule.

In the school districts studied, increased rationality relates to the cause-effect relationship and the more certain the cause-effect relationship, the more rational the outcome. The Kelsey Creek, Somerset Community and Sienna Heights districts made a systematic effort to reduce uncertainty by gathering common approaches to curriculum

and instruction. The districts studied have adopted balanced literacy and hands-on mathematics instruction and elementary teachers are expected to employ these teaching techniques. Common assessments and testing schedules have been developed with consistent grade level student expectations within individual districts. The districts believe that by filling in every step of the instructional and assessment process and gathering common approaches to curriculum that uncertainty will be reduced. The districts studied consider a reduction in uncertainty to be synonymous with an increase in rationality.

#### Confirmation of Prior Findings

The conclusions from the study support some of the literature cited in chapter two. For instance, Elmore and Fuhrman (2001) argue that recent legislative efforts subscribe to a common theory. The theory states that measuring student performance with standardized assessments and then coupling it to rewards and sanctions will cause schools and the individuals who work in them to perform at higher levels. Study findings indicate that the theory applies to NCLB and Education YES! legislation, however, the levels of student and teacher performance has yet to be established. Elementary teacher participants reported working harder than ever to prepare students for standardized assessments while demanding more from students. The short tenure of Education YES! and NCLB make it impossible to determine whether the instructional and assessment changes and higher student demands will lead to increased standardized test scores.

McNeil (2000) described a situation whereby the demands of federal and state legislative mandates had strengthened bureaucratic controls at the expense of teaching

and learning. Analysis of study data indicates compliance requirements of NCLB and Education YES! have strengthened bureaucratic control, however, administrators and teachers from the districts studied do not believe this was done at the expense of teaching and learning. The last statement is somewhat contradictory since study respondents reported spending large amounts of time preparing students for MEAP assessments in place of teaching core subject areas. Participants described large amounts of time required to plan differentiated instruction and conduct individualized assessments for all students. Teachers from all three districts studied describe spending more time teaching core literacy and math skills than other content areas because of the significance of math and reading sections on standardized assessments.

Elementary time has been significantly reallocated due to changes in student assessment, instruction and teacher record keeping behaviors influenced by recent legislation. The fact that elementary teachers and administrators do not believe that the increased bureaucratic control was done at the expense of teaching and learning indicates that study participants have bought into the theory described by Elmore and Fuhrman (2001). Elementary respondents described teaching as a static career that is constantly undergoing change and were willing to do whatever necessary to achieve the increased test scores desired. The study participants interviewed believe that the changes mandated by the bureaucracy to stay in compliance with recent legislation will result in increased standardized test scores.

McNeil (2000) described a situation in which state benchmarks and performance standards drive the curriculum that is being taught in Texas elementary schools. Study findings confirm that Michigan benchmarks and standards drive the curriculum being

taught in elementary schools because the standards are assessed on current MEAP tests. District benchmarks in the Sienna Heights, Somerset Community and Kelsey Creek school districts have been modified to reflect state standards and are designed to prepare students for MEAP assessments.

Administration for the districts studied appear to have bought into the standardized assessment theory of Elmore and Fuhrman (2001). Elementary principals from the study indicated feeling the pressure to improve MEAP scores and feared the potential sanctions should scores decrease. Principals reported spending larger portions of the building budget to provide materials in support of reform efforts in a time of reduced funding. Similar to the findings of Berteaux (2003), study data confirms that elementary administrators and teachers are required to do more with less; an unintended consequence of NCLB and Education YES!

Schmoker (2004) described the unintended consequences of comprehensive educational reform as causing fragmentation and overload in school districts. Although resources were scarce for the districts studied, the Somerset Community, Sienna Heights and Kelsey Creek districts exceeded the capacity required to implement reform initiatives. Through support from the local intermediate school district, district administrators interpreted NCLB and Education YES! mandates and designed a plan for compliance. The districts studied possess the capacity and resources necessary to avoid overload while staying in compliance with recent legislative mandates.

Data collected and analyzed for the study confirms that the district bureaucratic control was strengthened to facilitate the demands of NCLB and Education YES!. Administrators and teachers from the districts studied have bought into the premise that

changing instructional and assessment practices to focus on content covered in standardized assessments will result in improved performance on MEAP assessments, leading to rewards as detailed in recent legislation. Teaching and learning opportunities have been compromised due to requirements for individualized assessment and instruction reallocating large amounts of instructional time. As indicated in the study data and the literature cited in chapter two, administrators are spending larger amounts of the building budget to support reform initiatives for differentiated instruction, individualized assessment and teacher professional development. Respondents indicated that the prescriptive test-preparation curriculum, described by McNeil (2000), has been substituted in place of a substantive curriculum in the school districts studied. There is nothing in Ed. YES! or NCLB legislation to account for the extra time required for compliance in an already packed day. Study data establishes the rules and regulations of recent legislation do not consider the extra time required of teachers and administrators and charge onward, independent of the evidence that what the mandates require may not support school reform.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

The study has described current federal and state legislation and explained how those efforts have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior. During the preparation and analysis of data from the study, several areas for potential future studies have been developed. The conclusions from the study may suggest additional future opportunities for research. Future study opportunities include:

1. The data indicated that elementary teachers have significantly changed the ways in which mathematics and literacy skills are taught. The effectiveness of new instructional techniques on elementary student literacy and math achievement is a topic that may require further study.
2. Elementary school and teacher opportunity costs were proven to have been influenced by recent legislation. Future research could investigate the opportunity costs for elementary schools and teachers in greater detail.
3. The study focused on the influences that recent legislative acts had upon elementary school operations and teacher behaviors. Research regarding the influence of No Child Left Behind and Education YES! upon middle, high school, and central office personnel or superintendents may warrant further study.
4. There may be a question about whether the reforms in elementary teacher instruction and assessment were manifestations of bureaucratic necessity or pedagogical effectiveness. Future research could focus on this question to provide a more definitive answer.
5. It was suggested that the requirements of NCLB and Education YES! may become more routine, like the mandates of PA 25, to elementary teachers as time continues. A further study over time would provide an actual definition of the legislation and time demand results.

## Summary

Study respondents reported that recent legislative mandates have influenced elementary teacher and principal behaviors and the manner in which schools operate. Conclusions concerning the influences of NCLB and Education YES! legislation have been presented and discussed in a supportive and expansive manner. The conclusions discuss the issues studied in the research project. At the time of the study, NCLB and Education YES! mandates had been operating in Michigan elementary schools for approximately two years. Due to the short duration of the legislation's implementation, there may be aspects of the study that require future research to determine the lasting influences of Education YES! and NCLB on elementary schools and teacher behaviors.

## Afterword

Upon successfully defending the findings in the dissertation, the researcher would like to take the time to discuss some of the issues that came up during the final committee meeting. The first issue that deserves consideration is the role of the researcher in the dissertation. As described in chapter three, the researcher is an elementary school teacher working in Olympia County. Experiencing many of the same phenomenon as study participants gave the researcher an advantage as many times he was regarded as "one of us". For the most part, respondents were able to relate to the researcher as someone who understands and sympathizes with the experiences related by the participants. The term, sympathetic observer, was used to describe the role of the researcher. Being a sympathetic observer provided opportunities for the researcher to gain access to the innermost responses of the participants.

Being a sympathetic observer also created some challenges for the researcher during the interview portion of the research. Respondents would frequently talk about techniques and practices that the researcher was intimately familiar with. To avoid errors of misinterpretation, the researcher would ask questions such as, "When you talk about balanced literacy instruction, what do you mean?" Respondents would frequently laugh and say, "You know you are an elementary teacher too." The tape recorder provided an opportunity for the researcher to claim that all of the responses need to be clarified for the tape and then respondents would give their interpretation of the phenomenon described. Asking for additional information and definitions assured the researcher that educational vocabulary used by the participants would not be misinterpreted.

Past research suggests that reform of teacher practice is a challenging endeavor that is usually met with failure. The findings section of the dissertation describes the majority of elementary teachers who participated in the study had changed instructional, assessment and time usage behaviors. How can such a claim be made when past research asserts otherwise? Analysis of the research data suggests that NCLB and Ed. YES! legislation have accountability components that are much more specific and restrictive than past educational legislation. Elementary teachers described individually assessing students two to three times per year using the DRA or QRI. The results of these assessments are forwarded to the building administrator who compiles them in a composite of the school. The composites are turned into central office administration for further review. The accountability chain reaches from the teachers all the way to the central office, which uses the data for reports to state and federal education authorities. Teachers who fail to turn in their assessment scores to the principal are immediately



contacted to determine if there is a problem. As administrators scrutinize the assessment data, students that fail to show growth over time are closely watched. Elementary principals are aware of which teachers are using the newer instructional practices effectively by constantly reviewing the assessment data provided. Parental participation in terms of student and school progress is another example of the accountability components outlined in recent legislation. In chapter four, the principal of Woodridge Elementary School, Dr. Craig, explained the parental uproar that occurred when AYP and school grades were published in the local newspaper. The accountability components of NCLB and Ed. YES! have set the tone for elementary teacher and school compliance in lieu of serious financial and personnel sanctions.

It occurred to the researcher that the convergence of responses by study participants may warrant further examination. The majority teachers interviewed claim that they now use formal balanced literacy and manipulative-based mathematics instruction. In addition, teachers describe administering individualized assessments to students at multiple times during the school year. Despite the convergence of responses, the researcher never witnessed the teachers doing the things they talked about. The self report of changed practices can be viewed as a result of accountability mandates influenced by recent legislation. An alternative hypothesis explaining teacher responses could be a convergence of language and not a convergence of practice. Teachers may have told the researcher the responses that they thought were appropriate, but truly had not changed instructional or assessment practices. The alternative hypothesis does not seem likely judging by the accountability mandates described in NCLB and Ed. YES!, but deserves examination.

Elementary teachers participating in the study believe NCLB and Ed. YES! have influenced instructional and assessment practices. Recent legislation had been in operation for approximately two years during the study. Another possible explanation for teacher-reported changes could be the cumulative effects of past legislation coupled with current legislative requirements. Public Act 25 mandates have been active in Michigan public schools for 14 years and have made considerable changes to the school improvement process. The school improvement process is central to the mandates of Ed. YES! and NCLB and the three pieces of legislation work well to define school improvement objectives. It is plausible that the influences felt by teachers requiring instructional, assessment, professional development and time management changes are a cumulative effect of 14 years of pressure driving reform.

One final caveat that should be mentioned involves the location and socio-economic status of the districts studied. Study respondents indicated that parents of students in the Sienna Heights, Somerset Community and Kelsey Creek districts played an important role requiring accountability for student achievement. Kelsey Creek, Sienna Heights and Somerset Community districts serve middle to upper middle class students, many of whose parents have attended college. While the mandates of NCLB and Ed. YES! encompass the entire state of Michigan, the influences on elementary teachers and schools from other districts not serving middle class populations may look different.

## APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A**

### **UCRIHS APPLICATION**

**APPLICATION FOR INITIAL REVIEW**

**APPROVAL OF A PROJECT INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

**University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS)**

**Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair**  
**202 Olds Hall, Michigan State University**  
**East Lansing, MI 48824-1047**  
**Phone: (517) 355-2180**  
**Fax: (517) 432-4503**  
**E-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu**

**Office Hours: M-F (8:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.)**

<b>IRB#: 04-253</b> <b>ID# i019665</b>
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**1a. Responsible Project Investigator:**

**Name:** Philip A. Cusick  
**ID#:** XXX-XX-2031  
**Department:** Ed Admin  
**College:** EDUCATION  
**Academic Rank:**  
**Mailing Address:** 418 Erickson Hall  
MSU

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**1b. Secondary Investigator:**

**Name:** Christopher Cooper  
**ID#:** XXX-XX-6570  
**Department:** EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION  
**College:** EDUCATION  
**Academic Rank:** PI by Special Arrangement  
**Mailing Address:**

**Phone:**  
**Fax:**  
**Email:** cooper8@msu.edu

**1c. Additional Investigators:**

**2. Study Coordinator:**

Name:  
ID#:  
Department:  
College:  
Academic Rank:  
Mailing Address:

Phone:  
Fax:  
Email:

**3. Title of Project:** A study of the influence of recent legislation on the behavior of schools and elementary school teachers.

**4. Have you ever received Preliminary Approval for this project?** NO

**5. Category of Review** 1-1, 1-3, 1-4 ,2-6 EXPEDITED

**6. Is this project being conducted to fulfill the requirements of an education/training program?** Ph.D. Dissertation

**7. Funding:** Project is not funded

**8a. List all sites where this research will be conducted.**

Two elementary schools will be selected from 3 different school districts located within Oakland County, Michigan. Preliminary investigation of school districts indicates that the XXX districts may be selected.

**8b. Do any of these sites have their own IRB?** NO

**9. Do you have any related project that were approved by UCRIHS?** NO

**10. Have you submitted this to another IRB(s)?** NO

**11. Is another institution(s) relying on UCRIHS as the IRB of record?** NO

**12. Are you using an FDA approved drug/device/diagnostic test?** NO

**13. Are you using an FDA approved drug/device/diagnostic test for a non-FDA approved indication?**  
NO

**14. Has this protocol been submitted to the FDA or are there plans to submit it to the FDA?** NO

**15. Does this project involve the use of Materials of Human Origin (e.g. human blood or tissue)?** NO

**16. Research Category**

Education Research Yes

Survey/Interview Yes

Audio/Video Recording Yes

Oral History Yes

Internet-based No

Analysis of Existing Data Yes

International Research No

Gene Transfer Research No

Fetal Research No

Medical Records No

Stem Cell Research No

Medical Imaging No

Oncology No

Clinical Trial (specify below): none

**17. Project Description (Abstract)**

The study proposed will describe current federal and state legislation and then describe and explain how those efforts may have influenced schools and elementary teacher behavior.

The researcher will be conducting personal interviews with 24 teachers and 6 principals from 6 elementary schools located within 3 Oakland County Districts. Additional interviews with central office personnel may be required to completely answer certain research questions. Interviews will be audio tape recorded, transcribed and analyzed for common themes using the constant comparative method. From these interviews, the researcher will answer the following 2 questions: 1. what schools and elementary teachers are doing in order to comply with legislative mandates, and 2. what schools and elementary teachers are not doing because they are focusing on compliance with the legislation.

It is expected that review and analysis of the interview data will provide a deeper understanding of how schools and elementary teacher behaviors have been influenced by the legislative reforms included in the study.

**18. Procedures**

The researcher will use semi structured personal interviews to collect data from 24 elementary school teachers, 6 elementary principals and possibly several central office administrators. Interviews will be audio tape recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method. Transcribed interviews will be mailed to respondents asking for any additional comments and clarification.

**19. Does your investigation involve incomplete disclosure of the research purpose or deception of the subjects?** NO

**20a. Subject Population**

24 elementary school teachers

6 elementary school principals

potential interviews with central office administrators if necessary

**20b. Age range of subjects:** 22 to 100

**20c. The study population may include:**

**Target Population:**

Minors	No
Pregnant Women	Yes
Women of Childbearing Age	Yes
Institutionalized Persons	No
Students	Yes
Low Income Persons	No
Minorities	Yes
Prisoners	No
HIV/AIDS Individuals	No
Psychiatric Patients	No
Incompetent Persons	No

**Incidental Inclusion:**

Minors	No
Pregnant Women	Yes
Women of Childbearing Age	Yes
Institutionalized Persons	No
Students	Yes
Low Income Persons	Yes
Minorities	Yes
Prisoners	No
HIV/AIDS Individuals	Yes
Psychiatric Patients	Yes
Incompetent Persons	Yes

**20d. Expected number of subjects (including controls):** 30-40

**20e. Justify your sample size:** acceptable parameters for my qualitative research design as approved by my doctoral committee

**20f. Describe the criteria for the inclusion of subjects:**

First, second, third, fourth and fifth grade teachers who have taught a minimum of 4 years. Elementary school principals who have been school administrators for at least 4 years. Potentially certain central office administrators who have been central office administrators for at least 4 years.

**20g. Describe the criteria for the exclusion of subjects:**

Kindergarten teachers and any teachers teaching grades above grade 5. 1st-5th grade teachers who have taught less than 4 years. Elementary principals who have not worked at least 4 years as an elementary principal. Central office administrators who have not worked at least 4 years as a central office administrator.

**20h(1). How will the subjects be recruited?**

Teacher subjects will be identified and recruited by their elementary school principals. Elementary principals will be identified and recruited by central office administration. Should central office administration interviews be necessary, contact will be made through elementary principal respondents.

**20h(2). Will an advertisement be used? YES**

**(a) Describe:**

Contact letters will be sent to all potential respondents asking them to participate in the study.

**20i. Are you associated with the subjects? YES**

**(a) Nature of the association and what measures you are taking to protect subjects' rights, including safeguards against any coercion.**

Some elementary teacher, principal and central office administrators may be co-workers within the Walled Lake Consolidated School District where the researcher is employed. Contact letters will be mailed to each potential respondent asking for their cooperation and fully informing them of their rights and that their participation is completely voluntary.

**20j. Will someone receive payment for recruiting the subjects? NO**

**20k. Will the research subjects be compensated? NO**

**20l. Will the subjects incur additional financial costs as a result of their participation in this study? NO**

**20m. Will this research be conducted with subjects in another country? NO**

**20n. Will this research be conducted with subjects in the U.S. from an ethnic group of sub-group or other non-mainstream minorities (including non-English speakers)? NO**

**21a. Risks and Benefits for subjects: Describe and assess any potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, economic) and assess the likelihood and seriousness of such risks.**

Since this study concerns the influences of recent legislation on schools and elementary teacher behavior, it poses minimal risks to subjects. It falls into UCRIHS exempt category 1, research in an established educational setting. Participants' responses will not be traceable to individuals, nor will any sensitive personal information be recorded. Responses that contain sensitive replies or data critical of the school district will be coded with participants' pseudonyms.



**21b. Describe procedures for protecting against or minimizing potential risks and an assessment of their likely effectiveness.**

All respondents and their school districts will be provided with pseudonyms for use in all written documentation, and responses will be kept confidential. Interview documents and audio tapes will be kept in a locked storage area in the researcher's home. When information is entered into word processing or spreadsheet programs, it will be password protected. Audio tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research project so no voice record will be kept beyond this time period.

**21c. Assess the potential benefits (if any) to be gained by the subjects in this study, as well as benefits which may accrue to society in general as a result of the planned work.**

School districts will benefit from learning how recent educational legislation such as Public Act 25, No Child Left Behind, and Education YES! have influenced their elementary school teacher behaviors as well the behaviors governing the schools themselves. This information will prove valuable to teachers and district personnel for future budget planning, inservice scheduling, and teacher preparation.

**22a. How will the subjects' privacy be protected?**

All respondents and their school districts will be provided with pseudonyms for use in all written documentation, and responses will be kept confidential. Interview documents and audio tapes will be kept in a locked storage area in the researcher's home. When information is entered into word processing or spreadsheet programs, it will be password protected. Audio tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research project so no voice record will be kept beyond this time period.

**22b. Where will the data be stored and for how long?**

Data will be stored at the researcher's residence and will be kept in locked storage. Upon completion of the study, all audio tape responses will be destroyed.

**22c. Who will have access to the data?**

The project investigator, the secondary investigator, and MSU committee members Dr. Gary Sykes, Dr. Suzanne Wilson, and Dr. Susan Printy.

**22d. How will the integrity and security of the stored data be assured?**

Only the secondary researcher will be collecting the data and will keep all original data locked at his residence.

**23. Does this project involve protected health information as defined by HIPAA? NO**

**24. (a) Select appropriate consent option. Approval of a consent form and process**

**(b) Consent Procedures:** Consent forms will be provided to all respondents prior to the interviews. The secondary investigator will provide a physical copy of the consent form to each respondent as well as reading the form to the respondent. Respondents are asked to initial that they are willing to be interviewed and are willing to have the interview audio tape recorded. Respondents then print their name, date and sign their name on 2 consent forms and are given one to keep while the secondary investigator keeps one for the study file.

**25a. Have you or will you or a member of your immediate family receive, from the sponsor of the research, financial or other forms of compensation? NO**

**25b. Do or will you or a member of your immediate family have a vested interest in the company/agency/firm that is to sponsor the research? NO**

**25c. Are you submitting FDA form 3454 or 3455 (Conflict of Interest)? NO**

**26a. When would you prefer to begin this project? 4/20/2004**

**26b. Estimated duration of project: 12-18 months**

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS/ATTACHMENTS**

01. 3/25/2004 Survey Instrument (i019665\_Interview\_Guide\_Principals.pdf)

02. 3/25/2004 Survey Instrument (i019665\_Interview\_Guide\_Teachers.pdf)

03. 3/25/2004 Recruiting Advertisement (i019665\_Contact\_Letter\_Format\_Principals.pdf)

04. 3/25/2004 Recruiting Advertisement (i019665\_Contact\_Letter\_Format\_for\_Teachers.pdf)

05. 3/25/2004 Consent Form (i019665\_Consent\_Form\_for\_Elementary\_Principals.pdf)

06. 3/25/2004 Consent Form (i019665\_Consent\_Form\_for\_Elementary\_Teachers.pdf)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **UCRIHS CONSENT FORMS**

### **Consent Form for Elementary Principals**

**Study Title:** The influence of recent legislation on the behavior of schools and elementary school teachers

You are being asked to participate in a study about the influence of recent legislation on the behavior of schools and elementary school teachers. Your participation would consist of agreeing to allow Chris Cooper to conduct one interview with you for approximately 60-90 minutes. I will be asking you questions regarding how your teachers' classroom instruction, time use, assessments, and the school organization have been influenced by recent educational legislation. In addition I am interested to know how your hiring practices, staffing, building budget and administrative duties have been influenced by No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25. The information I collect will be strictly directed to your role as an elementary principal, and no personal information will be requested.

I would like to tape record the interview because it both assures the accuracy of the notes and allows me to concentrate on the substance of our conversations. All tapes will be transcribed and the contents will be reviewed and analyzed. All tapes will be destroyed after the research is completed. I value your privacy and will consider your responses confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may feel free to withdraw from the interview, to request that the interview not be taped, to skip any items, or request that the recorder be turned off at any time during the interview.

I will be contacting you in the following days to answer any questions about my study that you may have and to request your cooperation. Please feel free to contact Chris Cooper at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or cooper8@msu.edu should you have any questions about the study or questions asked during the interview. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517) 355-2180. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by writing your initials on the small line by those activities you are agreeing to participate in:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to be interviewed by Chris Cooper.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to have our interview audiotape recorded.

Principal's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent Form for Elementary Teachers**

**Study Title: The influence of recent legislation on the behavior of schools and elementary school teachers**

You are being asked to participate in a study about the influence of recent legislation on the behavior of schools and elementary school teachers. Your participation would consist of agreeing to allow Chris Cooper to conduct one interview with you for approximately 60-90 minutes. I will be asking you questions regarding how your classroom instruction, time use, assessments, and the school organization have been influenced by recent educational legislation. The information I collect will be strictly directed to your professional career as an elementary teacher, and no personal information will be requested.

I would like to tape record our interview because it both assures the accuracy of the notes and allows me to concentrate on the substance of our conversations. All tapes will be transcribed and the contents will be reviewed and analyzed. All tapes will be destroyed after the research is completed. I value your privacy and will consider your responses confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may feel free to withdraw from the interview, to request that the interview not be taped, to skip any items, or request that the recorder be turned off at any time during the interview.

I will be contacting you in the following days to answer any questions about my study that you may have and to request your cooperation. Please feel free to contact Chris Cooper at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or cooper8@msu.edu should you have any questions about the study or questions asked during the interview. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517) 355-2180. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by writing your initials on the small line by those activities you are agreeing to participate in:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to be interviewed by Chris Cooper.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to have our interview audiotape recorded.

Teacher's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**CONTACT LETTERS**

### Contact Letter Format for Elementary Principals

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Chris Cooper and I am a second grade teacher at XXXXXXXX Elementary School. I am also completing my dissertation work for my doctorate degree in educational administration at Michigan State University. As part of my dissertation research, I am interested in learning how the recent legislation such as No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25 have influenced schools and elementary school teacher behavior.

I would like to request your assistance in completing my doctoral research. Your participation would consist of agreeing to allow me to conduct one interview with you for approximately 60-90 minutes. I will be asking you questions regarding how your teachers' classroom instruction, time use, assessments, and the school organization have been influenced by recent educational legislation. In addition I am interested to know how your hiring practices, staffing, building budget and administrative duties have been influenced by No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25. The information I collect will be strictly directed to your professional career as an elementary principal, and no personal information will be requested.

I would like to tape record our interview because it both assures the accuracy of the notes and allows me to concentrate on the substance of our conversations. All tapes will be transcribed and the contents will be reviewed and analyzed. All tapes will be destroyed after the research is completed. I value your privacy and will consider your responses confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may feel free to withdraw from the interviews, to request that the interviews not be taped, to skip any items, or request that the recorder be turned off at any time during either interview.

I will be contacting you in the following days to answer any questions about my study that you may have and to request your cooperation. Please feel free to contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or cooper8@msu.edu should you have any questions. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517)355-2180. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chris Cooper  
Ph.D. Student  
Department of Educational Administration  
Michigan State University

### Contact Letter Format for Elementary Teachers

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Chris Cooper and I am a second grade teacher at XXXXXXXX Elementary School. I am also completing my dissertation work for my doctorate degree in educational administration at Michigan State University. As part of my dissertation research, I am interested in learning how the recent legislation such as No Child Left Behind, Education YES! and Public Act 25 have influenced schools and elementary school teacher behavior.

I would like to request your assistance in completing my doctoral research. Your participation would consist of agreeing to allow me to conduct one interview with you for approximately 60-90 minutes. I will be asking you questions regarding how your classroom instruction, time use, assessments, and the school organization have been influenced by recent educational legislation. The information I collect will be strictly directed to your professional career as an elementary teacher, and no personal information will be requested.

I would like to tape record our interview because it both assures the accuracy of the notes and allows me to concentrate on the substance of our conversations. All tapes will be transcribed and the contents will be reviewed and analyzed. All tapes will be destroyed after the research is completed. I value your privacy and will consider your responses confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may feel free to withdraw from the interviews, to request that the interviews not be taped, to skip any items, or request that the recorder be turned off at any time during either interview.

I will be contacting you in the following days to answer any questions about my study that you may have and to request your cooperation. Please feel free to contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or cooper8@msu.edu should you have any questions. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517)355-2180. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chris Cooper  
Ph.D. Student  
Department of Educational Administration  
Michigan State University



**APPENDIX D**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDES**

## **Elementary Principal Interview Guide Sample**

The questions listed below are presented as a guide to direct the interviewer's questioning. Each question will be asked of every participant. The background information will be asked first of each respondent, followed by the questions regarding the influence of recent legislation on elementary teacher behavior. Since a semi-structured interview atmosphere is desired, these topics will be explored as time allows with an emphasis on recording the subject's deeply descriptive narratives. This is an interview guide only and does not represent the researcher's verbatim questions.

### **Background Information Questions**

1. How long have you been an elementary school principal?
2. What have been your administrative responsibilities for the last 3 years (grade levels, building assignments, etc.)?
3. What educational credentials have you earned (degrees and certificates)?

### **Influence of Recent Legislation Questions**

#### **I. Math & Literacy Instruction**

1. How has your teachers' literacy instruction changed over the past two years?
  2. To what do you attribute those changes?
  3. How has your teachers' mathematics instruction changed over the past two years?
  4. To what do you attribute those changes?
  5. What has changed dramatically in your teachers' instructional practices and why has it changed?
  6. Have there been any changes in the district's math or literacy curriculum within the past 2 years? If yes, why?
  7. What has the school administration done to help align math and literacy instruction with the reform initiatives of No Child Left Behind and Education YES!?
- IF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED:**
8. Is math and literacy instruction influenced by your building's school improvement plans? Please elaborate.

#### **II. Use of Time**

1. Have teachers recently changed the amount of time they spend teaching one subject versus another? If so, why?
2. How are teachers spending time in collegial discussions or common planning times each week?
3. Has the time teachers spend in collegial discussions and common planning changed within the past 2 years? If so, why?
4. Has the time you spend working with school improvement plans and their implementation changed within the past 2 years? If so, how?

5. Describe the time you spend working on mandates related to Education YES! and No Child Left Behind.
6. Are there any other changes in your use of time due to mandates from No Child Left Behind or Education YES!?

### **III. Testing & Responses to Testing**

1. How have your teachers' assessment practices in math changed over the past 2 years?
2. To what do you attribute those changes?
3. How have your teachers' assessment practices in literacy/reading changed over the past 2 years?
4. To what do you attribute those changes?
5. What has changed in your teachers' math and literacy assessment practices and why has it changed?
6. Have there been any changes in your teachers' math or literacy assessments as required by the school district within the past 2 years? If yes, why?
7. What has the school administration done to help align assessments with the reform initiatives of No Child Left Behind and Education YES!?
8. What is being omitted from the teachers' instructional day to create time for new assessment practices?

### **IV. School Organization & Culture**

1. Describe the administration/organizational strycture of your school.
2. How has the admin/organization of your school changed over the past 2 years?
3. To what do you attribute those changes?
4. Describe some of the culture/traditions of your school.
5. How has the culture/traditions of your school changed over the past 2 years?
6. To what do you attribute those changes?
7. Does your school receive any assistance in planning for school improvement?, If yes, please describe.
8. Does your school receive any assistance in planning for school reform such as No Child Left Behind or Education YES!? If yes, please describe.
9. How have your hiring practices changed within the past 2 years? To what do you attribute those changes?
10. How have your budget/spending practices changed within the past 2 years? To what do you attribute those changes?
11. How have your administrative practices changed within the past 2 years? To what do you attribute those changes?

### **V. Paperwork/New Requirements**

1. Describe typical paperwork and file-keeping requirements related to school improvement planning and implementation.
2. How have your paperwork and file-keeping requirements changed over the past 2 years?
3. To what do you attribute those changes?

4. Have there been any changes in your paperwork and file-keeping requirements as mandated by your school district within the past 2 years? If yes, why? (Accountability)
5. Describe paperwork and file-keeping requirements related to new legislative mandates such as No Child Left Behind and Education YES!?
6. How have these paperwork and file-keeping requirements changed your job duties as an elementary school principal?

**VI. Other Changes**

1. Have there been any new challenges to your position as an elementary principal? (frustrations/surprises?)
2. Have there been any other changes in your behaviors as an elementary principal within the past 2 years that you would like to discuss?

Questions as needed to clarify or expand upon responses from elementary teachers.

## **Elementary Teacher Interview Guide Sample**

The questions listed below are presented as a guide to direct the interviewer's questioning. Each question will be asked of every participant. The background information will be asked first of each respondent, followed by the questions regarding the influence of recent legislation on elementary teacher behavior. Since a semi-structured interview atmosphere is desired, these topics will be explored as time allows with an emphasis on recording the subject's deeply descriptive narratives. This is an interview guide only and does not represent the researcher's verbatim questions.

### **Background Information Questions**

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What have been your teaching responsibilities for the last 3 years (grade levels, special education, etc.)?
3. What educational credentials have you earned (degrees and certificates)?

### **Influence of Recent Legislation Questions**

#### **I. Math & Literacy Instruction**

1. Describe a typical day of literacy instruction.
2. How has your literacy instruction changed over the past two years?
3. To what do you attribute those changes?
4. Describe a typical day of mathematics instruction.
5. How has your mathematics instruction changed over the past two years?
6. To what do you attribute those changes?
7. What has changed dramatically in your instructional practice and why has it changed?
8. Have there been any changes in your math or literacy curriculum within the past 2 years? If yes, why?

IF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED:

9. Describe how your math and literacy instruction is influenced by your building's school improvement plans.

#### **II. Use of Time**

1. Describe a typical instructional day in terms of time spent on various subject areas.
2. Have you recently changed the amount of time you spend teaching one subject versus another? If so, why?
3. Describe a typical day in terms of time spent on preparation and planning.
4. How has the time you spend planning and preparing changed within the past 2 years?
5. Describe the time spent in collegial discussions or block planning times each week.
6. Has the time you spend in collegial discussions and block planning changed within the past 2 years? If so, why?
7. Describe a typical week in terms of work done to meet school improvement plans.

8. Has the time you spend working on school improvement planning and instruction changed within the past 2 years? If so, why?

### **III. Testing & Responses to Testing**

1. Describe typical math assessments that you administer during the school year and the time allotted to administer those assessments.
2. How have your assessment practices in math changed over the past 2 years?
3. To what do you attribute those changes?
4. Describe typical literacy/reading assessments that you administer during the school year and the time allotted to administer those assessments.
5. How have your assessment practices in literacy/reading changed over the past 2 years?
6. To what do you attribute those changes?
7. What has changed dramatically in your math and literacy assessment practice and why has it changed?
8. Have there been any changes in your math or literacy assessments as required by your school district within the past 2 years? If yes, why?

### **IV. School Organization & Culture**

1. Tell me a little bit about the administration/organization of your school.
2. How has the admin/organization of your school changed over the past 2 years?
3. To what do you attribute those changes?
4. Tell me a little bit about the culture/traditions of your school.
5. How has the culture/traditions of your school changed over the past 2 years?
6. To what do you attribute those changes?
7. Does your school receive any assistance in planning for school improvement?
8. If yes, please describe.
9. Does your school receive any assistance in planning for school reform such as No Child Left Behind or Education YES!?

### **V. Paperwork/New Requirements**

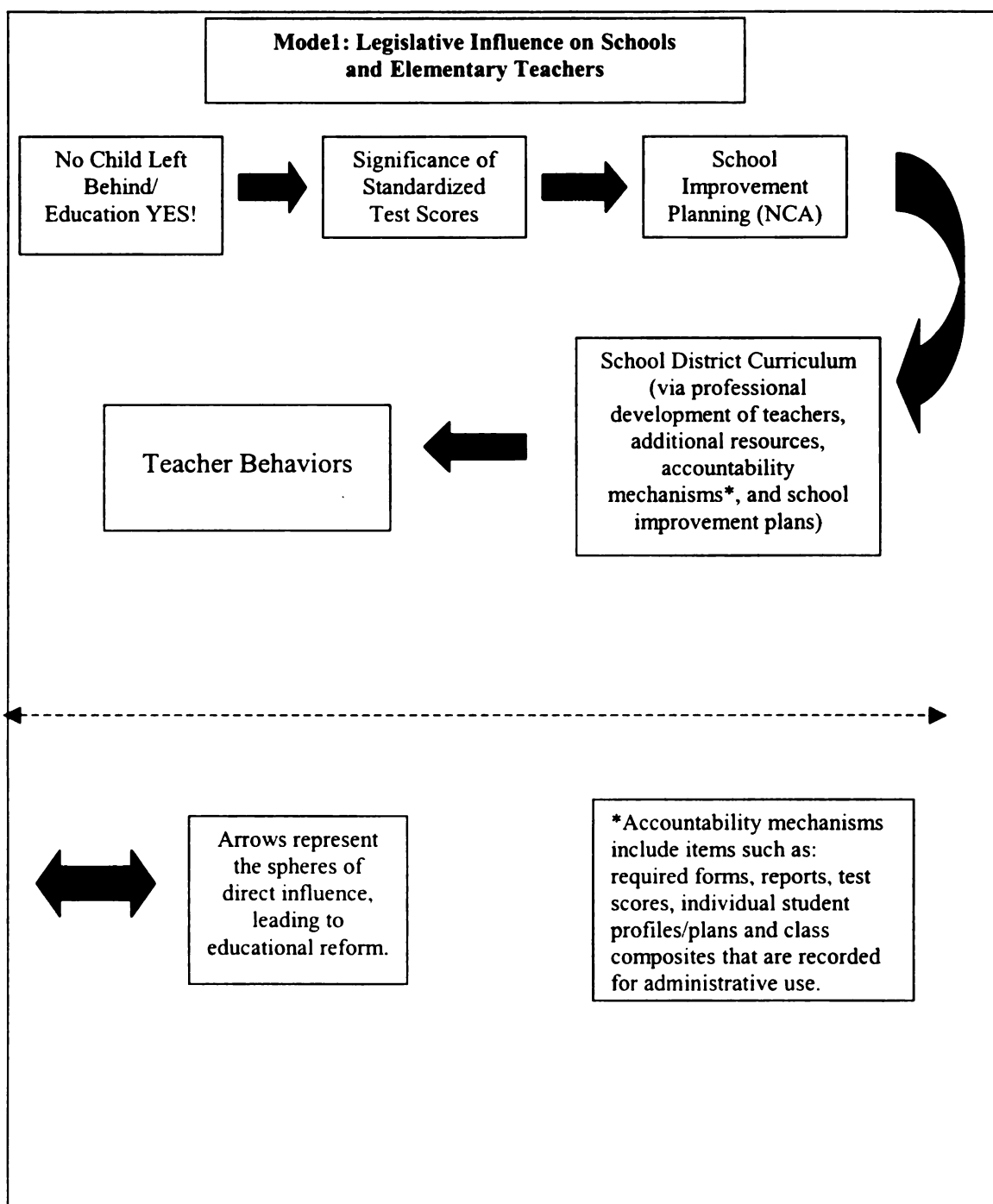
1. Describe typical paperwork and file-keeping requirements as an elementary teacher.
2. How have your paperwork and file-keeping requirements changed over the past 2 years?
3. To what do you attribute those changes?
4. What has changed dramatically in your paperwork and file-keeping requirements practice and why has it changed?
5. Have there been any changes in your paperwork and file-keeping requirements as mandated by your school district within the past 2 years? If yes, why?

### **VI. Other Changes**

1. Have there been any other changes in your behaviors as an elementary teacher within the past 2 years that you would like to discuss?
2. Have things been omitted from your instructional day to make time for instructional reform? If so, please describe.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **MODEL**





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