Educational Administrators' Perceptions of the use of School Performance Profiles to Improve Student Performances

Eleanor Jean Janufka

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EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS’ PERCEPTIONS OF
THE USE OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE PROFILES
TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCES

Eleanor Jean Janufka
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF
THE USE OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE PROFILES
TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the College of Graduate Studies of
Georgia Southern University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Administration

by
Eleanor Jean Janufka

December 2002
November 21, 2002

To the Graduate School:

This dissertation entitled "Educational Administrators' Perceptions of the Use of School Performance Profiles to Improve Student Performances" and written by Eleanor Jean Janufka is presented to the College of Graduate Studies of Georgia Southern University. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Administration.

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To the Chatham County Public School administrators for supporting and participating in this educational research endeavor.

To my students who daily remind me of the importance of educational research, a promise to do more.

And to my family, the love that comes with the support and sharing that this endeavor has enhanced. From the beginning you shared in the long hours of study and the many side trips to libraries. For Josh and Matt, this document is proof that persistence and hard work can culminate in educational achievement. For Carolyn, the memories of teaching you to read while studying and watching you pull and read microfiche. For Joe, without you covering all the events this would not have happened, this is indeed ours.
Vita

Ekanor Janula

Education

- BS, Ed., Social Studies; University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, 1974.
- Six Year, Reading and Curriculum Administration, University of South Carolina-Spartanburg, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1981.

Professional Experience

2000 – Present Savannah – Chatham County Public Schools
    Coastal Middle School
    170 Whitemarsh Island Road
    Savannah, Georgia 31410

Language Arts/Reading Teacher

- Teach Language Arts/Reading as part of the middle school curriculum. Class assignments include gifted cluster and gifted inclusion classes. Also assist the school administration with the school improvement and assessment analysis for the school.
• Professional experience

1993 – 2000 Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools
Assessment and Evaluation – Central Office
Savannah, Georgia 31401
Assessment Specialist
• Served as the System’s Test Coordinator overseeing and managing the standardized testing program for the schools and program sites. In addition, I worked with teachers, school staffs, and parents to help them understand the meaning of the standardized test results and their link to the instructional program. Provided in-service for school test coordinators, administrators, and school staffs on subjects related to testing. Assisted with program evaluations and projects within the Division of Instruction.

1989 – 1993 Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools
Hubert Middle School
Magnet Lead Teacher
• Worked with teachers, students, and staff to integrate the curriculum with technology. Assisted teachers with the production of curriculum guides and materials that linked their content areas to instructional technology and to the system’s initiatives in reading and math. Served as the contact person for the recruitment of students to the magnet program and managed the instructional magnet budget for the school. Provided in-service to the teachers on the use of computers in the classroom and on Microsoft Office Products. Assisted students with the production of the school newspaper.

1985 – 1989 Savannah – Chatham County Public Schools
Classroom Teacher: Elementary and Secondary
• Delivered and assessed the instructional program in a classroom setting. Worked with students from diverse backgrounds with a variety of learning styles. Worked with curriculum alignment projects linking classroom instruction with computer-assisted instruction and Microsoft Office applications. Taught staff development courses for teachers on the use of AppleWorks and Microsoft Office applications.

1978 – 1985 Greenville County Schools, Greenville, SC
Classroom Teacher/Department Chair
• Delivered and assessed the instructional program in a classroom setting. Worked with students with a variety of learning styles and abilities. Instructional activities focused on the integration of
reading/writing instruction as part of the delivery of the subject area curriculum and linked the activities to specific state and national assessments. Worked with curriculum alignment projects and the development of better informal reading assessments for the secondary student. Produced the school plays and coached the Forensic and Debate Teams to state awards. Worked on numerous committees at the school, district, and state levels related to assessment and the delivery of the curriculum.

1974 – 1976  Department of Juvenile Corrections, Columbia, SC
Classroom Teacher
- Delivered and assessed the reading curriculum to juvenile offenders in both a campus classroom setting and a maximum-security facility. As part of the instructional program assessed the reading skills and abilities of the students assigned to the program and developed individual instructional activity plans.

- Additional professional activities
  - Served on South Carolina’s Educational Reform Task Force under the leadership of Governor Richard Riley
  - Provided staff development for the SEARCH program (the gifted and talented program) in the Savannah – Chatham County Public Schools
  - Worked on Georgia Task Force for the Development of Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests
  - Reviewed social studies items for a national assessment company as part of their content validation study.
  - Participated in national focus groups related to assessment and classroom instruction conducted by assessment companies.
ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE PROFILES TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCES

DECEMBER 2002

ELEANOR JEAN JANUFKA

B.S. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Directed by: Professor Michael Richardson

The purpose of this study was to examine educational administrators' perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances. Using a survey instrument developed and validated at the University of Texas at El Paso, the perceptions of Chatham County administrators were examined and analyzed. Through the analysis of the open-ended questions and the Likert scale survey, the administrators' responses clearly showed that they accept the use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances, but they have doubts about the fairness of the documents as accountability measures. In addition, a significant difference was identified between the school and district administrators' perceptions of the disadvantages of the use of the school performance profiles as indicators of student success.
School performance profiles had been used by many states as indicators of school success. They were used as a means to hold school administrators accountable for their performance. It was important that school administrators perceive the profiles as positive elements to improve student performance. Few research studies involving the level of understanding and acceptance of the accountability measures by building level and central office administrators were found. With the first statewide school performance accountability reports in Georgia issued in spring 2002, it was critical to measure the school administrators’ level of understanding and acceptance of the school performance profiles.

In this research study, the administrators’ responses clearly showed that they accept the use of school performance profiles, even though they had doubts about the fairness of the profiles as accountability tools. Instead, the real value of the school performance profiles identified by administrators was their presentation of school data for a given period of time. From the analysis came a more focused and task oriented delivery of the curriculum. While the debate continued about the role for innovative and/or creative practices in such a data driven culture, attention to the scores presented in the profiles became a paramount task in the administrators’ routines. Improved student performances became the stated objective of the school performance profiles, even as questions were raised about student placements as a result of the tests. District and school administrators differed significantly in their view about the disadvantages of the school performance profiles, such as the increased enrollment in remedial classes. Despite the differences, administrators positively perceived and were satisfied with the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

During the 1980s and the 1990s, as a result of the effective schools and quality schools research, the links between educational leadership and school performance were reaffirmed. The performance indicators of student achievement, attendance, school climate, and parental involvement were outlined and linked in the research to effective schools and educational leadership practices (Purkey & Smith, 1985; Gilchrist, 1989). According to Hughes (1995), “effective schools were characterized by high student achievement irrespective of socioeconomic status or parent involvement” (p. 7). Hughes’ research supported what Negroni’s (1992) research reported three years earlier: that the single most important issue was equity. “It was not how children came to school that mattered, but what the school did with them when they got there that made the difference” (Negroni, p. 3). Using the basic correlates embedded in the effective schools and quality schools research, the reporting of student performance became an integral part of the improvement process (Becker, 1992). The dilemma, then, for educational policy makers was not only how should student performance be reported but also how student performances could be improved. McLagan (1991) stated that the quality movement had the potential to be more than a passing fad and could result in true accountability, if educators were committed to continuous improvement. One such effort to hold schools
accountable was the use of school performance profiles, which outlined for the public student achievement information. The student achievement indicators reported were standardized test scores, attendance, and school completion data. In this study, school performance profiles included the results of the Georgia High School Graduation Tests and the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests.

School Performance Profiles

School performance profiles, which report student performance for a given period of time, could be effective instruments to document changes linked to the student achievement indicators, such as standardized test scores and attendance. According to the research of Hill, Holmes-Smith, and Rowe (1993), school performance profiles used by schools to report progress on student indicators were effective tools to monitor student achievement and attendance.

Using standardized tests as accountability and school improvement instruments had been gradual and not without debate. In 1970 only three states had statewide assessment programs, but by 1990 all states had adopted state assessment programs that measured student achievement (Stiggins, 1999). By 1996 twenty-three states had policies which used some form of school performance profile to identify and address ineffective schools and their leadership (Pipho, 1997). In four years the number of states that published performance profiles based on standardized test scores almost doubled, going from twenty-three to forty states. Twenty-seven of the forty states that published performance profiles in 2000 ranked or rated their schools based on the student achievement scores collected from their state assessments (Archer, 2000; Orlofsky & Olson, 2001). President Bush’s education plan (2001) requires all public schools to
produce report cards by 2003. Despite the increase in the use of the performance profiles for accountability, the use of the performance profiles had not been validated as a school improvement tool. According to Stiggins (1999) and Linn (2001), no evidence supported the claim that high student achievement equals quality education, but nevertheless, it continued to be the primary tool used to identify top schools as models for the nation.

Recognizing the political climate that mandated and applied pressure for the reporting of student progress, Lewellen (1994) supported the idea that the school’s leadership was a critical link to student performance and should be addressed as such. According to Byrnes (1996), how well schools measured continuous improvement was not as important as collecting and reporting the schools’ progress on identified goals. The responsibility of the leaders in Byrnes’ plan (1996) was to guide the reporting process and to ensure that it was linked to established goals. By collecting the data over a given period of time educators and the public were helped to identify the improvement trends for student performance (Byrnes).

School Profiles and Receivership

After school performance profiles were published in Kentucky, New Jersey, and Ohio, some action to address identified inadequacies was required. In 1996, only Kentucky, New Jersey and Ohio, and the federal control board over the District of Columbia had activated the school receivership program in their educational reform legislation (Hendrie, 1996). Two years later in 1998, three additional states, New York, Texas, and Oklahoma, had replaced staff, reconstituted schools, or closed schools based on their student achievement data collected by the states (Curran, 2000). By 2000 eighteen states had the legal authority to close, take over, or replace the staff of any
school identified as failing academically (Archer, 2000). According to Pipho (1997), "while the existing research [on receivership] is primarily limited to building takeovers, data at the state and district levels is growing."

When these states defined the conditions, which necessitated placing a school and/or system in receivership, or under the control of an appointed body other than the local board, the criteria used were not uniform. In New Jersey, for example, the state had to prove that a school system was not only not improving on the identified student indicators, such as achievement, but also was resisting the changes needed to improve (Pipho, 1997). In Texas, schools had to fail to show improvement in all areas identified—student achievement, dropout rates, and student attendance. According to Curran (2000), such accountability policies were changing the state, the district, and the school roles in education. The districts were now quickly becoming the support and the data collection agencies for the state policy makers. Despite the state involvement, personnel at the district levels continued to monitor student progress on identified performance indicators and to rely on local efforts to change educational leadership patterns. The most effective method to improve student performance in ineffective schools, be it local or state initiatives, remained the subject for much debate (Hendrie, 1996). By 2000, Stake argued that we had consequences for poor performances on state assessments, but that there was no theory or management system that had been validated to guide the districts in the efforts to improve teaching and learning activities.

School Performance Profiles and Accountability

While communities struggled with the accountability issues raised by performance profiles, replacing the educational leadership at the poor performing schools was not the
primary issue in the debate. Instead the focus of the debate was the reporting measures, that of student performance, educational progress, and accountability, and it remained the central topics of discussion (Kane, Khattri, Reeve, & Adamson, 1997). Student achievement scores with no links to other demographic indicators, such as the students' families' economic or educational backgrounds, or those that were defined only by norm-referenced standardized achievement tests were not true measures of a school's educational program and progress. According to Kane, et al (1997), standardized scores were only snapshots of problems that went beyond the schoolhouse door (OERI, 1988; Binkowski, Cordeiro, & Iwanicki, 1995).

While the focus on student achievement scores continued to be the main criteria for the schools' rankings, some school performance profiles began to account for demographic differences. The profiles created by North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1997) and by Georgia's Council for School Performance (Georgia Council for School Performance, 1997) included school demographic data as part of the profiles' standards. In Georgia, the Council for School Performance Reports provided school profiles for all K-12 public schools in Georgia, using both the student achievement indicators and the community's demographic data. According to the Georgia Council for School Performance criteria, the schools received their rankings (five stars equaled excellence) based on the comparative data from schools with similar demographics (Council for School Performance, 1997). The Tennessee Value Added Assessment grouped students according to the demographics of race and economics to measure gains and reported those gains as indicators of student achievement (Camilli, 1996; College Board, 1999). Like Tennessee and North Carolina,
the Texas Achievement Assessment System (TAAS) also measured and reported achievement gains grouped by the demographics of race and economics (Curran, 2000). Despite these efforts to address the influence that demographics may have, Camilli (1996) noted that the standard errors on the standardized tests that were used, such as the TAAS, were large and made comparisons difficult, at best.

Nevertheless, as part of a qualitative study conducted by the U. S. Department of Education (Kane, Khattri, Reeve, & Adamson, 1997), two of the purposes of the performance profile assessments were to monitor student progress and to make administrators and teachers accountable, regardless of how the data were collected and reported. Kane, et al, argued “public information was an important component of the accountability mechanism” linked to the performance profiles (p. 223). Moreover, administrators and teachers were held accountable for student achievement either officially through rewards and sanctions or unofficially through the media and the reporting instruments, themselves. Because the performance profiles were used for the purpose of “high stakes accountability” (p. 223) which was linked to leadership performance evaluations and instructional changes, the data needed to be collected on identified student performance indicators over time. Furthermore, the authors maintained that for the profiles to have real meaning as accountability measures, all collected data had to be standardized, linked to staff improvement, and explained using the school’s frame of reference: student population and the neighborhoods served (Kane, Khattri, Reeve, & Adamson, 1997). Since the school performance profiles called “public attention to the quality of education, and thereby promoted accountability”, they became an important
chronicle of student achievement, which the school needed to embrace (Illinois Board of Education, 1992, p. 18).

Accountability and Principals

In a case study conducted by Washington State and the University Council for Educational Administration, Portin (2000) found that the pressure for accountability defines the roles of the principals, since they are the ones that must provide the resources and the leadership. With the demand for increased accountability (Riley, 2000), this study confirmed the findings of an earlier RAND study conducted in 1996 for the New American Schools Development Corporation. The RAND study interviewed thirty principals and reported heightened anxiety about the lack of alignment between proven innovative programs and the existing accountability programs (Mitchell, 1996). Unlike previous programs that archived school test scores, the accountability programs fully disclosed the school data with rewards and sanctions attached and directed public scrutiny to the building principals (Lashway, 1999). While Lashway argued that standards always existed within schools and were tied to administrative controls, accountability programs now reported schools’ progress not only against themselves but also against established benchmarks. It was against this backdrop that the principals now operated. According to the 1996 RAND study, Mitchell reported that principals were “nested in a complex environment of expectations, regulations, and professional stimulations from districts, states, and the federal government” (p. 46 – 47). Therein, the conflicts for principals arose, for each level of accountability – bureaucratic, legal, professional, political, and community – presented the principals and their schools with accountability expectations that did not match. As a result principals reported accountability overload where the
demands for data collection were excessive and overshadowed the focus on improved instruction (Heim, 1996).

The Effect of Performance Profiles

Moreover, Pipho (1999) contended that reports like the performance profiles were not accurate descriptions of the educational progress of any group, and instead were open to the interpretations of the readers of the profiles. In addition, according to Suarez (1991), if societal issues were not addressed and reported in conjunction with the identified student achievement deficiencies, then the schools and the students they served became the scapegoats. More importantly, using school performance profiles, which labeled the school ineffective or probationary or which placed it in receivership, did not have a “profound effect” on improving student performance (p. 5). In fact, in some cases the opposite was true, the negative publicity and poor staff morale could compound the schools’ problems in both the student community and the educational community (Suarez, 1991). Stakes (2000) further argued that there were no studies that statistically validated that there was any connection between how well teachers taught and how well students did on a standardized test. Despite these concerns, Education Week (December, 2000) reported that accountability programs that used performance profiles linked to student performances on standardized tests were prominent policy issues at all levels.

Principals’ Perception of Their Roles in the Accountability Process

In an effort to examine how principals viewed their roles in the accountability process, studies were conducted by the RAND Corporation (1996), the University Council for Educational Administration (2000), and by Schulte (2000) in his research at the University of Texas at El Paso. In each of the studies, the researchers interviewed
principals about where they fit into the accountability process and how the process had affected their roles. The RAND study (Mitchell 1996) conducted on site interviews with thirty principals nationwide and another twenty using telephone interviews, while the University Council for Educational Administration focused on urban school principals with their “Thousand Voices from the Firing Line” project (Portin, 2000). Schulte (2000) further refined the studies by examining the perspectives of Texas border principals on Texas’ accountability program. All three studies found that the principals held the primary responsibility for the success or failure of the schools’ accountability policies. It was the principals who managed the resources, nurtured the morale, explained and defined perceptions, and ensured equity throughout the process (Lashway, 1999). In addition, the studies reinforced what Heim reported in 1996 that it was the principals who focused their staffs’ attentions on where improvement was needed and then led the improvement efforts. While the studies focused on the principals and accountability, the studies also reported that many principals believed that a single assessment did not reflect the students’ knowledge base nor did it encourage innovative practices. Instead, principals seemed to think that accountability programs narrowed the curriculum and failed to address the learning needs of all students (Mitchell, 1996; Portin, 2000; Schulte, 2000).

Significance of the Study

With communities across the country looking at how well their schools were doing in comparison to others, it was important that the reporting instrument which reflected student performance be used by educational administrators (Montgomery, Rossi, Legter, McDill, McPartland, & Springfield, 1993). It was imperative that principals and other educational administrators clearly understood and supported the methodology used to
create the reporting instruments. Within the highly political climate, each school's leadership had to determine how best to meet the demands for student achievement accountability and move the school forward (Fenster, 1996). Pipho (1999) argued that the higher the stakes, the greater the expertise was needed to insure that the reports reflected the assessment results accurately. However, to what degree the principals and the educational leaders understood the measures used to hold them accountable had never been formally assessed locally.

In the past, school profiles were created to meet a political agenda and were linked to no longitudinal data to determine the effectiveness in improving student performance. Without a close examination of the level of understanding that the educational administrators had of the accountability measures used to spur improved student performances, school improvement was left to chance. If the accountability measures were understood and embraced, the educational leadership could better identify the proper role for them in the accountability process. If the level of understanding and acceptance of the accountability process could be documented, then it seemed reasonable that the accountability instrument would be the catalyst for school improvements.

Problem Statement

School performance profiles had been used by many states as indicators of school success. They were used as a means to hold school administrators accountable for their performance. It was important that school administrators perceive the profiles as positive elements to improve student performance. Few research studies involving the level of understanding and acceptance of the accountability measures by building level and central office administrators were found. With the first statewide school performance
accountability reports in Georgia issued in spring 2002, it was critical to measure the school administrators' level of understanding and acceptance of the school performance profiles. The purpose of this study was to examine the administrators' perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance.

Limitations and Assumptions

The recognized limitations of the study were that the participants were limited to one school system in Georgia. However, the assumption was made that, like the studies of Schulte (2000) and Acker-Hocevar & Touchton (2001) which focused on targeted educational administrators, the participants' perceptions would be representative.

Research Question

The major research question was: What were the principals' and the district administrators' perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance?

The research sub-questions were as follows:

1. How did principals and district administrators perceive the impact of school performance profiles on teaching and learning?

2. What did principals and district administrators perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of using school performance profiles as indicators of student success?

3. Were principals and district administrators satisfied with the use of school performance profiles to account for the school performances in Georgia?
4. Was there any difference in the perceptions of school principals and those of district administrators regarding the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance?

Definition of Terms

**Course completion**: Measure reported as the percent of students who receive passing grades for each course attempted during the school year.

**District administrators**: Central office certificated staff who by their defined job descriptions were directly linked to the instructional programs at the schools, for example, the Associate Superintendents that supervised the principals, the Division of Instruction staff that supported and oversaw the subject areas, the Accountability staff that assisted with the analysis of the school data, and the Instructional Technology staff that assisted with the data collection and the analysis of data. The Division of Instruction staff included the subject area curriculum specialists, the program managers for Title I, the gifted and talented program, the magnet program, and staff development. The Accountability staff included the data analysts and test director. The Instructional Technology staff included the technology specialists who assisted the schools and the teachers with the software programs.

**Dropout rate**: Measure reported as the percent of students, grades 6 - 12, who withdraw from school before completing the requirements for a high school diploma and/or certificate.

**Educational administrators**: Administrators employed by the school system to lead the instructional programs at the schools and/or the instructional support services at the district office.
Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests (GCRTs): Standardized tests that were linked to Georgia’s Quality Core Curriculum in Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies for grades 1 – 8. The tests were scored by converting raw scores for each sub-test into standard scores. The reliability of the GCRTs was assessed by a method that resulted in two coefficients. One was the generalizability coefficient that examined the dependability of the score decision and the score point. It was derived by examining the individual scores by the item design which was equated with the coefficient alpha and the traditional formula KR-20. The validity for the tests was assessed using four criteria: 1) Did it measure what was taught? 2) Did it provide consistent standards for all students? 3) Did it produce a consistent measure over time? 4) Was it free of bias? Content experts representing each school system in Georgia and classroom teachers took part in the validation process (Georgia Department of Education, 2001).

Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGTs): Standardized tests that were linked to Georgia’s Quality Core Curriculum for high school in English/Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Writing and that served as a graduation requirement for a high school diploma for all students entering 9th grade prior to Fall 2002. Using the same process for establishing reliability that was used for the GCRTs, the reliability for the GHSGTs was determined to be .93 to .96 with a range of 2.92 – 2.22 for the standard error of measure. The validity for the GHSGTs was determined using the same criteria and process as the state used for the GCRTs. In addition, periodic reviews of the content were conducted to insure that the GHSGTs remained valid and reliable (Bunch, 1997).

OSIRIS: The Georgia Department of Education's student, school, and system database used to store achievement, attendance, grades, and demographic information.
**Promotion:** Measure reported as the percent of students who passed to the next grade level at the end of the school year.

**Receivership:** Status of a school that had not demonstrated improvement on identified student indicators over a two-year period.

**School performance profile:** Document that reported identified student achievement indicators. In this study, a school performance profile included the Georgia High School Graduation Tests and the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests.

**Socioeconomic status:** For purposes of this study, the working definition for school systems was used; that was the percent of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch in the federally funded school nutrition program.

**Student achievement:** For the purpose of this study, student achievement was defined in the context of the school performance profiles. School performance profiles recognized standardized test scores on the Georgia criterion-referenced tests, such as the Georgia High School Graduation Tests and the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests, as student achievement.

**Student achievement indicators:** Measures recognized in educational research as reflective of successful student performances; for example, standardized test scores, attendance, and drop-out and promotion rates.

**Student attendance:** Measure reported as the percent of students who attend school daily for the 180 days of school.

**Trend data:** Data collected over a given period of time for a school to determine if a performance pattern exists.
Summary

Since the 1980s debates within the educational and political arenas grew on how best to hold schools and their staffs accountable for student performance. As a response to this debate, the number of states that published school performance profiles increased from three to forty-eight. The school performance profiles in the 1980s merely reported the school data and let the public draw their own conclusions. By 2000, states used the school performance profiles to rank and identify schools with the poorest student performances. As a result, the emphasis shifted from the reporting feature of the school performance profile to the accountability process that used the data in the school performance profile.

The issue by the late 1990s clearly rested on accountability and how to insure that schools and students were improving their performances. Despite the continuing debate about how best to do this, few studies examined how principals and the central office administrators perceived or viewed the school performance profiles as an accountability tool. The RAND Corporation in 2000 began to interview urban principals, and in 2001, D. P. Schulte’s dissertation study examined the principals’ perceptions of the Texas school accountability system that was based on the Texas Academic Assessment System (TAAS). Both found that principals viewed accountability from various perspectives – legally, politically, and bureaucratically. However, all principals interviewed recognized that they as the building leaders were responsible for their staff’s focus on the accountability measures, regardless of the reporting format.

From this frame of reference, the current study examined the principals’ and district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve...
student performances. In addition, the survey used in the study attempted to identify the principals’ and district administrators’ perceptions of the school performance profiles impact on teaching and learning. With the first statewide accountability reports to be issued in spring 2002, it was critical to view the school performance profiles from the principals’ and the district administrators’ perspectives. With this information, the school district could better address the areas of concern and uncertainty that might exist.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

During the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the effective schools and quality schools research, the links between educational leadership and school performance were reaffirmed. The performance indicators of student achievement, attendance, school climate, and parental involvement were outlined and linked in the research to effective schools and educational leadership practices (Purkey & Smith, 1985; Gilchrist, 1989). According to Hughes (1995), "effective schools were characterized by high student achievement irrespective of socioeconomic status or parent involvement" (p.7). Hughes' research supported what Negroni's (1992) research reported three years earlier: that the single most important issue was equity. "It was not how children came to school that mattered, but what the school did with them when they got there that made the difference" (Negroni, p. 3). Using the basic correlates embedded in the effective schools and quality schools research, the reporting of student performance became an integral part of the school improvement process (Becker, 1992). The dilemma, then, for educational policy makers was not only how should student performance be reported but also how student performances could be improved. McLagan (1991) stated that the quality movement had the potential to be more than a passing fad and could result in true accountability, if educators were committed to continuous improvement. One such effort to hold schools accountable was the use of school performance profiles, which outlined for the public
student achievement information. However, before individual school performances came under scrutiny, public education in the United States became the focus of reform movements (Melcher, 1996).

Educational Reform Movement

With the publication of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983 that detailed the poor performances of American public schools when compared to other nations, the modern educational reform movement was born. The modern educational reform movement called for standards, results based funding, and increased accountability for schools and educators (Melcher, 1996). According to Melcher, from 1983 to 1996 educational reform became a political agenda item with mass-market appeal. The political educational agenda varied in degree to the party affiliation but indifferent to the party affiliation were the four basic strategies it encompassed: 1) broad standards; 2) increased accountability; 3) early intervention and parental involvement; and 4) additional teacher training (Melcher, 1996).

From the political agenda and the national reaction to *A Nation At Risk* came the United States Department of Education's *Goals 2000* (Kozol, 1997). Despite the debate that surrounded *Goals 2000* over who should establish the goals, the local community versus the federal government, a strong focus on data collection and educational measurement developed (Kozol, 1997). In 1995, thirteen years after *A Nation At Risk* had been published, Theodore Sizer argued that data about the schools was critical to educational reform. According to Sizer (1995), once standards and goals were established, comprehensive school data was needed to determine if and when the goals were achieved. However, Sizer warned that currently the data that "continues to present some schools as better than others is based on data that cannot accurately measure what is
valued and is capricious, at best" (1996, p.78). In addition, Sizer (1995) further warned
that the use of such data reporting did not build a climate for educational reform within
the school communities that the administrators wished to improve. Instead, Stakes (2000)
argued that the reports served to focus instruction on the assessments and not on
educational improvements.

Bracey Reports and the Search for Meaning Within the Reform Movements

In 1997 Gerald Bracey argued against the premises of *A Nation At Risk*, while still
supporting the need for educational reform in the United States. However, instead of
arguing for educational change based on the failures cited in *A Nation at Risk*, Bracey
(1997) argued that real reform and improvement could begin only when one looked at
how well the United States’ public education system has worked in the past. According to
Bracey, the American educational system continued to do well despite what *Nation At
Risk* reported. To substantiate his arguments, he presented data that showed how the high
school completion rate has steadily increased since 1940. From Bracey’s viewpoint, the
political agenda for educational reform “blamed the schools for the economic failures but
gave no credit for its successes” (p.40). Schools became the scapegoats and the data
collected became selective in its reporting formats (Bracey, 1997).

Educational Reform and Improved Academic Performance

While Bracey argued how well the American schools had done, Chester Finn
(1997) pointed out that many of the reforms driven by the politics of the 1980s failed to
improve academic performance because there were no accountability measures. The
reforms that failed to produce improved academic performances were without reliable
measures of academic performance linked to precise objectives. According to Finn
(1997), it was this failure to track academic progress that made it impossible to hold anyone accountable for the success or the failure of the reforms. As a result more and more people began to believe that the American public schools were doing a poor job (Finn, 1997). As a result, accountability for student achievement became a prominent policy issue at all government levels (Education Week, December, 2000).

To compound the problem of accurately measuring the academic performance of schools, teacher unions in the 1980s and the 1990s worked against standards, accountability, and testing programs designed to track academic progress (Gergen, 1997). According to those who argued against such accountability measures, “tests drove down the level of instruction as teachers matched lessons to the low level skills being measured” (Foch and Daniel, 1996, p. 64). The debate over the accountability of schools focused on the measures of student learning that each community perceived to be the purpose of the schools and the requirements for student learning (Doss, April 1998). In Quality Counts 2001 published by Education Week, researchers found that “state tests overshadowed the standards that they were designed to measure…and that many states may be rushing to hold students and schools accountable for the results” (Education Week online, January 2001, p.1).

In addition to those arguments, Aleta Watson (June 1998) found that the United States “loved benchmarks to show progress even if the units of measures were flawed” (p. 733). According to Watson, communities wanted benchmarks and test scores, but they also wanted the media to report what made the scores newsworthy. From this perspective, renewed strength was given to the political agendas that linked American public school performances with their international counterparts (Watson, June 1998).
Despite the public’s acceptance or tolerance of the flawed assessments, educators insisted that there must be a “quality assurance system that included demonstrable teacher effectiveness as measured by the learning gains of students” to accurately benchmark academic progress (Schalock, Schalock, & Myton, February 1998, p. 469). Performance profiles and the quality schools movement addressed both the need to benchmark progress and the drive for increased accountability for the schools (Bennett, 1995). By 2000, the public expectation was that all states would report and hold schools accountable for student achievement that was measured by standardized tests chosen by the states (Curran, 2000).

Performance Profiles and the Quality Schools Movement

According to Arcaro (1995), total quality schools were characterized by a customer focus, total stakeholder participation, progress-assessment measurements, a systems view, and continuous improvement. California, in an attempt to improve their schools, linked accountability measures and standards to the progress and assessment characteristics of quality schools (Bennett, 1995). Building on the quality schools’ characteristics of progress-assessment measurements, and the standards approach, the Louisiana Department of Education identified the following school indicators for their performance profiles: “(1) class size; (2) classes taught by certified teachers; (3) student dropouts; (4) student attendance; (5) students suspended and expelled; (6) American College Test (ACT) results; and (7) state criterion and norm-referenced test results” (Franklin & Crone, 1992, p. 2-3).

School performance profiles offered education the opportunity to report student progress in much the same format as business organizations did – in a simple presentation
with visible measurements and concise performance data (Bernhardt, 1994). According to Alspaugh (1995), the “school profile served as a tool to assist with the interpretation and implementation of student test results for targeting instructional improvement efforts. The school profiles were designed to assist in giving direction for the allocation of instructional improvement efforts needed to attain improved student achievement” (Alspaugh, p. 11).

Public reports, such as school profiles, not only encouraged discussions about the educational process but also helped track the progress of the schools. If the school profiles were to be effective tools for school improvement, they should recognize that improving student achievement was a recurring goal (Southern Regional Education Board, 1995). Earlier, Aseltine (1993) said that school performance profiles had the potential to be the best validation of continuous improvement as it related to student achievement, but school systems had yet to find the most effective way to proceed with the validation process. As educational institutions entered the twenty-first century, systems had identified three elements of successful accountability programs that used school performance profiles. These elements were as follows: [1] standardized test scores reported by schools and subgroups; [2] indicators reported for all students, including special education and English Speakers of Other Languages; and [3] performance incentives awarded to staff and students (Curran, 2000).

Performance Profiles as Legislated Accountability

According to Herrington (1993), school performance profiles became popular mechanisms used by policy makers to make school staffs more accountable. The legislated profiles described by Herrington included demographic statistics, teacher
information, and student performance data. The Southern Regional Educational Board (1992) clearly stated the rationale for the legislated reports:

"Behind all of these efforts is the understanding that the information can shape public support for education --- that parents and state leaders need to be kept up-to-date about what students know and can do. When schools report regularly and clearly on results, government, business and community leaders are more willing to ease regulations and leave the discussions in the hands of the teachers and principals. Taxpayers also want a straightforward report card showing whether their major investment in public education is paying off." (p. 2)

In addition, Herrington (1993) reported that the profiles appealed to policy makers because it placed the responsibility for fixing the identified problems at the local level. Furthermore, it was a low cost school improvement strategy aimed at motivating parents and/or community leaders to improve the education of their children by focusing on the results (Herrington, 1993). Furthermore, it reinforced the belief that the state controlled the reported activities and not the expected outcomes; local systems became the data collectors for the states (Education Week online, December 2000).

However, when Webster and Edwards (1993) studied school performance profiles as an accountability tool, they found that how the standards would be measured was a critical step. In fact, they reported that not only should the school performance profiles outline the standards for students but they should also provide the key diagnostic information needed for improvement to occur. If the performance profiles were to serve the dual purpose of accountability and school improvement, then Webster and Edwards (1993) argued that the student achievement indicators should provide teachers with the
information they need to improve instruction. However, that was not now the case with the current school performance profiles (Webster and Edwards, 1993). In fact, there was no established validity between how well a teacher taught and how well students performed on any reported indicator. Furthermore, because the indicators, such as the selected standardized tests, had established validity, that same validity did not transfer to the school performance profiles that used them to rate schools (Stake, 2000).

Accountability and Effective Leadership

This was not to say that accountability and programs linked to performance indicators, such as student achievement, were not without some benefits. Academic and performance based measures of accountability were political realities, and educators had to come to terms with them (OERI, 1988; Pipho, 1999; Curran, 2000). Quality schools’ research showed that school leadership was “critical in developing a positive teacher work environment” and that “the key to improved educational outcomes was teacher effectiveness” (Hill, Holmes-Smith, & Rowe, 1993, p. 27). No longer could educational leaders be satisfied with the status quo for their community of children (Hendrie, 1996).

Instead, schools had to measure their annual performance against the recognized student achievement indicators outlined in the effective schools’ research to demonstrate continuous improvement. Hughes, (1995) in her research on effective elementary schools in West Virginia, found that effective schools were characterized by:

- high student achievement irrespective of socioeconomic status or parent involvement; low teacher turnover; faculty teamwork; high staff morale and accountability; teachers with high levels of education, experience, and commitment; strong teacher belief that children can achieve; infrequent student
arguments; strong student pride and respect; student services and programs to offset the effects of poverty; strong instructional leadership; and a supportive principal. (p. 7-8)

In addition to these ideals, Webster's (1993) research identified the following student achievement indicators linked to effective schools: (1) national norm-referenced test scores; (2) state-mandated criterion-referenced test scores; (3) promotion rate; (4) graduation rate; (5) attendance rate; and (6) percentage of students taking the SAT and the average scores.

Schools, which historically did well with student achievement, were challenged to examine all their instructional programs in order for the school to demonstrate continuous improvement. It was no longer acceptable to the community for some schools to continue to exist as is without some signs of continuous improvement. In Texas, public schools must demonstrate that all student groups achieved on the identified student achievement indicators during the reporting period (Webster & Edwards, 1993). If all students were to have equal access to the same educational opportunities within the state or local community, educational leadership must utilize the tools, which report and encourage school improvement. To allow multiple years of poor student performances without some direct instructional initiatives and interventions would be political and educational suicide (Dolan, 1992).

Administrative Perceptions of the Use of School Performance Profiles

In an effort to examine how principals viewed their roles in the accountability process, studies were conducted by the RAND Corporation (1996), the University Council for Educational Administration (2000), and by Schulte (2000) in his research at
the University of Texas at El Paso. In each of the studies, the researchers interviewed principals about where they fit into the accountability process and how the process had affected their roles. The RAND study (Mitchell 1996) conducted on site interviews with thirty principals nationwide and another twenty using telephone interviews, while the University Council for Educational Administration focused on urban school principals with their “Thousand Voices from the Firing Line” project (Portin, 2000). Schulte (2000) further refined the studies by examining the perspectives of Texas border principals on Texas’ accountability program. All three studies found that the principals held the primary responsibility for the success or failure of the schools’ accountability policies. It was the principals who managed the resources, nurtured the morale, explained and defined perceptions, and ensured equity throughout the process (Lashway, 1999). In addition, the studies reinforced what Heim reported in 1996 that it was the principals who focused their staffs’ attentions on where improvement was needed and then led the improvement efforts. While the studies focused on the principals and accountability, the studies also reported that many principals believed that a single assessment did not reflect the students’ knowledge base nor did it encourage innovative practices. Instead, principals seemed to think that accountability programs narrowed the curriculum and failed to address the learning needs of all students (Mitchell, 1996; Portin, 2000; Schulte, 2000).

While the research was clear on the school principal’s role in the accountability process, the same was not true for the administrative staffs at the central office. As early as 1998, Bechtel reported that even though principals were often promised greater autonomy at their schools if they could produce higher test scores, the central office staff was not willing to give up control of the schools. In the same year, Simon, Foley, and
Passantino (1998) reported that even within the central office, the administrative staff could not agree on their role in the accountability process. In fact, while administrators in the Central Offices were generally assigned the tasks of aligning the curriculum and developing programs that address the needs of the students and the schools, more often than not, they hired teachers and school principals to perform these tasks and merely served as the clearing house for the work (Luhm, Foley, & Corcoran, 1998; Simon, Foley, & Passantino, 1998). From the perspective of the principals, especially those at poor performing schools, central office staffs were seen as those who established the accountability systems, who monitored their progress, but who offered little, if any, instructional support on a continuous basis. Without the continuous support, the principals in the poor performing schools felt threatened by mandates from the top and often had to argue with the central office staff to receive the resources needed to improve student performances at their schools (Acker-Hocevar & Fontana, 2001)

Performance Profiles as Academic Sanction Instruments

With more states adopting school performance profiles with some type of rating system, a clearer understanding of their role was needed. In a study conducted by the North Carolina Educational Policy Research Center, the use of sanctions as part of the performance profile process was reviewed (Suarez, 1991). The researchers found that a common denominator to all sanction programs was the failure to show improvement over a given period of time on a published school performance profile. In addition, school performance profiles that incorporated sanctions for poor performance included provisions for instructional and/or administrative assistance before a school takeover was enacted. In fact, according to the North Carolina study, most states relied more on the development
and implementation of improvement plans as a consequence of poor performance profiles rather than the removal of the school or system's leadership (Suarez, 1991). Fuhrman and Elmore (1992) argued:

"Unless states are clear about how intervention in troubled districts and schools can help those districts meet state goals, intervention is likely to be a symbolic gesture at best and a trauma with more distractions than benefits at worse." (p. 35)

Studies conducted by the Southern Regional Education Board (1995) supported the argument set forth by Fuhrman and Elmore three years earlier. The Board's studies indicated that unless accountability reporting, such as the school performance profiles, served as the catalyst for changing the way people think and operate in a school, then the school and/or culture needed to sustain school improvement would last only as long as the "occupation" or the "takeover" (Southern Regional Education Board). In 1997, Anderson and Lewis continued to argue that only when school performance profiles served as a change catalyst for the development of collaborative efforts aimed at the root causes of poor student performances could the gap be bridged between accountability and school improvement. However, at the February 3, 1997, meeting sponsored by the Education of States for states and systems currently operating under sanctions, there was no evidence that profiles were even attempting to examine and address the causes of the poor performances. The role school performance profiles played in the change process continued to be a key issue in the debate over their role in any school improvement plan (Anderson and Lewis, 1997). While Quality Counts 2001 reported some instructional changes had occurred as a result of the standards established during the accountability
movement, they also reported that the changes were superficial at best with classrooms looking like they did ten years ago (Education Week, January 2001).

Performance Profiles as Instruments of Change

However, once the institutional needs were identified, the issue shifted the focus to improve student performance through the use of public accountability measures, such as school performance profiles. The use of the school performance profile with sanctions focused the administrator on the change process (Rettig, 1992). As Rettig pointed out in his case study of the New Jersey City school system, the framework for administrative takeovers was built on the change process – its theories (Berman, 1981; Fullan, 1981), its processes, and its implementation (Chin, 1967; Clark & Guba, 1967; Huberman & Crandall, 1983). However, the takeovers faltered in the midst of the change process because the administrative powers failed to attend to change implementation outlined in research and to address the issues of “insider-outsider conflict, timing, and goals and evaluation” (Rettig, 1992, pg. 37-38). Huberman’s (1983) case study for the National Diffusion Network illustrated that change could be successful, but was dependent on the following four characteristics: (1) the quality and amount of technical assistance available to the teachers; (2) sustained central office and building level support; (3) slow implementation with staff being eased into the process; and (4) frequent in-service opportunities centered around support activities. In addition to the prolonged commitment of the central office and building level staff, Fullan (1985) argued that lasting changes might be realized earlier if the decisions to change were reached collaboratively. However, in states and systems using school performance profiles, those most affected by the administrative changes had not collaboratively designed the takeover or receivership
programs. Instead, the programs were designed outside the schools’ processes (Suarez, 1992). Therein lay the challenge for effective school change as it was linked to the quality process. For accountability programs to be successful, Sirotnik and Kimball (1999) argued that they had to include support, staff development, and the resources to implement the needed improvements.

According to Steinberger (1993), leaders must facilitate the change process if student performances were to improve. To do this required leaders to (1) clearly communicate the school’s mission and goals; (2) solicit participation in the process by all those effected by the changes; (3) capitalize on all the staff talents; (4) set standards and benchmark progress; and (5) tailor staff development to the staff and student needs (Steinberger). In addition, leaders must recognize the importance of commitment, as well as the timing and readiness for change, if schools were to move forward toward more effective practices which demonstrated the continuous improvement of student performance (Fullan, 1985).

Long-Term Effects of Performance Profiles

Fenster (1996), in his study on the effectiveness of Kentucky’s use of performance profiles, found that profiles linked to rewards and sanctions did not produce the long-term commitment to continuous school improvement any more than other less radical interventions did. Schools showed progress initially with the influx of funds and personnel, but once the new school leadership became established, the schools resumed similar past performance patterns (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1992; Suarez, 1991). According to Fenster, the Kentucky legislated program attempted to force improved student achievement and educational equity across the state by the use of sanctions and financial
incentives. Without the local commitment and responsibility for school improvement, the state receivership programs had limited value as a method for improving the ineffective leadership practices singled out by the accountability measures (Fenster, 1996; Education Commission of the States, 1995). In fact, Sirotkin and Kimball (1999) found that such accountability measures were systematic ways to reward and punish schools and their staffs.

Performance Profiles and Achievement

While the supporters of educational accountability programs recognized the limitations of many of the standardized measures of student achievement, they did not believe it should detract from the importance of making schools and programs accountable for students' progress. Instead of fighting the accountability programs, they felt efforts should be made to select, design, or expand the definitions of the assessment measures used to track student and/or school progress. No single score or criteria was enough to label a school "at-risk" any more than it was for a child (Alspaugh, 1995). As school staffs understood, while it might not be the most effective way to change the direction of a poorly performing school, as defined by the school performance indicators, it certainly focused attention on the challenge at hand (Guskey, 1993). By so doing, the school performance profiles helped ensure that the educational leadership currently assigned to a school would assess and address their institutional needs so that instructional progress could be documented. Using an accountability program aligned to the following standards, Sirotkin and Kimball (1999) believed that the performance profiles would be more accurate measures of schools' performances. The recommended standards for such accountability programs were as follows: 1] should not determine the rating using a single
test or formula; 2] should include “operational context” of the community and the staff in
the rating formula; 3] should provide support and monitor the “opportunities for learning”; 4] should monitor and support ongoing classroom assessments; 5] should be based on
defined curriculum standards; 6] should be aligned to the schools’ goals and funding; and 7] should not be punitive but instead support improvement initiatives and staff
development (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999).

Performance Profiles Impact on Teaching and Learning

By 2000 most states had accountability programs with standardized test results as
their foundation and with the “global purpose of improving teaching and learning” (Linn,
2001, p. 3). How well that purpose was achieved was a matter of debate for many
educators. During the course of the debate, many common advantages and disadvantages
of the use of school performance profiles surfaced in the research. The predominant
advantages of the accountability programs identified in the research were: 1] provided a
clear focus for classroom instruction; 2] provided valuable data and feedback to both the
community and the schools; 3] provided the data needed to develop, implement, and
monitor school improvement plans; 4] provided the impetus for the alignment of the
curriculum with the tests and the standards embedded in the accountability programs; 5] provided the data needed to tailor staff development programs to the needs of the students and the schools; and 6] most importantly, focused attention on student needs and
encouraged flexible grouping for instruction (Linn, 2000; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Lewis,
2001; Doherty, 2002). In addition to the benefits of the accountability programs identified
by the principals, teachers, and administrators, Stronge and Tucker (2000) recognized the
powerful database that it created for educational research. According to their research,
with the accountability programs came not only publicized test scores, but also
improvement plans and staff development plans that could be studied as they related to
improvements in student achievement, i.e., increased test scores.

However, in sharp contrast to the advantages cited with the use of the school
performance profiles, Darling-Hammond (1990) argued early that the creation of such
profiles negatively influenced teachers' choices regarding content and methodology. In
essence what was cited most often as the biggest disadvantage was the emergence of the
"what's tested is taught" and the "drill and kill" mentalities of the educators whose
performances were linked to standardized test scores (Glatthorn, & Fontana, 2000;
Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001; Galley, 2001; Linn, 2001;
Doherty, 2002). Moreover, Stronge and Tucker (2000) found that such programs limited
not only the content and instructional strategies but also reduced the actual instructional
time provided. Instead of the delivery of a well balanced curriculum, test taking skills, test
preparations, and the actual administration of the state tests replaced valuable classroom
argued that the tests themselves focused on content and questions that could be measured
the easiest, thereby eliminating critical thinking and application skills from the daily
curriculum. Earlier Lewis (2001) reported that while the standards told teachers to focus
on high level thinking skills, those standards were never measured in the tests embedded in
the performance profiles, and therefore, in practice were omitted from the curriculum.

To many the real impact of the use of standardized scores as the crux of school
performance profiles was measured in the effects they had on students and learning
(Lewis, 2001; Linn, 2001; Doherty, 2002). The main advantage according to Glatthorn
and Fontana (2000) was that such programs served to motivate students to do well, especially when the tests addressed in the performance profiles were exit exams required for diplomas and/or promotions. While Cohen and Spillane (1994) recognized their impact on students, they argued that any advantages were overridden by how the tests negatively affected poor and/or minority students. Poor test performances limited their educational opportunities, as well as increased stress among both the students and their teachers (Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Doherty, 2002). In addition, Lewis (2001) reported that many of the state assessments failed to provide the accommodations for students with identified needs, and therefore, the scores did not accurately reflect all student performances. With the test data defining the educational programs and student placements, students who were also identified as poor, minority, and/or with special needs were more likely to be placed in remedial programs or specific test preparation classes which focused on rote memory than students who were not so identified (Cohen & Spillane, 1994; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Doherty, 2002).

Performance Profiles and the Accurate Measurement of Student Performances

In 1993, Webster and Edwards analyzed the performance profiles created by the Texas Department of Education and identified a measurement flaw common in many state testing program reports. Instead of comparing schools with similar demographic characteristics, as the Georgia Council for School Performance did, states compared schools to each other using raw data, i.e., a standardized test score. To even the playing field, Webster and Edwards (1993) advocated making statistical adjustments and predictions linked to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status using multiple regression analysis. In addition, they argued that the collection and reporting of cohort and
longitudinal data was essential for meaningful student achievement to be tracked. The emphasis of the performance profiles using these statistical measures shifted the focus of the profiles away from the reporting function and more toward school accountability for all learners. Without accountability measures linked directly to the analysis of data for each reported indicator, school improvement was a chance occurrence and not the result of a calculated plan (Webster and Edwards, 1993).

Research published in 1999 by the Education Trust Foundation in Washington, D.C. found that differences between student achievement levels could be accounted for more by differences in culture, expectations, motivations, and parental involvement than by any single educational program. In order to address such influences, the foundation suggested that attendance, dropout, and discipline rates be factored into any profile rating (Hendrie, 1999).

Even with the addition of those factors, a study conducted by the Detroit Free Press found that the links between poverty and student mobility, two factors beyond the school’s control, were so strong that any performance profile ratings were meaningless (Olson, 1998). In 1999 the College Board study on minority achievement in the United States reinforced the findings when it found that the socio-economic status of a student was one of the most powerful predictors of student achievement. In addition, the College Board’s findings further supported the Detroit Free Press’ study when they identified the top five factors that influenced student achievement: economics of the family; parental educational level; prejudice; culture; and the quality, amount, and use of community resources. None of these were the responsibility of the schools alone but instead better shared and addressed by the whole community. To highlight the inequities overlooked by
the current performance profiles, the College Board study found that the percentage of poor students assigned to schools was linked to lower achievement scores (1999). In addition, the mobility of these same students compounded the problem of accurately defining how effective a school was by publishing performance profiles (Hoff, 1999). “The reality is that a student who cannot read will not be taught by a test or by the passage of a law that defines the rating formula... Curriculum, instructional materials, and even parental attitudes will have to be changed.” (Pipho, 1999, p. 565) Nevertheless, accountability for student performance continued to be a prominent policy issue despite the debate on how best to report and assess the effectiveness of schools using performance profiles (Education Week, 2000). During this time, the debate continued over how to best report and calculate a school’s effectiveness using standardized test scores (Womble, 2000).

Principals’ Satisfaction with the Use of School Performance Profiles

Unlike the debate reflected in research on the effects of the use of school performance profiles on teaching and learning, the research reported no such debate regarding the principals’ satisfaction with their use (Lashway, 2000; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Acker-Hoecevar & Touchton, 2001). Instead, all agreed that school profiles were fair when they considered variables beyond the schools’ control, such as mobility and poverty, and when they focused on student growth over a period of time. In fact, Lashway (2000) reported that principals now saw performance profiles and accountability as one of the many tasks that their jobs embraced. Moreover, Stronge and Tucker (2001) added that principals saw the information provided by the profiles as enhancing their decision-making and that they enabled them to make decisions that were now data driven.
and clearly explainable. Even principals, who were at schools with failing grades, saw the profiles and the data that they provided as a driving force in their school improvement plans (Stronge and Tucker, 2000; Acker-Hocevar and Touchton, 2001). Despite their acceptance and satisfaction with profiles' use, the principals expressed concerns about their ability to hire and retain good teachers at schools where the test scores were low. Without some comparisons to similar student populations built into the school performance profiles or without the focus on student growth and improvement, principals in poor performing schools predicted that their teaching staffs would be highly mobile and more easily burned out. Nevertheless, these same principals viewed the profiles as a way of telling their schools' stories and of obtaining the additional funding for both programs and staff development that they needed to move their schools forward. (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001)

Summary

As a result of effective schools and quality schools research, educational and political leaders published works that set standards for students and examined the roles of the principals and educational administrators in the school improvement process. The definitive publication of the 1980s was A Nation at Risk, which detailed the poor performances of the American public schools when compared to other nations' schools. In response to that publication, Gerald Bracey published a series of annual reports that addressed the issues raised in A Nation at Risk. Despite the debate over the publication, educational reforms that called for standards for students, results based funding, and increased accountability for schools and educators flourished.
As part of the reform movements, the United States Department of Education pushed *Goals 2000*, which focused on data collection and standards. While the debate continued over who should set the standards, the importance of data collection could not be underestimated. Theodore Sizer argued that the school data was critical to any educational reform practices. In addition, Chester Finn believed that unless the standards and the data were linked to accountability few, academic improvements could be documented. With the infusion of accountability into the reform movements, teacher unions and others argued against the use of tracking data and standardized test scores to document improvements. Nevertheless, by 2001, state testing programs, which tracked and reported school data as accountability measures, were a reality.

The use of school performance profiles to hold school staffs accountable and to report school performance became recognized benchmarks for the public. While each state had varied formats for their school performance profiles, all used standardized test scores as the major indicators for success. States, like Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Texas, used standardized tests that measured their instructional objectives, as well as reported performances according to the demographics of the schools. For many researchers like Bracey, the demographics of the school became a critical point in the development of school performance profiles.

Once the states developed the school performance profiles and linked them to rewards and sanctions, the focus shifted from the profiles' format to their role in school improvement plans. Studies by Rettig in the early 1990s found that the school performance profiles focused the principals on the change process. Other studies debated how best to facilitate the change process and sustain the improvements over time.
While many argued that no one test score should determine a school’s success or failure, Webster and Edwards found that the analysis of data led to calculated plans for improvements. That, in itself, was the foundation for public policy issues that supported the use of school performance profiles as a critical point in the calculation of a school’s effectiveness.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

During the 1980s and the 1990s, as a result of the effective schools and quality schools research, the links between educational leadership and school performance were reaffirmed. The performance indicators of student achievement, attendance, school climate, and parental involvement were outlined and linked in the research to effective schools and their educational leadership practices (Purkey & Smith, 1985; Gilchrist, 1989). According to Hughes (1995), "effective schools were characterized by high student achievement irrespective of socioeconomic status or parent involvement" (p. 7). Hughes' research supported what Negroni's (1992) research reported three years earlier: that the single most important issue was equity. "It was not how children came to school that mattered, but what the school did with them when they got there that made the difference" (Negroni, p. 3). Using the basic correlates embedded in the effective schools and quality schools research, the reporting of student performance became an integral part of the school improvement process (Becker, 1992). The difficulty, then, for educational policy makers was not the report but rather how should student performance be reported to reflect the performance of the school. McLagan (1991) stated that the quality movement had the potential to be more than a passing fad and result in true accountability, if educators were committed to continuous improvement. One such effort to hold school
accountable was the use of school performance profiles, which outline student achievement information to the public.

Research Question

The major research question was: What were the principals’ and the district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance?

The research sub-questions were:

1. How did principals and district administrators perceive the impact of school performance profiles on teaching and learning?
2. What did principals and district administrators perceive as the advantages and the disadvantages of using school performance profiles as indicators of student success?
3. Were principals and district administrators satisfied with the use of school performance profiles to account for the school performances in Georgia?
4. Was there a difference in the perceptions of school principals and district administrators regarding the use of school performance profiles to improve school performance?

Participants

The study participants were all the elementary, middle, high school, and special center principals and assistant principals of the traditional school sites, and all the district administrators that worked with the principals in the instructional programs in the Chatham County Public Schools. District administrators included the Associate Superintendents that supervised the principals, the Division of Instruction staff that
supported and oversaw the subject areas, the Accountability staff that assisted with the analysis of the school data, and the Instructional Technology staff that assisted with the data collection and the analysis of data. The Division of Instruction staff included the subject area curriculum specialists, the program managers for Title I, the gifted and talented program, the magnet program, and staff development. The Accountability staff included the data analysts and test director. The Instructional Technology staff included the technology specialist who assisted the schools and the teachers with the software programs. All participants were directly involved with the schools' instructional programs and improvement of those programs in Chatham County Public Schools.

The study limited the participants to Chatham County Public Schools because Chatham County was the only district that had been developing, refining, and using performance profiles over an extended period of time. The district first began developing school performance profiles during the 1992-1993 school year. Therefore, the use of the school performance profile was not new to any of the administrators currently working in the district (Savannah – Chatham County Public Schools, 2001).

Instrumentation

The survey instrument consisted of three parts: 1] Perceptions, 2] Demographics, and 3] Open-ended questions. For each question in Part I, a four option Likert Scale was presented: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

In addition to the Likert Scale survey, open-ended questions were presented to collect data relating to the participants' perceptions, suggestions, and reactions to the school performance profiles. The survey questionnaire and the open-ended questions were
based on the survey administered by D. P. Sculte (2000) to principals in Texas about the use of their state assessment, TAAS. According to Schulte,

John R. Slate, Professor of Educational Leadership and Foundations at the University of Texas at El Paso, developed and validated the survey instrument. A pilot test of the instrument was conducted prior to the actual administration of the survey. (p. 80)

The only changes made to the survey that was piloted and administered in Texas was to change the name of the state assessment instruments from TAAS in Texas to Georgia’s GCRTs and GHSGTs in the survey titled, Survey of Administrators’ Perceptions of School Performance Profiles. Both the Texas and the Georgia assessment instruments contained in the surveys were criterion-referenced tests specific to the respective state adopted curriculums, making the change necessary.

As shown in Table 1, the research questions were supported both by the survey and questionnaire items, as well as by the research literature. However, limitations and assumptions were present in the study. The major limitation was that the participants of the study were limited to one school system in Georgia. In addition, it was assumed that the educational administrators’ perceptions would be representative of the larger population.

Procedures

Before the survey forms were sent for data collection, application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University for research approval. The research proceeded upon approval of the IRB.
A survey questionnaire was administered to principals, assistant principals, and central office administrators who were subject to the accountability measures and directly involved with the instructional programs in the schools. The survey was sent to 129 participants with a cover letter explaining the nature and the purpose of the study. Code numbers were randomly assigned and placed on each return envelope for confidentiality and for tracking each response. Each packet included a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a request to reply within two weeks. To those that failed to respond within two weeks a reminder was sent with another copy of the survey. A third reminder was sent with the cover letter, survey, and questionnaire to all non-respondents, using the district computer email system, Lotus Notes. All respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the data. No individuals were identified in the study.

Data collected from the open-ended responses were systematically classified and logged for later references. The open-ended questionnaire allowed participants to clarify their survey responses and add ideas that were not expressed in the Likert survey.

Analysis of Data

Data collected in this study was analyzed both quantitatively (24 Likert scale items) and qualitatively (6 open-ended questions systematically classified). Specific items on the survey were identified to answer the major research question: What were the principals and the administrators' perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance? To answer the major research question, responses to survey items 1, 7, and 8 were used. To answer sub-question #1, survey items 2, 3, 11, and 21 were used to reflect “teaching”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Supporting Literature</th>
<th>Survey and Questionnaire Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the principals’ and district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance?</td>
<td>Alspaugh, 1995; Heim, 1996; Mitchell, 1996; RAND, 1996; Sirotnik &amp; Kimball, 1999; Portin, 2000; Schulte, 2000; University Council for Educational Administrators, 2000</td>
<td>Survey: 1, 4, 7, 8, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did principals and district administrators perceive the impact school performance profiles had on teaching and learning?</td>
<td>Foch &amp; Daniel, 1996; Doss, April 1998; Schalock, Schalock &amp; Myton, February 1998; Linn, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Doherty, 2002</td>
<td>Survey: 1, 2, 3, 11, 21; Questionnaire: 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did principals and district administrators perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of using school performance profiles as indicators of student success?</td>
<td>Darling-Hammond, 1990; Webster &amp; Edwards, 1993; Cohen &amp; Spillane, 1994; Alspaugh, 1995; Foch &amp; Daniel, 1996; Glatthorn &amp; Fontana, 2000; Linn, 2000; Stronge &amp; Tucker, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Galley, 2001; Doherty, 2002</td>
<td>Survey: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22; Questionnaire: 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were principals and district administrators satisfied with the use of school performance profiles to account for the school performances in Georgia?</td>
<td>Lashway, 2000; Stronge &amp; Tucker, 2000; Acker-Hocevar &amp; Touchton, 2001</td>
<td>Survey: 4, 13, 19, 22, 23, 24; Questionnaire: 5, 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 continued. Item analysis of the research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Supporting Literature</th>
<th>Survey and Questionnaire Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>administrators regarding the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For sub-question #2, responses to survey items 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, and 22 were used to reflect the “disadvantages” of school performance profiles and survey items 7, 10, 12, and 18 were used to reflect the “advantages” of school performance profiles. To answer sub-question #3, responses to survey items, 4, 13, 19, 22, 23, and 24 were used to indicate the degree of administrators’ satisfaction with the school performance profiles. Descriptive statistics were used to provide mean scores and standard deviations of the responses to the aforementioned groups of survey items: general perceptions, impact of the school performance profile on teaching, the impact of the school performance profile on learning, the perceived disadvantages and the perceived advantages, and the extent of the administrators’ satisfaction with the school performance profile.

To answer research sub-question #4, a two-tailed t-test was used to compare the perceptions of the principals and the district administrators to determine if significant differences could be detected. In addition, the mean differences were also calculated.

Qualitative data collected in this study were shown in the responses to the 6 open-ended questions. All responses to the open-ended questions were classified by individuals, by questions, by status (principal or district administrator), and by sections of the responses. The responses to the open-ended questions were coded numerically and linked to main ideas identified in the written responses. The key words from the responses were entered into SPSS and then hand checked for accuracy to identify the common patterns and ideas. A frequency chart was used to display the common written responses. All responses were analyzed for common themes, patterns, consensus and differences relating
to the major research question and sub-questions. The qualitative data collected in this study were used in comparison with the quantitative data to confirm the extent of the agreement (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Summary

In this study, a survey questionnaire was administered to all elementary, middle, high school, and special center principals and assistant principals and district administrators who worked with the principals and the instructional programs in the Chatham County Public Schools. All participants were assured that their response would remain confidential. In addition, all research protocols from both Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board and the Chatham County Public Schools were followed.

The survey questionnaire adapted from a Texas survey examined the principals’, assistant principals’, and the district administrators’ perceptions of the use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances. The surveys with both closed-ended Likert scale items and an open-ended questionnaire were used to collect the research data. The surveys were coded and sent with a cover letter explaining the study and its purpose. Moreover, the open-ended responses were coded and linked to the main ideas expressed by the respondents. Explanations of how the survey data was coded and linked to the open-ended responses was presented.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine educational administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances. Using a survey instrument with closed-ended Likert scale questions and a questionnaire with open-ended questions that permitted participants to clarify responses, data was collected from school and district administrators in Chatham County Public Schools in Georgia. The total survey response rate was 61.2% [79 out 129] with 64.5% of school administrators [60 out of 93] and 52.8% of district administrators [19 out of 36] returning the surveys (Table 2).

For the Likert scale questions, frequencies were calculated for both the school and district administrators. In addition, the means for each group were calculated and a t-test was administered to determine if differences between the two groups were significant. For the open-ended questions, the responses were coded according to the stated main ideas to determine if common themes could be identified.

Survey Results: Quantitative Data

The main research question was: What were the school and district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances?
Responses to the following survey items were used to answer the main research question.

# 1. The emphasis placed on student test scores is helpful in improving student achievement.

# 4. Use of test scores to differentiate among good, average, and bad schools is appropriate.

# 7. Low income and minority students are positively affected by the testing program.

# 8. Only information on the state’s standardized tests are being stressed by teachers.

#23. I think that another system should be implemented to evaluate educational progress in Georgia.

#24. Other states should be encouraged to adopt an educational accountability system similar to Georgia’s.

As shown in Table 3, of the 79 administrators who participated in the study, 44.7% positively viewed the overall use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances. While 74.7% agreed that the emphasis placed on student test scores was helpful in improving student achievement, the opposite was not true when test scores were used to differentiate among the good, average, and bad schools. In response to that item, only 22.8% of the administrators agreed with the use of test scores for that purpose. Moreover, 59.5% of the administrators also negatively perceived the testing programs’ effect on low income and minority students. Even with the mixed perceptions of the administrators about the use of the test scores, they did not feel strongly about replacing the school performance profile with another system (32.9%) or about recommending the Georgia system to other states (32.9%).
Administrators’ Perceptions of the Profiles’ Impact on Teaching and Learning

Sub-question #1 was: How did school and district administrators perceive the impact school performance profiles had on teaching and learning? Responses to the following survey items were used to address the teaching component of the research question.

# 1. The emphasis placed on student test scores is helpful in improving student

# 2. Teachers find the emphasis on student test scores to be helpful in their teaching efforts.

# 3. Teachers report that standardized tests restrict their use of creative and innovative teaching strategies.

#11. Teachers at my site are evaluated by their students’ performances on the GCRT/GHSGT.

#21. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed teachers under more pressure than they would be normally.

The study showed mixed administrative perceptions of the impact of the use of the school performance profiles on teaching (Table 4). According to the survey results, the administrators agreed (74.7%) that the emphasis placed on student test scores was helpful in improving student achievement. The administrators also perceived the use of school performance profiles as helpful to teachers (63.3%) and not restrictive of the use of creative and innovative teaching strategies (58.2%). Moreover, while the administrators did not perceive the use of school performance profiles as increasing the pressure on teachers (63.3%), less than half (46.8%) reported that student performances on the GCRT/GHSGT were used as part of the teachers’ evaluations.
Table 2. Survey return rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Number Sent</th>
<th>Number Returned</th>
<th>Return Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School principals</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant principals</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District administrators</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. School and district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the school and district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances?</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The emphasis placed on student test scores is helpful in improving student achievement.</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Use of test scores to differentiate among good, average, and bad schools is appropriate.</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Low income and minority students are positively affected by the testing programs.</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I think that another system should be implemented to evaluate educational progress in Georgia.</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Other states should be encouraged to adopt an educational accountability system similar to Georgia’s.</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like the administrators' perceptions of the impact on teaching, the administrators' perceptions of the use of the school performance profiles' impact on learning were also analyzed as part of sub-question #1. The following survey items were used as part of this analysis:

#15. Low income and minority students are placed in lower level, remedial settings as a result of their GCRT/GHSGT performances.

#16. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to an increased effort to refer students to special education.

According to survey results (Table 5), administrators perceived that the use of school performance profiles impacted learning by increasing efforts to refer students to special education as a result of the use of the GCRT/GHSGT (64.6%). However, administrative perceptions were mixed when the impact on learning was examined as it was related to low income and minority students. When examined, 38% of the administrators thought low income and minority students were placed in lower level, remedial settings as a result of the GCRT/GHSGT performances, while 48.1% disagreed and 13.9% had no opinion.

Administrators' Perceptions of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Profiles

Sub-question #2 of the study examined the administrators' perceptions of the disadvantages and advantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success. The following items on the survey were identified for the examination of the disadvantages perceived by the administrators:

# 5. Skills not measured by standardized tests are being neglected.

# 6. To do well on the GCRT/GHSGT, teachers are having to teach students to memorize information.
Table 4. School and district administrators’ perceptions of the impact of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances on teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrators’ perceptions of the impact of the use of school profiles on teaching</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The emphasis placed on student test scores is helpful in improving student achievement.</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers find the emphasis on student test scores to be helpful in their teaching efforts.</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers report that standardized tests restrict their use of creative and innovative teaching strategies.</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teachers at my site are evaluated by their students’ performances on the GCRT/GHSGT.</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed teachers under more pressure than they would be normally.</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. School and district administrators’ perceptions of the impact of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances on learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did principals and district administrators perceive the impact the use of the school performance profiles had on learning?</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Low income and minority students are placed in lower level, remedial settings as a result of their GCRT/GHSGT performances.</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to an increased effort to refer students to special education.</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# 8. Only information on the state’s standardized tests are being stressed by teachers.

# 9. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to a fragmented curriculum.

#14. Children with talents not measured by the GCRT/GHSGT receive appropriate educational opportunities.

#15. Low income and minority students are placed in low level, remedial settings as a result of their GCRT/GHSGT performances.

#16. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to an increased effort to refer students to special education.

#17. At the secondary level, the GHSGT has led to more students dropping out of school.

#20. Field trips and such experiences are being minimized as a result of the GCRT/GHSGT.

#21. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed teachers under more pressure than they would be normally.

#22. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed administrators under more pressure than they would be normally.

As a group, administrators had mixed views on whether there were disadvantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success with 38% of administrators acknowledging that there were disadvantages. Forty-nine point two percent (49.2%) thought there were no disadvantages, and 12.8% had no response (Table 6). Furthermore, administrators were split over whether the use of the GCRT/GHSGT led to a fragmented curriculum (48.1% on either side) and whether field trips and such experiences were minimized as a result of the GCRT/GHSGT (44.3% vs. 39.2%). In contrast, administrators thought that teachers’ stress on tested information (68.4%), and increased efforts to refer students to special education (64.6%) were definite disadvantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success.
However, administrators did not perceive the use of school performance profiles as a disadvantage when skills (26.6%), low income and minority student placements (38.0%), and inclusion of other talents (31.6%) were considered. While those instructional considerations were not considered disadvantages, neither were the pressures exerted by the use of the profiles on teachers (22.8%) or administrators (22.8%).

Even though administrators expressed mixed views on the disadvantages, the opposite was true when the advantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success was analyzed. To examine the advantages, the following survey items were analyzed:

# 7. Low income and minority students are positively affected by the testing programs. 

# 10. Parents are interested in their children’s GCRT/GHSGT performances. 

#12. Local media are interested in our students’ performances on the GCRT/GHSGT. 

#18. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has increased the success of students who are normally successful at school. 

As seen in Table 7, administrators’ overall perceptions of the advantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success were positive (62%); however, when the items were examined as they pertained to students’ placements and success (# 7 and # 18), the opposite was true. Administrators’ perceptions of the testing programs’ effects on low income, minority, or successful students was not positive; only 36.7% and 34.2%, respectively, positively viewed the test programs. Nevertheless, when
Table 6. School and district administrators’ perceptions of the disadvantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did school and district administrators perceive as the disadvantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success?</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Skills not measured by the standardized tests are being neglected.</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To do well on the GCRT/GHSGT, teachers have to teach students to memorize information.</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Only information on the state’s standardized tests are being stressed by teachers.</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to a fragmented curriculum.</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Children with talents not measured by the GCRT/GHSGT receive appropriate educational opportunities.</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Low income and minority students are placed in lower level, remedial settings as a result of their GCRT/GHSGT performances.</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to an increased effort to refer students to special education.</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Field trips and such experiences are being minimized as a result of the GCRT/GHSGT.</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed teachers under more pressure than they would be normally.</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed administrators under more pressure than they would be normally.</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the administrators considered parental and media interests in the students' performances on the GCRT/GHSGT, the responses were overwhelmingly positive with 84.8% for parental interests and 92.4% for media interests.

Administrators' Satisfaction with the Use of School Profiles

With such discrepancies, sub-question #3 attempted to assess the administrators' satisfaction with the use of the school performance profiles to account for school performances in Georgia. To do this, the following survey items were used:

#4. Use of test scores to differentiate among the good, average, and bad schools is appropriate.

#13. There are successful schools that do not earn recognition or exemplary ratings.

#19. The use of the GCRT/GHSGT has made my job as an administrator more difficult.

#22. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed administrators under more pressure than they would be normally.

#23. I think that another system should be implemented to evaluate educational progress in Georgia.

#24. Other states should be encouraged to adopt an educational accountability system similar to Georgia's.

In response to whether administrators were satisfied with the use of school performance profiles to account for school performances in Georgia, only 29.7% responded positively, as shown in Table 8. However, when asked if another system should be used, the response was split with 32.9% positive, 46.8% negative, and 20.3% with no response. The strongest negative response came from the idea that there were successful schools that did not earn recognition or exemplary ratings with 86.1% rejecting that idea. In
Table 7. School and district administrators' perceptions of the advantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did school and district administrators perceive as the advantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success?</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Low income and minority students are positively affected by the testing programs.</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Parents are interested in their children’s GCRT/GHSGT performances.</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The local media are interested in our students' performances on the GCRT/GHSGT.</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has increased the success of students who are normally successful at school.</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contrast, only 22.8% viewed the use of test scores to differentiate among good, average, and bad schools positively. In similar contrast, 57% of the administrators thought it made their jobs more difficult, but only 22.8% credited it with placing them under more pressure than they would be normally.

School Administrators’ Perceptions vs. District Administrators’ Perceptions

To determine if any differences among administrators existed, sub-question #4 examined the responses by groups: Was there a difference in the perceptions of school based administrators and district administrators regarding the use of the school performance profiles to improve student performance? For the main research question that focused on the overall perceptions of the administrators and the sub-questions that focused on their perceptions of the use of the school performance profiles’ impact on teaching and learning, the advantages and disadvantages, and their overall satisfaction with the profiles’ use, the mean responses were calculated for each group and a t-test administered. Significance level was set at <.05. Using the criteria, a significant difference was found in only one area.

A significant difference was found between the school administrators’ perceptions and the district administrators’ perceptions of the disadvantages of using the school performance profiles as indicators of student success. As seen in Table 9, the differences were not significant for any of the other research items.

Questionnaire Results: Qualitative Data

The responses to the open-ended questions were coded numerically and entered into SPSS according to the stated main idea and examined to determine if any common patterns existed. The coded responses were also analyzed individually to ensure that data
entry responses in SPSS matched the data. By responding to the open-ended questions, participants were permitted to clarify or make suggestions that the closed-ended Likert items would not allow. Each question was linked back to items on the survey and to the research questions.

Question #1 on the questionnaire (How do you think that the state testing program, especially the GCRT/GHSGT, has changed your site?) was linked to the overall administrators’ perceptions and to the perceived disadvantages and advantages of using the school performance profiles. The most frequent change identified by the administrators was that they observed that teachers and students were “more focused” (49.1%) on instruction and the results. For some (15.1%) the changes that they perceived were negative with 9.4% reporting increased stress and fear and 5.7% reporting the loss of real instructional time as a result of the administration of the standardized tests. Administrator #94 (questionnaire, May 2002) voiced what many considered as the source of the stress: “Teachers can control the quality of the instruction, but not the results achieved.” Moreover, administrator #1 argued, “There are too many accountability systems – the state’s, Title I programs', the local benchmarks, and the school’s. A school can be a ‘Pay for Performance’ school or in ‘good standing’ status on one accountability system and in ‘needs improvement’ on another.”

Nevertheless, the perceived advantages of using the school performance profiles to improve student performances were addressed by question #2 (What have you experienced as the benefits of the state’s GCRT/GHSGT and its use at your site?). Again,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Were school and district administrators satisfied with the use of the school performance profiles to account for the school performances in Georgia?</strong></td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use of test scores to differentiate among good, average, and bad schools is appropriate.</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. There are successful schools that do not earn recognition or exemplary ratings.</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The use of the GCRT/GHSGT has made my job as an administrator more difficult.</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed administrators under more pressure than they would be normally.</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I think that another system should be implemented to evaluate educational progress in Georgia.</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9. School based administrators’ perceptions versus district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrators’ perceptions of use to improve student performances</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Based</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.35</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>0.0621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived impact on teaching</td>
<td>School Based</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12.27</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>-.140</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>-0.0588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived impact on learning</td>
<td>School Based</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>0.0291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived disadvantages</td>
<td>School Based</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27.35</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.432</td>
<td>-2.16*</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>-1.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29.14</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*p&lt; .05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived advantages</td>
<td>School Based</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9.434</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.097</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>-0.0276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.462</td>
<td>.660</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>School Based</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.74</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>-0.6399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.38</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.417</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
administrators listed increased instructional focus (34.7%) as a major benefit, followed by increased data analysis and planning (24.5%), and the creation of a standardized curriculum with some consistency from site to site (20.4%).

In an attempt to identify examples of how the use of school performance profiles impacted teaching and learning, question # 3 asked: Please describe an incident in which the GCRT/GHSGT has been helpful to a teacher and/or student. As reflected in other responses, administrators described how data was used to plan for instruction and improvement (30.6%) and how classroom instruction and students were more focused (36.1%). In addition, administrators credited the use of the school performance profiles with improved student placements in instructional programs (8.3%) and with the development of instructional materials to improve student performances (5.6%). To administrator # 33, “teachers can look at results and see the deficit areas; then the work begins.” For administrator #79, “It made everyone focus on student achievement.” In addition, administrator #74 recognized, “We are focused. We finally have a test that is aligned with the state curriculum.” (questionnaire, May 2002)

Unlike the benefits and changes identified by administrators, there was no real consensus on the disadvantages of the use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances. To address the disadvantages and the impact of the use of school performance profiles, administrators responded to question #4 (Please describe an incident in which the GCRT/GHSGT has been detrimental to a teacher and/or student?). Administrators described a range of incidents that they considered detrimental to teachers and/or students as a result of the use of the GCRT/GHSGT (Table10), but no one common experience could be identified. Despite the lack of consensus, concern was
expressed about the increased number of students placed in remedial programs (16.7%), the increased stress on both students and teachers (13.9%), and the limitations placed on both students and teachers (11.1%), and the denial of diplomas based on the results of the GHSGT (11.1%). Addressing how teaching changed, administrator #92 responded: “Teachers continue to be fearful of innovative/project based/ student centered instructions. They are afraid that they will not cover enough material before the test.” Administrator #135 reiterated this theme, “The tests have increased the narrow mindedness of focus. Only what students need to know to pass the test is the main point of focus.”

Questions # 5 and #6 asked for suggestions for revisions to the GCRT/GHSGT and replacements for the system to evaluate educational progress in Georgia, respectively. The major revisions that were suggested by the administrators were to adjust the length of the testing time (30.2%) and to insure that reports and information were received earlier (20.9%). In addition, administrators wanted the school performance profiles to expand beyond the GCRT/GHSGT to include both informal and formal assessments of student performances (13.5%) or to include portfolio assessments (18.9%). As administrator # 79 simply stated, “There needs to a combination of both formal and informal measures for evaluating a child’s performance.” Administrators acknowledged that with the GCRT in its first phase of full implementation and with the GHSGT scheduled to be replaced by End-of-the-Course Tests (EOCT) in spring 2003, additional time was needed before revisions or replacements could be fairly suggested (13.5%). A few administrators split (5.4% either way) on whether the evaluation program for Georgia should exclusively use local instruments or a national instrument. For now, most are willing to let the testing and evaluation programs in place have a chance to work.
Summary

A survey and questionnaire instrument was sent to school and district administrators in Chatham County to examine their perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances. The total survey response rate was 61.2% [79 out of 129] with 64.5% of school based administrators [60 out of 93] and 52.8% of district administrators [19 out of 36] returning the surveys.

Frequencies were calculated for all the closed-ended survey items for each group of administrators, as well as for the entire group. Based on the survey results, 44.7% of the administrators positively viewed the overall use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances. While they agreed that the emphasis placed on the test scores was helpful to student achievement, they did not perceive the use of the profiles as appropriate for differentiating among good, average, and bad schools. In addition, the administrators also did not perceive the testing programs as being a positive influence for low income and minority students.

When administrative duties were examined, the administrators perceived the use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances as making their jobs as administrators harder, but did not perceive them to be a source of increased pressure for either the administrators or the teachers. While they acknowledged that the use of the school performance profiles was helpful to their teachers, less than half included the GCRT/GHSGT scores in the teachers' evaluations.
Table 10. Detrimental incidents as a result of the GCRT/GHSGT described by administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of incident or concern</th>
<th>Percent of administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased enrollment in remedial programs</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased stress on students and teachers</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations placed on teachers and students</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of diplomas based on the GHSGT</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness of tests to students</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in recruitment of teachers to low performing schools</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education’s delivery of materials/reports, Timelines, and administration guidelines</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To determine if there were significant differences between the perceptions of school based administrators and district administrators, the means for the research questions were calculated and t-tests were run. Despite what appeared to be differences on the surface, only one area of the study proved to show significant differences. The significant difference (p ≤ .05) was in the school based and district administrators’ perceptions of the disadvantages of the use of school performance profiles as indicators of school success. For the main research question, there was no significant difference in their perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances.

The major advantages identified by the administrators in the survey were the interests that the parents and the local media showed in the students’ performances on the GCRT/GHSGT. However, in the questionnaire when the administrators were not restricted in their responses, a more focused approach to instruction that utilized data was listed as a change and a benefit that they reported as a result of the state’s testing programs. The disadvantages identified by the administrators in the open-ended items were the increased enrollment in remedial classes and the increased efforts to refer students to special education. Despite these disadvantages, the administrators were not ready to abandon the use of school performance profiles or recommend the state’s system of evaluation to other states.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine educational administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances. Using a survey instrument developed and validated at the University of Texas at El Paso and used by Schulte (2001) to examine the perceptions of the Texas administrators, the perceptions of administrators were examined and analyzed. Building on the early findings of Mitchell (1966), Alspaugh (1995), and Heim (1996), the study focused on the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances and on the accountability movement that demanded their use (Webster & Edwards, 1993; Stake, 2000). In addition to the generic use of the school performance profiles, the study examined the administrators’ perceptions of the school performance profiles’ impact on teaching and learning. Again, building on the early research of Foch and Daniel (1996), common key elements were identified.

Even though common themes were identified in this survey and in earlier research, some disparity was noted between the school and district administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances. While earlier research (Betchel, 1998; Simon, Foley, & Passantino, 1998; Luhm, Foley, and Corcoran, 1998; Acker-Hocevaar & Touchton, 2001) discussed the roles of district administrators in the development and the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances, none dealt specifically with the perception disparity. To this end, this study
sought to determine if a disparity did exist and if it was significant. From that research point, future studies could be developed.

Discussion of Research Findings

The main research question was as follows: What were the school and district administrators’ perceptions of the use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances? While administrators generally agreed (74.7%) that the emphasis placed on student test scores was useful, they were not as optimistic about the overall use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances. Only 44.7% of the administrators supported their overall use, a view that supported the continuing debate of the use of school performance profiles as both a tool to improve student performances and as part of a school rating system (Alspaugh, 1995; Sirotnaik & Kimball, 1999; Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001). As did administrators in Stronge and Tucker’s (2000) and Acker-Hocevar and Touchton’s (2001) research studies, many administrators (59.5%) perceived that the use of the school performance profiles had a negative effect on low income and minority students.

Research sub-questions #1 and #2 examined their perceptions of the use of the school performance profiles in greater depth by focusing on the perceived impact and the advantages and disadvantages of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances. Sub-question #1: How did principals and district administrators perceive the impact school performance profiles had on teaching and learning? In the survey, the administrators perceived the impact of the school performance profiles on student performances positively, with 74.7% supporting the emphasis on test scores, 63.3% recognizing their usefulness to teachers, and 64.6% admitting their usefulness in
the student referral process. Again these findings support the earlier views found in Linn's (2001), Lewis' (2001), and Doherty's (2002) research, and directed attention to sub-question #2.

Sub-question #2: What did the principal and district administrators perceive as the advantages and the disadvantages of using school performance profiles as indicators of student success? As in the research of Linn (2000), Stronge & Tucker (2000), and Doherty (2002), administrators thought that teachers' emphasis on tested information (68.4%) and that the increased efforts to refer students to special education (64.6%) were definite disadvantages of using school performance profiles. Despite the disadvantages, the administrators surveyed acknowledged the importance of the media (92.4%) and of parental interest (84.8%) as strong advantages. As Bernhardt proposed in 1994 and as administrators recognized in 2002, it was important to report to both the media and to parents student achievement data in the form of school performance profiles.

To further examine the profiles' role as an accountability tool for both the media and the parents, the administrators' satisfaction was analyzed in sub-question #3. Sub-question #3: Were principals and district administrators satisfied with the use of school performance profiles to account for the school performances in Georgia? Even though principals and administrators perceived the use of the school performance profiles to improve student performances positively (74.7%), they were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their use as an accountability tool. Only 29.7% of the administrators surveyed perceived the use of the school performance profiles as a positive accountability measure. Instead, their concerns about their use to identify exemplary schools (86.1%) and their use to differentiate among schools (74.7%) mirrored the issues presented in Lashway's
(2000), Stronge and Tucker’s (2000), and Acker-Hocevar and Touchton’s (2001) research. The ability and the accuracy of the use of the school performance profiles to discriminate among the schools with varying populations were the focus of their concerns.

Because at first there appeared to be differing perceptions between school and district administrators regarding the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances, sub-question #4 examined the significance of the differences. Sub-question #4: Was there a difference in the perceptions of school principals and district administrators regarding the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances? When the overall perceptions and the perceptions of the impact on learning and teaching, the advantages and disadvantages, and their satisfaction were examined, only one area was identified as having a significant difference. The difference of perceptions of the school and district administrators of the disadvantages of the use of the school performance profiles as indicators of student success was significant at <.05.

While the research outlined the debate over the district administrators’ roles in the use of school performance profiles (Betchel, 1998; Simon, Foley & Passantino, 1998; Luhm, Foley & Corcoran, 1998; and Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001), no research was identified for the perception disparity. The implications for future research studies were clear; for if such a disparity in perceptions did exist between school and district administrators concerning the disadvantages of the use of school performance profiles as indicators of student success, then what impact did that have on school programs? For if all administrators did not share similar perceptions about the school performance profiles’ use as indicators of student success, then how common were their visions, goals, and
objectives that formed the school performance profiles. It was within this area that additional questions for future research were raised.

The responses to the questionnaire identified similar issues found in the recent research of Linn (2000), Glatthorn & Fontana (2000), Stronge & Tucker (2000), Acker-Hocevar & Touchton (2001), and Doherty (2002), as well as explained their perceptions about the use of school performance profiles. To Question #1 (How do you think that the state testing program, especially the GCRT/GHSGT, has changed your site?), the most observed change was that students and teachers were now more focused on instruction and the results (49.1%). This same observation was made to Question #2: What have you experienced as the benefits of the state’s GCRT/GHSGT and its use at your site? The most common benefit listed was focused instructions. In addition, administrators identified other benefits found in the above-mentioned research: increased data analysis and a standardized curriculum for all schools.

To further identify specific incidents that reflected the use of the school performance profiles, Question #3 asked: Please describe an incident in which the GCRT/GHSGT has been helpful to a teacher and/or student. Again, administrators talked about more focused instruction, the use of data, better student placements, and the development of useful instructional materials to assist students. In both this research and in the other studies improved data-driven decision making seemed to be the underlying theme. More directly administrators clearly addressed the use of data for instructional planning.

Even though the findings of this study matched the positive findings of Doherty (2001), Glatthorn & Fontana (2000), Linn (2000), and Stronge & Tucker (2000), on the
use of school performance profiles to improve student performances, the same was not
ture for the disadvantages of the school performance profiles’ use. While those studies
identified increased rote learning, less creative teaching, and more test preparation
activities as negative side effects, there was no consensus to Question #4: Please describe
an incident in which the GCRT/GHSGT has been detrimental to a teacher and/or student.
While increased enrollment in remedial programs was an identified concern, the real issue
was whether students who tested poorly but were achieving were being improperly placed.
It was here that the disparity in the perceptions between the school and district
administrators was significant. While school administrators addressed a list of concerns
ranging from increased enrollment in remedial programs to the fairness of the tests, district
administrators recognized few disadvantages. Instead, ideas for stress reduction and equity
within the school performance profiles were areas identified by district administrators in
the research (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001).

However, when Questions #5 and #6 asked for suggestions or revisions to the
GCRT/GHSGT and replacements for the system to evaluate educational progress in
Georgia, administrators discussed the national concerns regarding the use of multiple
assessments and value-added criteria for the development of school performance profiles
(Lashway, 2000; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001). In
addition, suggestions made by administrators were very specific to Georgia. Those
suggestions dealt with timelines, reporting deadlines, and testing times.

Conclusions

In this research study, the administrators’ responses clearly showed that they
accept the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances, even
though they had doubts about the fairness of the profiles as accountability tools. Instead, the real value of the school performance profiles identified by administrators was their presentation of school data for a given period of time. With the data now displayed and center stage, faculties led by administrators analyzed what the test scores meant to them and their students. From the analysis came a more focused and task oriented delivery of the curriculum. While the debate continued about the role for innovative and/or creative practices in such a data driven culture, attention to the scores presented in the profiles became a paramount task in the administrators' routines. Improved student performances became the stated objective of the school performance profiles, even as questions were raised about student placements as a result of the tests. District and school administrators differed significantly in their view about the disadvantages of the school performance profiles, such as the increased enrollment in remedial classes. These differences most likely were the result of the district administrators' distance from the daily instructional routines. In essence, school administrators saw and heard all, while district administrators only saw and heard what was brought to their attention.

However, the doubts expressed were linked more to accountability issues than instructional issues. For administrators did not view the performance profiles as accurate barometers of school success; instead, they acknowledged that the school performance profiles were poor discriminators for school rating formulas. Nevertheless, they accepted their role in the process and offered no suggestions for alternate accountability programs. While they did not like their use as accountability instruments, administrators recognized their importance in the school improvement process. Without the data presented in an organized and systematic fashion, administrators lacked the foundation for their decisions.
To this end, administrators positively perceived and were satisfied with the use of school performance profiles to improve student performances.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the review of the literature and this study, administrators clearly pointed to the importance of standards and alignment when school performance profiles were used to improve student performances. The same challenge must now be faced with the school performance profiles themselves. With so much emphasis on improved student performances, it would serve the educational community well if all school performance profiles could be aligned. In addition to being viewed with consistency, an aligned process for school performance profiles would address the discrepancies identified in the research. For if 74.7% of administrators recognized that the emphasis placed on student test scores as a feature of school performance profiles improved student achievement, then one could assume that more than 29.7% of the administrators would be satisfied with the use of the school performance profiles to account for school success. This raises questions that this research did not attempt to answer about the development of the school performance profiles and what could account for these differences. In addition to these differences, future research could impact school and district administrators' working relationships and coherency of purpose, if studies were done to further explore the differing perceptions between the two. The gap in the research appears to exist, and if programs need to be developed or supported for schools working hard but still coming up short on improving student achievement, then any research that could identify the disparities would be beneficial. For once such disparities were identified, they could be addressed to insure
that all administrators are working with the same understanding of the problems and the solutions.

Closing Thoughts

Since the political and educational climate supported the creation of school performance profiles, administrators should begin to assume leadership roles not only in their use and further refinement, but also as instruments for research and validation studies. The data existed prior to the use of school performance profiles, but was not in the forefront in instructional plans as it should have been. However, with the school performance profiles' use and the increase in test scores at some schools, links were made between the two without any validation studies to support such a link. Instead, administrators used the data to assess program effectiveness and document school improvement plans, while politicians refined the school performance profiles. A step back was needed to analyze the existing data as it related to the use of school performance profiles as accountability measures; administrators needed to move beyond the program effectiveness studies to validation studies on the performance profiles themselves.

Instead of merely stating reservations or concerns about the use of school performance profiles as accountability measures, administrators needed to analyze the data in greater depth to see if any such link could be validated. Without such studies and analysis, administrators would remain on the defensive when school performance profiles were used to rate and rank schools. Initially, this might detract from their focused school improvement plans, but in the end the data documents produced would be more meaningful to both schools and their community.
References


APPENDICES
Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-681-5465
Fax: 912-681-0719
Ovrsight@gasou.edu

To: Eleanor Jean Janufka
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

Cc: Dr. T.C. Chan, Faculty Advisor
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

From: Mr. Neil Garretson, Coordinator
Research Oversight Committees (IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: March 20, 2002

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After an expedited review of your proposed research project titled "The Use of School Performance Profiles to Improve Student Performances," it appears that the research subjects are at minimal risk and appropriate safeguards are in place. I am, therefore, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board able to certify that adequate provisions have been planned to protect the rights of the human research subjects. This proposed research is approved through an expedited review procedure as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR §46.110(7)), which states:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

However, this approval is conditional upon the following revisions and/or additions being completed prior to the collection of any data:

1. You will need to revise your informed consent document to include a brief statement that explains the purpose of the code numbers. For instance; “…the code numbers will be used for tracking non-respondents and all identifying links will be destroyed at the conclusion of data collection.”

2. You will need to revise the last paragraph of your informed consent document to contain the complete contact information as required by the IRB:
   If you have any questions about this research project, please call me (the researcher) at (phone number). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912)681-5465.

3. When you have received the written authorization from Dr. Geri Smith, Deputy Superintendent of School Management, please submit a copy of this letter for inclusion in your file.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about these conditions of approval, please do not hesitate to contact the IRB Coordinator. Please send a copy of all revised and/or additional materials to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs (PO Box 8005).

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the exempted research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, whether or not it is believed to be related to the study, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator prior to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, please notify the IRB Coordinator so that your file may be closed.
To: Eleanor Jean Janufka  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

Cc: Dr. T.C. Chan, Faculty Advisor  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

From: Mr. Neil Garretson, Coordinator  
Research Oversight Committees (IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: April 24, 2002

Subject: Status of Conditional IRB Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committee has received your revised and/or additional application materials for the approved research titled, "The Use of School Performance Profiles to Improve Student Performances." You have satisfactorily met the conditions of your Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, as detailed in the March 20, 2002 approval letter.

Please remember that this approval is in effect for one year (3/20/02 - 3/20/03) and if at the end of that time there have been no substantive changes to the approved methodology, you may request a one year extension of the approval period.

Good luck with your research efforts, and if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the status of your approval, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Dear Colonel O'Sullivan,

I am a teacher in the system and a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. As part of the degree requirements, I am writing a dissertation that attempts to measure the principals' and the district level administrators' perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance. While a similar study has been conducted in Texas, no such study has been done in Georgia. Since school performance profiles are used as a means to hold school administrators accountable for their performance, it is important to identify how those working in and with the school staffs perceive these instruments. With the first statewide school performance accountability reports to be issued in spring 2002, it could be useful in planning staff development to measure the school and district level administrators' level of understanding and instructional perceptions of the school performance profiles.

To obtain this information, I am requesting permission to distribute the attached survey and questionnaire to district level administrators in the Divisions of Instruction, Accountability and School Management, as well as to all building principals and program administrators. As part of the collection process, all responses will be coded for tracking non-respondents, but the identifying links will be destroyed at the conclusion of the collection of the data.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like a copy of the results, please email me at janufka@aol.com or jean.janufka@savannah.chatham.k12.ga.us. Thank you for your time and your assistance with this research project.

Sincerely,

Jean Janufka

Attachments
April 12, 2002

Mrs. Jean Janufka
112 Grays Creek Court
Savannah, GA 31410

Dear Mrs. Janufka:

This will confirm that your request to distribute a survey and questionnaire, intended to measure the perceptions of principals and district level administrators on the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance, has been approved, with the stipulation that I receive a copy of your dissertation.

It is my understanding that this survey and questionnaire will be distributed to district level administrators in the Division of Instruction, School Management/Leadership and the Office of Accountability, as well as to all principals and program administrators. Furthermore, participation is strictly voluntary, and responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Good luck with your research. I look forward to receiving the final results.

Sincerely,

John F. O’Sullivan, Jr.
Superintendent

JFO/cw
Grays Creek Court  
Savannah, GA 31410  
April 18, 2002

Dear Principals and Administrators,

I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University and as part of the degree requirements, I am writing a dissertation that attempts to measure the principals’ and the district level administrators’ perceptions of the use of school performance profiles to improve student performance. While a similar study has been conducted in Texas, no such study has been done in Georgia. Since school performance profiles are used as a means to hold school administrators accountable for their performance, it is important to identify how those working in and with the school staffs perceive these instruments. With the first statewide school performance accountability reports to be issued in spring 2002, it could be useful in planning to measure the school and district level administrators’ level of understanding and instructional perceptions of the school performance profiles.

To obtain this information, I am requesting your assistance with the permission of the district. Please take a moment to complete the survey and open-ended questions enclosed and return them in the self-addressed stamped envelope. All responses are voluntary and will be confidential. The results will not allow for you, your school and/or your departments to be identified. As part of the collection process, all responses will be coded for tracking non-respondents, but the identifying links will be destroyed at the conclusion of the collection of the data.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like a copy of the results, please call me at 898-3950 or 897-7035. You may also reach me through Lotus Notes as Jean Janufka (jean.janufka@savannah.chatham.k12.ga.us) or through e-mail, janufka@aol.com. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to Mr. Neil Garretson, IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs, Georgia Southern University, at 912-681-5465.

Thank you for your time, your assistance with this research project, and your prompt responses.

Sincerely,

Jean Janufka
Survey of Administrators’ Perceptions of School Performance Profiles

This is a study of principals’ and instructional leaders’ perceptions toward the School Performance Profiles as indicated by the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests and the Georgia High School Graduation Tests in public schools. Please provide the responses that best characterize your perceptions. Your responses will be kept confidential and the results will be reported only in the form of grouped data averages. Please complete the survey within the next two weeks and return in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you for your participation in this research.

Part I: Perceptions
Please circle the response that best describes your perceptions about each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SA – Strongly Agree</th>
<th>A – Agree</th>
<th>D – Disagree</th>
<th>SD – Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The emphasis placed on student test scores is helpful in improving student achievement.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers find the emphasis on student test scores to be helpful in their teaching efforts.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers report that standardized tests restrict their use of creative and innovative teaching strategies.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use of test scores to differentiate among good, average, and bad schools is appropriate.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Skills not measured by the standardized tests are being neglected.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To do well on the GCRT/GHSGT, teachers are having to teach students to memorize information.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Low income and minority students are positively affected by the testing programs.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Only information on the state’s standardized tests are being stressed by teachers.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to a fragmented curriculum.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Parents are interested in their children’s GCRT/GHSGT performances.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teachers at my site are evaluated by their students’ performance on the GCRT/GHSGT.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The local media are interested in our students’ performance on the GCRT/GHSGT.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. There are successful schools that do not earn recognition or exemplary ratings.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Survey

14. Children with talents not measured by the GCRT/GHSGT receive appropriate educational opportunities. SA A D SD

15. Low-income and minority students are placed in lower level, remedial settings as a result of their GCRT/GHSGT performances. SA A D SD

16. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has led to an increased effort to refer students to special education. SA A D SD

17. At the secondary level, the GHSGT has led to more students dropping out of school. SA A D SD

18. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has increased the success of students who are normally successful at school. SA A D SD

19. The use of the GCRT/GHSGT has made my job as an administrator more difficult. SA A D SD

20. Field trips and such experiences are being minimized as a result of the GCRT/GHSGT. SA A D SD

21. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed teachers under more pressure than they would be normally. SA A D SD

22. Use of the GCRT/GHSGT has placed administrators under more pressure than they would be normally. SA A D SD

23. I think that another system should be implemented to evaluate educational progress in Georgia. SA A D SD

24. Other states should be encouraged to adopt an educational accountability system similar to Georgia’s. SA A D SD

PART II. Demographics
Please circle the appropriate response.

25. Gender: Male Female

26. Age: 20 - 30 years 31 - 40 years 41 - 50 years 51+ years

27. Years as educator: 1 - 5 6 - 15 16 - 25 25+

28. Years as an administrator: 1 - 3 4 - 6 7 - 10 11+

29. Ethnicity: African-American Asian Caucasian Hispanic Native American other

30. Current school rating: Exemplary Recognized Average Low-Performing
As part of the survey, the following questionnaire is to collect your thoughts and views regarding the impact of the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests and the Georgia High School Graduation Tests. Again, similar questionnaires have been used as part of research projects being conducted in other states. If you would take the time to respond to the following open-ended questions, it will support your beliefs that may be missed in the survey scales. Thank you for your time and your responses.

1. **How do you think that the state testing program, especially the GCRT/GHSGT, has changed your site?**

2. **What have you experienced as the benefits of the state’s GCRT/GHSGT and its use at your site?**

3. **Please describe an incident in which the GCRT/GHSGT has been helpful to a teacher and/or student.**

4. **Please describe an incident in which the GCRT/GHSGT has been detrimental to a teacher and/or student.**

5. **If the GCRT/GHSGT continues to be used, what suggestions would you have for its revision?**

6. **If the GCRT/GHSGT were to be replaced, what would you suggest the new system to evaluate educational progress in Georgia look like?**