

ACCOUNTABILITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY: A STUDY OF THE
NEW JERSEY QUALITY SINGLE ACCOUNTABILITY CONTINUUM (NJQSAC)
IN THE JERSEY CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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ABSTRACT

Complying with legal rulings and performance mandates has presented challenges in many of New Jersey's school districts, particularly poor and urban districts. This study examined the policy background as well as grounded experiences of key actors involved in the administration of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), a system of accountability for performance in the Jersey City school district, a state controlled school district. QSAC monitors and evaluates the performance of school districts in five key areas: Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management, Operations, and Governance. Its objective is to establish an exit strategy for state-operated school districts, building capacity and strategies that will lead to the return of the schools to local control. Using a case study methodology involving legal and policy analysis along with in-depth interviews of school officials, this study addressed the following questions: 1. What were the legal and policy factors that led to the state takeover of the Jersey City School District and the implementation of the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum? 2. How do administrators in the Jersey City School District view QSAC and its impact on district and school improvement? 3. What structures or systems must exist to build district capacity, achieve district and school effectiveness and to establish a thorough and efficient system of education (as required by the New Jersey constitution)? The findings of the study suggest that agreement exists among many central district administrators, that the QSAC process provides a useful self-examination encouraging districts to achieve excellence. However, there is a disconnect between district and school level administrators. The primary finding further suggest that QSAC as a method of accountability for performance is largely connected to Instruction and Program and that a testing system under state control, absent district input, creates a disadvantage for school districts and schools. The study recommend John Kingdon's (1984, 1995) theory on Public Policy and Policy Streams, establishing education Policy Communities, developing Policy Networks in urban and poor school districts similar to the Jersey City School District, is worth an examination to provide some guidance and solutions to achieving federal and state accountability for performance initiatives, district and school effectiveness.

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I dedicate my success to the memory of my beloved parents, Robert and Gertrude Friday. Although you are no longer physically with us, you have left a loving legacy that radiates and will always remain with us all. I would like to sincerely thank my wife, Keshia, my children Antoine, Isaiah and Aneesah for their patience, my wonderful siblings, Kevin, Barry and Robin for always having faith in me. I'd like to give a special thanks to my dear mother-in-law, Hazel Goodman, for having faith in me and for being such a wonderful person. My dedication would be incomplete if failed to acknowledge one of the most important individuals in my life, my dear aunt Wilhemina "Tunie" Brown. You have been such an inspiration throughout my entire life and a mother to me, since the day my dear mother departed this life. Your love and inspiration is unmatched and one I wish the world could experience.

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INTRODUCTION

“The Jersey City School District has a long history of being state controlled since 1989. With any outside accountability policy, assessment or monitoring system comes objectivity, lack of understanding of the process, and sometimes resistance (Participant #11).”

The quote opening the introduction to this research was drawn from an interview with one of the respondents in this study. It reflects the respondent’s perceptions and opinions of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), as a system of state mandates for accountability for performance and its effects on the Jersey City School District. Early public administration literature describes a politics - administration dichotomy, in which policymakers set goals and establish policies, government administrators and public agencies are then tasked to implement. The policy process in education attempts to improve our nation’s and states’ education systems and has created a dichotomy in which procedural controls are imposed both at the federal and state levels in a top-down fashion, giving very little attention to the implementers of the policies and the effect that they have on educational environments. As Long and Franklin (2004) note, “These kinds of actions do not foster visionary governance; instead, they invite micro-level bureaucratic control” (p. 309). The accountability for performance movement has strongly touted the virtues of organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Behn (2002) and Holzer (2011) have emphasized its virtues.

Much has been written on New York City Police Department’s accountability process COMPSTAT¹ as an example of a successful accountability for performance system. The successful implementation and achievement of educational reforms and the

¹ COMPSTAT was developed to be the New York City Police Department’s accountability process and has been replicated in many police departments nationwide. It has also served as a management philosophy or organizational management tool for police departments.

achievement of accountability for performance initiatives in New Jersey's school districts—particularly poor and urban school districts—have been a difficult task to accomplish. The structures and processes, relationships between school districts and stakeholders, and the systems and mechanisms needed to achieve such initiatives in school districts and schools all require further analysis. The work of researcher Jean Anyon (1980, 1981, 1997, and 2005) has contributed a great deal to the field of education, placing value on understanding schools from an urban systems perspective. Her work provides insight on various topics such as the hidden agendas and disparities present in curricular content and textbooks, including the attempt to reproduce social class differences. She brilliantly illustrates how public and economic policies effect education in poor and urban school districts, and provides empirical evidence of schools' potential for promoting social change. These themes add great value and contribute to the literature on urban and poor school districts.

This dissertation examines the policy background as well as grounded experiences of key actors involved in the administration of QSAC in the Jersey City, a state controlled school districts. QSAC monitors and evaluates the performance of school districts in five key areas: Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management, Operations, and Governance. The objective of QSAC is to establish an exit strategy for state-operated school districts, building capacity and strategies that will lead to the return of the schools to local control. Using a case study methodology involving legal and policy analysis, along with in-depth interviews of school officials, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What were the legal and policy factors that led to the state takeover of Jersey City schools and the implementation of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC)?
2. How do administrators in the Jersey City School District view QSAC and its effects on school improvement?
3. What structures or systems must exist to build district capacity, achieve district and school effectiveness and to establish a thorough and efficient system of education (as required by the New Jersey constitution)?

Chapter One – “Accountability for Performance and Public Education”, begins by tracing the roots of the accountability for performance movement to the work of the Bureau of Municipal Research and the early progressives’ attempts to implement principles of scientific management, separating political influence and corruption from the administration of government and public institutions. The Bureau served as a catalyst for establishing effectiveness and efficiency in public education, and determined who should control the Manhattan School District. Unlike the progressives’ idea to separate politics from the administration of public institutions such as public school districts, the chapter examines the more recent push for mayoral control of school districts, especially in urban areas. Further, the chapter illustrates the role of and impact on the accountability for performance movement on school districts and schools. The chapter concludes with an examination of the policy implementation process, its complexity, and the contribution of various researchers to our understanding of policy making and implementation process.

Chapter Two – “The Paradox of Federal Accountability for Performance in Public Education”, describes how federal policies for accountability in public education have

created a paradox, examining the influential federal policy of the No Child Left Behind Act and its complexity. The chapter provides a case study analysis of the Philadelphia School District and its ability to survive within a federal accountability framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion on Race to the Top, President Barack Obama's plan to reform our national education system.

Chapter Three – “Methodology”, outlines the research methodology of the study, which is mainly a case study methodology with a focus on the Jersey City School District. The methodology includes an examination of the legal background and policy history of education in New Jersey, with particular focus on urban school districts. In addition, the methodology of this study involves a series of in-depth interviews with administrators in the Jersey City School District and an analysis of data on individual schools.

Chapter Four – “The Quest for Educational Equality in New Jersey”, begins by tracing the roots of education reform, particularly for the underrepresented, poor and urban students, to the landmark Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), in which segregated schooling between blacks and whites was ruled unconstitutional overturning the decision in the *Plessey v. Ferguson* case (1896). This chapter also analyzes the decision of *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (1973), which determined that the Texas school funding system did not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. The chapter continues with an analysis of three New Jersey rulings that affected school districts throughout the state, particularly poor and urban school districts: *Robinson v. Cahill* (1972), which was the court's attempt to equalize school spending between wealthy and poor school districts; *Abbott v. Burke* (1981), which challenged the state system of school financing that had created disparities between poor

and wealthy school districts; and the New Jersey State Takeover Law (1987), which allowed the state to take full control and operate school districts and schools. The chapter concludes with an examination of the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJ QSAC), which is the focus of this study. QSAC monitors school districts in five key components: Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management, Operations and Governance.

Chapter Five - “The Research Setting”, provides demographic information (population, income, education attained school dropout rates, student enrollment and district factor grouping) about the city of Jersey City and its school district. The Chapter illustrates the research findings and results. Chapter Six – “Case Study and Interview Findings”, illustrates the research findings and results of the in-depth interviews of Jersey City school administrators. This chapter also includes a detailed analysis of data on the performance of various Jersey City schools.

Chapter Seven – “Discussion and Implications”, provides a discussion and analysis of the research. The study concludes with making a recommendation that an examination of John Kingdon’s (2003) theory on public policy and policy streams should be considered, to better understand and to improve policy making and its process in education. Within the framework of Kingdon’s theory, the study confirms the importance of policy communities and networks in the effort to create a system of greater accountability, and to improve effectiveness and efficiency in school districts and schools.

A key challenge for researchs in the study of education and public administration is to understand the circumstances and environments in which accountability for performance initiatives are and are not effective. To make progress in developing a better

empirical theory and to better understand the nature of stakeholders' perceptions of accountability for performance mandates and policies, we must understand how they evolved and how they are perceived by those individuals responsible for their implementation and outcomes. Further, we need to know the impact and effects of such policies and the systems necessary to achieve their required results in school districts and schools.

CHAPTER ONE

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Introduction

Accountability in the governing of public institutions, including public schools, was the foundation upon which the Bureau of Municipal Research was built. A single theme has been consistent in the public administration literature: accountability for the performance of government and public institutions. The accountability for performance movement has made a great impact on public institutions and organizations. Such systems are designed and implemented to ensure that organizational goals are being achieved and to hold organizational leaders responsible for organizational effectiveness. Accountability for performance initiatives at the federal level has encouraged the implementation of accountability systems at the state and local levels of government, including federal organizations and institutions.

Established in 1921, the Government Accountability Office aimed to ensure that Congress fulfilled its constitutional responsibilities to improve government performance, responsibility and accountability to the American people. The Government Performance

and Reform Act (GPRA) enacted in 1993 and implemented in 1997, required accountability for results from various government agencies. The 2002 Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) instituted administrative processes and procedures in support of agency accountability. Within an ever-changing educational environment, the accountability for performance movement has found its way into the hallways of school districts and schools. The call for greater accountability and performance in the nation's educational systems was first highlighted in the famous 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*.² The report followed the likes of such Presidential Committees as President Truman's Commission on Higher Education for Democracy³ and Eisenhower's Committee on Education and Beyond High School.⁴ With legislative movements such as President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and President Obama's Race to the Top⁵ (2009), the trend to hold administrators and educators responsible and accountable, and improve performance in our national and states' systems of education has become more imperative.

The goals of these movements are to hold administrators and educators of public education institutions accountable for student performance, implement school and district effectiveness, and improve the national and states' educational systems overall. A federal

²See datacenter.spps.org/uploads/SOTW_A_Nation_at_Risk_1983.pdf, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education*.

³ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2004).
Harry S. Truman: Statement by the President Making Public a Report of the Commission on Higher Education.

⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Letter Appointing Members of the President's Committee on Education Beyond the High School," April 19, 1956. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10784>.

⁵ Race to the Top is a \$4.35 billion initiative by the United States Department of Education, created to encourage innovation and reforms in state and local school districts. The initiative is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and was announced by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan under President Obama's administration. Race to the Top Program Executive Summary. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved January 26, 2010.

focus on the nation's education system forced states to examine the school districts' and schools' effectiveness in creating, introducing, and implementing performance accountability measures and improve these systems' management and effectiveness. The foundation of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) is built on the idea of creating more effective school districts that hold administrators accountable for monitoring and evaluating school districts in five key areas: Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management, Operations, and Governance⁶. The primary objective is to establish an exit strategy for state operated school districts, building capacity and strategies which will begin the process of returning control of these key functions to school districts.

The Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) was considered by its designers to be an improvement over past systems of monitoring and compliance and an improvement over the state takeover law and its process. However, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie issued Executive Order No. 58 on April 4, 2011. The executive order established a new education task force charged with the revamping of existing accountability systems for district and school performance. This chapter examines the accountability for performance movement, its impact on government institutions and organizations, and its influence on public education.

The Bureau of Municipal Research

The attempt to improve public education and to create a more effective and efficient public system of education, employing principles of scientific management, was an idea

⁶ *New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum; 2006 Pilot Program Evaluation (QSAC), Institute on Education and Policy*: <http://ielp.rutgers.edu>.

that originated from the early Progressives and the Bureau of Municipal Research.⁷ Although the Bureau originally “served as a catalyst for the creation and expansion of a professional public service” (McDonald, 2010, p. 815), in addition to giving legitimacy to the field of public administration as a profession, the Bureau of Municipal Research played a significant role in the debate on public education in New York City.

As the nineteenth century came to an end, reformers began to notice the problems that existed in urban communities and the corrupt political practices that surrounded them. The reformers’ goals were aimed at eradicating corruption and ineffectiveness in city and government institutions. Although the call for more effective government dates back to the early days of the 1880s reform movement, it was not until the creation of the Bureau of Municipal Research in 1907 that the implementation and application of the principals of scientific management began. The use of scientific management principles was an attempt to “evaluate a city’s work technique and improve the agency’s efficiency” (McDonald, 2012, p. 817). The Bureau’s first attempt at applying scientific management techniques was the application of Frederick Taylor’s notion that a scientific management that focused on city government “would increase the awareness of citizens to the activities of their elected officials and public administrators” (McDonald, 2010, p. 818).

Further, it became the Bureau’s opinion that an informed citizenry would encourage administrators to act ethically and efficiently (Beard, 1919). The focus of the Bureau in its

⁷ Henry Bruere, “The Bureau of Municipal Research.” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association*, Vol. 5, Fifth Annual Meeting (1908), pp. 111-121. Reform-minded Progressive social workers began to notice the mismanagement in American municipalities and desired a better form of government. With the creation of the Bureau of Municipal Research, headed by John Ernst Bruère, the Bureau first investigated the operation of street cleaning and the handling of explosives within city limits. Finding success in these areas led to the first full study of a Borough’s operations in Manhattan and later in other jurisdictions throughout the United States.

early years was the conducting of surveys to determine the condition of the city. Employing this approach, the Bureau observed work processes and decided how they might be improved. During the survey process, the Bureau observed and documented the amount of money spent to repair city streets, which resulted in finding that the streets remained in despair despite the amount of money spent. With its newfound fame, in addition to public outcry for a better working government, “government officials and citizen groups throughout the United States were encouraged to form bureaus in their own cities, establishing the survey as the foundation of bureau methodology” (McDonald, 2010, p. 919). The Bureau required individuals with experience to run the newly created organizations.

With the idea of keeping politics separate from business, the Bureau began to realize the need to “train men for the study and administration of public business” (Upson, 1938, p. 173). As a result, a training school was established in 1911 that emphasized the teaching of scientific principles. Paramount to the school’s curriculum was the education of students in areas of budgetary work. The school later expanded its curriculum to include municipal politics, law, and accounting and included lectures and symposiums conducted by notable figures such as Frederick Taylor and Mary Parker Follett.

In addition, the school produced several notable scholars such as C. E. Right, director of the Bureau of Government, and A. E. Buck, the budgetary specialist of the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce. The understanding of municipal politics, law, and accounting and the educational approach taken by the Bureau were “essential processes and functions of government and pivotal to understanding in making administrative improvement” (McDonald, 2010, p. 820). Although these areas were deemed important for

the Bureau to create an understanding towards making administrative improvements, these very areas are now deemed as important to the functioning of the nation's education systems, which are imbedded in the five components of QSAC.

In 1911, The Bureau of Municipal Research became “engulfed in a controversy of politics versus expertise during the debates on the role of New York City’s Board of Education” (McDonald, 2010, p. 820). The debate began when the New York City Board of Estimates and Apportionment had established a committee of three to resolve the issue “over who should control the Manhattan public school system” (McDonald, 2010, p. 820). Prior to 1911, the state legislature controlled the functions of the Manhattan public school system. The governance of the Manhattan public schools was revamped in 1911, placing control and authority in the hands of Boards of Education. Board members were elected in predominately at-large, nonpartisan elections, creating a system that “favored a school-governance model that tended to limit popular participation in decision making” (Schachter, 1997, p. 55). This process was viewed as placing “limitations on popular participation in the decision making process” (McDonald, 2010, p. 821) and was favored by early twentieth century educational administrators. “City politics, on the other hand were seen as corrupted by the state legislature and thus separated from the governance of schools” (Schachter, 1997; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Overseeing the newly established committee, Professor Paul Hanus and a team of researchers focused on the idea of schools being operated by individuals that held a vested interest in the students, favoring the notion that schools should be under the control of individual cities. The popular opinion was that if “control over the school system remain with a non-representative Board of Education and the various school superintendents,

citizen-ownership would be lost and inefficiency would run rampant” (McDonald, 2010, p. 821). Central to the Bureau was the idea of the “efficient citizen concept—the idea that an informed citizenship encourages administrators to act ethically and efficiently” (McDonald, 2010, p. 821). Further, the Bureau believed that the application of scientific management principles would create a greater sense of accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency. The Bureau’s methods and ideas have not only left an everlasting affect on how we presently manage, operate, and measure success in organizations and institutions, but they have also impacted the way that we measure district and school effectiveness and student improvement.

Mayoral Control and Public Education

In 2009, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan encouraged school boards unable to improve student achievement to consider mayoral control (Partners in Reform, 2009). Mayors have been encouraged to take control of failing education systems within their districts and to collaborate in the effort to improve poor performing districts and their schools (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1996, as cited in Cuban & Shipps, 2000; Usban, 2006). As Cuban and Shipps (2000) write, “School policy becomes labor policy and schools reflect the resources of the community, thus urban school systems are seen as engines of economic development when corporate and local political leaders cooperate in their governance and redesign” (p. 96). Similarly, Raffel (2007) notes, “Education accounts for one quarter of the United States and local government spending, employs one third of governmental employees and consistently ranks as a high priority of citizens” (p. 135).

To a certain extent, mayoral control of school districts has become more of a practice over the past twenty years. The idea of mayoral governance or involvement in public education was initially not widely accepted. In a 2006 Gallup poll, only 29 percent of participants were in favor of mayoral leadership in education. In 2007, that number increased to 39 percent, with an increase of 42 percent of parents in favor of mayoral leadership in schools (Wong & Shen, 2013). Wong and Shen (2013) attribute this increase to media coverage and the actions of mayors in large cities such as New York and Chicago who are promoting education reform.

A major feature of mayoral governance of public education is that it holds mayors accountable for school performance in the areas of academics, finance, operations, management, and the effectiveness of school systems. Mayoral governance of public education, as an institutional redesign, presents an organizational deviation from past education reform efforts, influencing the governing structure, and placing direct responsibility in the hands of the mayor and his officials (Chub & Moe, 1990; Henig & Rich, 2004). Further, it requires a certain degree of decentralization “which is often seen as an undermining of community engagement in local schools” (Wong & Shen, 2013, p. 5).

Traditionally, school boards have dominated the governance and operation of school districts, a process that separates schools from municipal politics. The isolation is evident in the two different elections, separating the school board elections from the municipal elections. Although school boards can influence factors within their districts (Hoffman, 1995) and can be elected or appointed without any experience or expertise, a mayor’s ability to appoint individuals with policy expertise eliminates the time spent on

assisting board members in understanding and distinguishing policy from administrative matters. The governance of many large urban school districts has been viewed as structural barriers, which impedes academic and management improvement (Wong & Shen, 2013).

According to Wong and Shen (2013),

“Many urban districts are exceedingly ungovernable, with fragmented centers of power that tend to look after the interest of their own specific constituencies. Consequently, the independently elected school board has limited leverage to advance collective priorities, and the school superintendent lacks the institutional capacity to manage entrenched interests that are preserved by regulations and union contracts. Mayoral control aims to address these governing challenges in urban districts”. (p. 6)

On the one hand, most mayors elect to work within the traditional structural framework of a school board to support and move forward with their education agenda. On the other hand, some urban mayors choose to diversify by contracting with outside providers, restructuring schools, or establishing charter schools. Mayoral control of public education brings systemic reform, implementing large structural changes system wide.

The concept of systemic reform was a creation of the National Science Foundation, which developed a Statewide Systemic Initiative program, calling for projects to “broaden the impact, accelerate the pace, and increase the effectiveness of improvements in science, mathematics, and engineering education in both K-12 and post-secondary levels” (NSF, 1990, p. 1). This called for the alignment of the parts of a system to produce “comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained change” by creating “curriculum learning goals; content, institutional materials, and practice; assessment; teacher recruitment and

preparation; and professional development of teachers, administrators, and others” (Heck & Weiss, 2005, p. 1). The process begins with changes in school governance, creating high achieving outcomes for students, and aligning institutions and policymakers to achieve planned goals and outcomes (Goertz, Floden, & O’Day, 1996).

Mayoral governance and accountability for public education infers strong leadership, which is a major component for effective schools and student improvement (Barth, 1990; Semel, 1992; Semel & Sadovnick, 1999, as cited in IELP, 2002). As such, mayoral governance has been championed as a pathway to redesigning failing or poor performing school districts and possessing the ability to successfully and strategically manage district resources.

In an eleven-year analysis of school district finance and staffing patterns from 1992-2003, Wong and Shen (2007) found that mayor-led districts were not spending more when compared to other school districts. Instead, their research revealed that mayors in control of school districts spend differently over time and reallocated “financial resources to instruction and instructional support. The district was able to reduce the level of spending on general administration, as well as the percentage of expenditures on general” (Wong & Shen, 2013, p. 10). In addition, their research found that these districts’ ability to self-manage efficiently in addition to showing fiscal discipline, contributed to their ability to improve the school system’s bond rating over a period of time. It also allowed for the reallocation of staffing resources which played an important role in streamlining central bureaucracy and maintained a collaborative relationship with union representatives and members, resulting in an absence of teacher strikes. Moreover, mayoral controlled districts facilitate “strategic partnerships among key stakeholders to improve efficient

management of school districts. Education mayors seem to have the ability to leverage cooperation—and occasionally even concession—from school union employees’ unions” (Wong & Shen, 2013, p. 11). The school system of Chicago has enjoyed such success. Gaining control of the school system in 1995, then Mayor Richard M. Daley played a pivotal role in establishing partnerships with the teachers’ union to support his agenda for district reform. The successful partnership provided the mayor with the avenue to negotiate and to secure a contract, granting the union’s request for a 3 percent annual raise.

The contract effectively avoided conflict over the issue of increased teacher accountability and school closings. Despite the ramification for teachers—including layoffs throughout the district—the union avoided criticizing the mayor” (Wong & Shen, 2013, p. 11). The partnership between the mayor, teachers’ union, and teachers made it possible to initiate several significant reforms. Similar results were achieved in cities such as New Haven, Connecticut under Mayor John DeStefano in 2009, spearheading, along with the New Haven Teachers Union, a school reform movement and agreement that championed a teacher evaluation “based on student performance complemented by targeted reform efforts for failing schools. In return for union concession on school turnaround initiatives, DeStefano raised teacher salaries by as much as 10 percent” (Wong & Shen, 2013, p. 11).

Facing a budget crisis, Providence, Rhode Island Mayor Angel Taveras temporarily terminated all of the district’s teachers, only to rehire most of them prior to the start of the new school year. Within a year of the firing and rehiring of the teaching staff, the mayor had revived a strong district union partnership. The partnership began to explore innovative ways to improve school performance. In addition, in 2012, the Teachers’ Union and school

district together established “a nonprofit education—management organization, United Providence, to turnaround three failing schools. United Providence was founded on the principal of a ‘reciprocal obligation’ of labor management. Such an undertaking may give new meaning to shared governance and joint responsibility” (Wong & Shen 2013, p. 11).

In the city of Cleveland, Mayor Frank Jackson reached an agreement with the Cleveland Teachers Union, creating a path to pass legislation that would assist in improving the struggling school district. They “agreed to use teacher evaluations as the major component when determining layoffs, rather than seniority” (Wong & Shen, 2013, p. 12). As a result, the mayor agreed to abandon the idea of terminating all district teachers as originally planned. The mayor, district, and union collaborated to make the needed changes to foster district and school improvement. The new relationship paved the way to education reform, a trend that is becoming more popular in New Jersey under Governor Chris Christie: “In July 2012 Ohio Gov. John Kasich signed off on the bill to revamp how teachers are hired, fired and paid. The hallmark state, district, and union collaboration will link student performance with teacher pay” (Wong & Shen, 2013, p. 12). Governor Christie’s Reform Agenda professes to have the ability to turn “the current system inside out and finally puts effective, quality teaching ahead of seniority and lackluster results” (Governor Chris Christie’s speech to the League of Municipalities, 24 February 2010). Its hallmarks are:

- Prohibiting salary schedules or compensation policies that reward seniority alone;
- Prohibiting the use of graduate degree accumulation as a basis, in and of itself, for salary increases, except in areas where graduate degrees have proven to be effective markers of improved teacher performance such as math and science;

- Granting schools and districts the flexibility to reward excellence in the classroom and to attract high-quality teachers to low-performing schools or hard-to-fill positions, all in the effort to improve accountability, improves district, student and teacher performance.

Accountability

The accountability for performance movement has become an integral part of our federal and state government practices and systems, and has found its way into our national and state public education systems: “Accountability has to do with responsibility and carries the connotation of being answerable to” (Biesta, 2004, p. 22). Researcher Robert Behn (2001) argues that the definition of accountability is constantly changing. For Behn (2001), accountability indicates that one party is holding another party responsible for one of three things: finances, fairness, or performance. He observes a new public administration paradigm consisting of “the entire collection of tactics and strategies which seeks to enhance performance in the public sector” (Behn, 2001, p. 586). According to Behn (2001), this new paradigm is in response to the inadequacies of the traditional public administration, with an emphasis on accountability for performance. As a result of many states’ broken education systems, similar observations and paradigms have been observed, calling for more accountability and improved performance at both the district and school levels.

QSAC was designed based on similar observations, creating a paradigm consisting of five components that are considered important to the overall effectiveness and success of districts and schools. Behn (2001) presents the argument that rather than blaming the

individual, the failure of performance should be a collective blame that includes superior officers and managers responsible for providing cooperation, collaboration, and resources. Sirotnik (2004) adds responsible accountability to the definition of accountability. Literature suggests that, “accountability policy provides a historically novel opportunity to advance goals of educational equity” (Gunzenhauser & Hyde, 2007, p. 2).

Performance Measurement

The Winter Commission’s call for the improvement of governance at the state and local levels has resulted in many proposals “to modernize public institutions and systems” (Sagner, 2008, p. 70). The Commission encouraged government agencies to establish and create more efficient and accountable ways of governing in an effort to produce better and more effective results. According to Sagner (2008), “The performance measurement movement and its related performance management movement are public management trends of wide influence in state and local government, that are both and adjunct to, and a reflection of those aspirations” (p. 70). Literature on performance measurements in the public sector has increased over the past decade. This trend is important in showing how federal and state educational systems measure the success of districts, schools, administrators, and teachers. Bouckaert (1993) discussed the history of performance measurement, Newcomer (2007) and Wholey (1999) have addressed its values, and Ammons (2002) and Kravchuk and Schack (1996) examined the obstacles to performance measurement. Bowden (1996), Marshall (1996), and Newcomer and Write (1997) have discussed public organizations’ experiences with performance measurement, and

Halachmi (1998), Hatry (1999), Newcomer (1997), and Wholey (1999), examined methods that show continuous improvement using performance measurements.

What constitutes performance, however, varies in different organizations and institutions. These variations involve different specifications of the type of information that is required to measure performance (de Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2008). Although such variations exist, terms such as input, process, output, outcome, effectiveness, and efficiency are all associated with the word performance (de Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2008). As such, performance measurement can be defined as the ongoing collection of data about an organization or program's activities and accomplishments, and is grounded in that organization or program's goals and objectives (de Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2008).

Nevertheless, accountability for performance has become an important aspect of our educational systems and reform agendas, "driven by increasing pressure from elected officials and citizens demanding higher levels of accountability, responsiveness and quality" (Yang & Hsieh, 2007, p. 861). Performance measurements are established to measure results through designed indicators that use the results to improve management and governance (Yang & Hsieh, 2007; Hatry, 2002; Ho, 2006; Moynihan, 2006b; Wholey, 1999). The focus of accountability for performance has been on the managerial effects to "enhance staff evaluation, priority setting, cost efficiency, strategic planning, and its political effects, such as improved external communication, public accountability, customer responsiveness, and citizen trust" (Yang & Hsieh, 2007, p. 861).

Proponents of accountability for performance measurements believe that information gathered could be utilized to make relevant program decisions that will improve institutions and organizations' effectiveness and performance. Further,

accountability for performance measures is useful diagnostic tools for making program decisions. Professors Patria de Lancer Julnes and Mark Holzer (2008), along with other researchers, present the argument that ongoing and continuous performance measurement systems that emphasize indicators and analyses are linked to improvement and are useful tools to track and improve results over time. Accountability for performance measurements systems might be designed for:

1. “Establishing goals and measuring results;
2. Estimating and justifying resources requirements;
3. Evaluating or tracking or assessing evidence of progress;
4. Identifying promising areas, helping to select as targets those functions continually faced with large backlogs and slipping deadlines;
5. Providing timely data which reflect cost savings, additional services, independent evaluations of service levels, client satisfaction, and reduction in waiting or processing times, turnover, or many complaints;
6. Reallocating resources;
7. Developing organization improvement strategies; and
8. Motivating employees to improve performance” (de Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2008; Behn, 2003; Wang, 2002; Wholey & Newcomer, 1997).

The Policy Implementation Process

“Conventionally, policy is described in instrumental terms as a strategic intervention to resolve or assist in resolving a problem” (Fisher, 2003, p. 60). Theodoulou and Kofinis (2004), define policy implementation as the stage where the government executes an adopted policy as specified by the legislation or policy action. Various

government agencies and departments responsible for the respective area of the policy are made formally responsible for its implementation. Once implemented, specified target populations experience the first tangible effects of the policy.

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) define policy implementation as the process or way that governments put policy into effect. How well a policy is implemented is a determining factor of its success or failure. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) suggest that to achieve successful implementation, policy goals should be clear and consistent, the extent of change should be limited to what is necessary, and the responsibility of implementation should be given to an agency that is sympathetic to the policy.

Three factors have been attributed to the importance of successful policy implementation: “the tractability of the problem, the ability of the statute to structure implementation, and other none statutory variables” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p. 935). The first wave of policy implementation studies, from 1973 to 1978, focused on explaining the failure of the policy implementation process. A clear example is Pressman and Waldalvsky’s (1984) study of the Economic Development Agency’s employment programs in Oakland California. Their research demonstrated “how implementation frustrated government action” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p. 935). From 1978 to 1985, the second wave of policy studies built upon the foundation of the first wave of policy studies and presented theoretical models that attempted to explain the failure or success of policy implementation. The second wave of policy studies produced two different schools of thought: the top-down and bottom-up approach. The top-down theorist views policy designers as central actors to policy design, “focusing analysis on statutes or central orders” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p. 935). In contrast, the bottom-up theory

views service providers at the local level, defined by Michael Lipsky (1980) as the street-level bureaucrat central to the implementation process.

According to the bottom-up theory, implementation happens in two stages: the macro level where central policy designers create a program, and the micro level, where local service providers interact with the target population. Although there are differences between the two schools of thought, the third wave of implementation studies in 1985 attempted to reconcile the top-down and bottom-up theories. This wave of policy studies, also known as the contingency approach, is held by the likes of Elmore (1985), Matland (1995), O'Toole (1986), and Sabatier (1986). Because of the debate between the two schools of thought in reference to “who should be studied (local versus central actors); what constitutes success, (adaptation versus consistency); and how success should be achieved, (flexibility versus clarity)” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p .935), the contingency approach explains under which conditions the top-down or the bottom-up approach is most appropriate.

Berman (1980) made a first attempt at clarifying these conditions by providing five conditions “1. Scope of change, 2.Validity of technology, 3.Policy goal conflict, 4.Institutional setting, and 5.environmental stability” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p. 935). Matland (1995) posits that under conditions of incremental change, certain technology, small goal conflicts, and stable environments, the top-down approach is appropriate. However, when the situation does not meet all five conditions and there is uncertainty, it is debatable whether either approach is suitable. One of the most promising approaches was Richard Matland's (1995), who advocated synthesizing top-down and bottom-up implementation. He presents a framework identified as the ambiguity-conflict

model. Within the model, he creates a two-by-two matrix based on the level of ambiguity and conflict of a particular policy, to determine whether either a top-down or bottom-up approach would provide a “more comprehensive and coherent understanding basis for understanding implementation” (Matland, 1995, p. 144). Matland’s model presents four types of policy implementation:

Table 1

		Conflict	
		Low	High
Ambiguity		Administration	Political
		Experimental	Symbolic
	Low		
	High		

Source: Matland (1995, 160).

1. “*Administrative Implementation*: Policy at this stage is characterized as having low policy ambiguity and low policy conflict. The policy goals and means are clearly acknowledged, the outcomes or success are “directly related to providing enough resources” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p. 936).

2. “*Political Implementation*: Policy has low ambiguity and high conflict. The goals in this stage are understood, but they are in dispute. The success of policy implementing is likely to be determined by the power of the policy actors’ ability to force the policy on the stakeholders. Policies in these two categories, a top-down approach to policy implementation, provide more guidance for policy actors” (Matland, 1995, p. 168).

3. “*Experimental Implementation*: According to Matland, when a policy has high levels of ambiguity and a low level of conflict, policy implementation is experimental. “Successful implementation depends greatly on the contextual conditions, with disparities likely to emerge from place to place” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p. 936).

4. “*Symbolic Implementation*: this type of policy is characterized as having high levels of ambiguity and high levels of conflict. Successful outcomes are often “determined by the coalition of actors at the local level who control the available resources” (Matland, 1995, p. 168). Policies in these two categories “can often be informed by the bottom-up implementation literature in understanding the barriers to successful implementation” (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010, p. 936).

Policy conflict can affect and influence the implementation process, making it difficult to successfully implement a policy and its process. According to Howard, Wrobel, and Nitta (2010), “The degree of ambiguity in goals and/or means affects how the policy is perceived by policy actors across implementation locations and increases the likelihood of local conditions being more important in successful implementation” (p. 936). Researcher Barry Gold (2007) suggest that the top-down approach of No Child Left Behind failed because school administrators and teachers rejected the reforms and, in some cases, modified the reforms to both their needs and an educational approach that was believed to be more appropriate for urban students. He advances his theory on the failure of the reform arguing that the difficulty and limited understanding of how to implement No Child Left Behind as a policy reform contributed to its failure.

Similarly, in her study of the Chicago Public School System and the Baltimore, Maryland School District, Jennifer O’Day (2002) illustrated that a top-down approach to

accountability is ineffective because this approach only allows for a one-way flow of information. In her study, she noticed individuals reacting to directions that were imposed upon them in a top-down fashion. Rather than the system focusing on internal practices and a collective sharing of information, mandates were instead the focus.

Epstein (2001) suggests that there are important state and district policies that foster stakeholder partnerships. She suggests that the most important policies for successful stakeholder involvement (school, family, and community partnership), is expressed at the school level, which is a bottom-up approach. In order to better understand school districts and how they function as systems, we must understand their internal and external makeup and those factors that affect the achievement of accountability for performance initiatives in public education systems.

The Complexity of Policy Implementation

Literature on accountability for performance and policy implementation provides a framework for understanding how respondents perceive QSAC as an effective accountability and monitoring system for school districts' improvement. Implementation theory provides a means to understand the relationship between the process of complying with QSAC directives and requirements, and school districts' ability to achieve the expected results. Further, the literature allows for an examination of the internal and external factors that are important to or impeding of the implementation process' success (Ripley & Franklin, 1982). Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) and Sabatier and Maxmanian (1978) suggest that institutions and organizations adapt to implementation as obstacles to its process are achieved, leading to success and achievement of the required or expected

results. The way in which obstacles to the implementation process are perceived and addressed can influence the policy outcome. “Understanding the meaning of implementation and its associated problems is not as straightforward and rational as it seems at first glance” (Nudzor, 2009, p. 502). For Fullan; (2001; 1988), implementation is the process of changing a practice and the process of altering existing practices in order to achieve an effective desired outcome.

Rist (2000) argues that policy designers and implementers seem to ignore the multi-dimensional structure of implementation. Rist (2000), citing Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) on the complexities and task of implementation, presents the idea that “policy presents a link between a present condition and future outcome... Implementation, then, is the ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results” (cited in Rist, 2000, p. 1007). Huczynski and Buchanan (2001) illustrate a disjuncture between the intentions of policy and its intended outcomes in practice. They cite Bedian’s (1980) four reasons to exemplify why change in organizations and institutions are strongly resisted: “parochial self-interest of individuals or groups in the organization, misunderstanding and lack of trust of the change process, contradictory assessment of change, and low tolerance for change” (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, pp. 599-601). There are a number of internal and external factors that should be given consideration with respect to the policy design and its implementation process (Ripley & Franklin, 1982). Such factors might include the number of individuals involved and the nature of their role in the implementation process.

As Long and Franklin (2004) note, “The nature of conflict over the policy in question, and expectations concerning the goals and outcomes of the policy” (p. 310), can

complicate and can affect the implementation process. Majone and Wildavsky (1984) present the argument that implementation should be observed as an evolutionary process, where adaptation occurs for the survival of the policy. A key factor of implementation is the approach that institutions and organizations use towards the implementation process. Policy implementation can “be centralized, decentralized, or a mixed approach consisting of top-level policy guidance and a bottom-or-street-level, administrative expertise” (Long & Franklin, 2004, p. 311).

The traditional approach to policy implementation with regard to education accountability and reform has existed within a centralized approach. This centralized approach has allowed policymakers at the federal and state levels greater control over the process (Sabatier, 1986). Decentralized policy allows input from street-level bureaucrats presenting a bottom-up approach, which are viewed as having a great deal of administrative discretion (Sabatier, 1986; Hjern & Porter, 1981; Lipsky, 1980). Decentralized implementation, when inclusive of external stakeholders, is seen as a means to democratic control (deLeon, 1995; Gruber, 1987). Mixed implementation (Goggin et al., 1990) imposes constraints from the top; implementation actors at this stage “interpret policy so that implementation is congruent with their own preferences” (Long & Franklin, 2004, p. 311). Tower and Knight (2002) write that, “The technical-rational approach to policy assumes that if sufficient energy can be elicited from those involved by enthusiastic leaders with clear vision of change then large-scale transformation can be accomplished relatively quickly and economically” (p. 144).

Literature on stakeholder theory supports the idea that collaboration and input from internal and external stakeholders in the policymaking and implementation process “is

valuable because it strengthens the policy in a variety of ways: it enhances responses, focus resources on key concerns of those the organization serves, and improves the likelihood of successful implementation because stakeholders perceive that they have ownership of a policy or program” (Long & Franklin, 2004, p. 311). Although complexity theory is widely examined in the literature relative to corporate governance, it is worth an examination in a context relative to effecting accountability for public education performance and to help understand that school systems as a whole are more than the sum of the parts (Klijn, 2008).

Conclusion

Accountability for performance measurement and management systems are commonly used by managers, agency heads, and elected officials to communicate the value and importance of a program, instill confidence in stakeholders or the public, and gain support for resources needed to enhance program operations. Further, such initiatives measure and evaluate program costs, service delivery, and short- and long-term outcomes. Similar to public organizations and institutions, public education systems need key information that is critical to the functioning of schools districts, schools, and students, to achieve optimum effectiveness. Accountability for performance initiatives has the potential to provide stakeholders with valuable information. Through the structure of institutions, feedback can be used to hold administrators, agencies, and elected officials accountable for schools and districts’ performance. Similarly, stakeholders have the potential to hold governors, mayors, school districts, schools, and teachers accountable for educational improvement. Its reporting aspect adds great value to “restoring citizen trust in government

by making its activities—service efforts and accomplishments—more transparent, open to public scrutiny, and demonstrative of real value to taxpayers” (Sagner, 2008, p. 71). In addition, state and district information relative to student performance and achievement that is transparent to stakeholders, parents, elected officials, and community leaders, has the potential to restore trust in our state and local education systems. Information on student performance and achievement that is shared with and available to all stakeholders has the potential to improve local school districts, make elected officials, school administrators, and teachers more accountable, and promote collaborative initiatives.

Ingram and Smith (1993) and Yates (1982) note a disconnect between public policy formulation, government organizations, and civic participation. How organizations, institutions, and agencies interact with key participants in the policy design and implementation process can significantly affect its expected outcome (Ripley & Franklin, 1982). Internal and external factors can therefore affect the policy and implementation process. As with other organizations and institutions, how the policy is designed to avoid ambiguity and how it is understood and interpreted by its implementation actors is important to the public education policy process. Further, who is involved in the policymaking and implementation process is of great concern. Selecting and identifying stakeholders and ranking them in an order of importance of individual roles, facilitation and participation can be valuable to the policy and implementation process (Franklin, 2001b). One critical factor of this process is the type of stakeholders to be included. Lastly, how policy is structured can affect how information is shared and disseminated, whether in a top-down or bottom-up fashion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PARADOX OF FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Introduction

The implementations of legal rulings, legislation, and education reform efforts have traditionally been framed in a bureaucratic fashion while policies are carried out and implemented by street-level bureaucrats.⁸ Max Weber described this process as top-down bureaucratic control, the hierarchy in which policy is made. Policy implementation has been dependent upon how the process is carried out by individuals on the ground level: “The honor of the civil servant is vested in his ability to execute conscientiously the order of the superior authorities” (Weber, 1946, p. 95). The duties and responsibilities of administrators at the district and school level at times find it difficult to effectively execute federal, state laws and policies. The idea of accountability concerns itself with the individual responsible for the implementation of the policy. During the design and implementation process of educational policy, policymakers continue to ignore a critical fact: the ability of those individuals responsible for executing such policies. This chapter explores the impact of federal accountability initiatives for performance on districts and schools.

⁸ Researcher Michael Lipsky describes the functions of the street-level bureaucrat in his book titled *Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Critical Role of Street-Level Bureaucrats* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1980).

No Child Left Behind

In January 2001, President Bush introduced a national system for school accountability, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The law was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),⁹ a federal law affecting education from grades K-12. NCLB was considered to be the framework for bipartisan educational reform. The intention of this new act was to ensure improved performance, to implement a method of accountability, and to eliminate the achievement gap in America's educational system by 2014. Similar to the ESEA, NCLB was meant to provide stronger accountability for results.

The performance standards call for states to measure the extent to which students have highly qualified teachers (defined as educators with subject matter competency). The act required states to develop goals and plans that would ensure that all teachers are qualified. Schools failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress¹⁰ (AYP) towards proficiency goals as stipulated in the act will come under a plan of improvement, restructuring, and corrective actions. Two of the largest teacher organizations, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, initially supported the act, because it consisted of various positive measures.

⁹ The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed during the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his "War on Poverty." The passing of the legislation is considered the most far-reaching legislation affecting public education. Not only did the act provide funding for primary and secondary education, but it also emphasized access to equal education and called for establishing high standards and accountability.

¹⁰ Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a standard of measuring the progress of public schools and public school districts, according to the results of standardized tests. AYP has been one of the most controversial issues surrounding George W. Bush's administration and the No Child Left Behind Act.

However, these organizations soon began to take note of serious flaws contained in NCLB. Teachers argued that the act was not consistent with their education, training, and professional norms. Much of the criticism lay in the focus of the implementation of standardized testing, which was considered to be a contributing factor in the increased dropout rates in mostly urban and poor school districts. An examination of the legislation by various researchers found the act to be flawed and warned that it would result in the labeling of large numbers of schools as failing, unrelated to the quality of education that they provided.

With the implementation of No Child Left Behind, federal control of accountability and performance of the nation's schools was instituted. Although this legislation contained some elements advocated by the civil rights community, it contained "mostly fads, not facts" (Radin, 2006, p. 105), and neither of the researchers who developed the legislation had any knowledge about the effects of the legislation on poor children. By the end of 2003, various problems and the impact of No Child Left Behind became clear. Urban and poor school districts argued that the act harmed struggling schools rather than helping them. The act was viewed by many advocacy groups to "contradict its professed aim" (Radin, 2006, p. 106), and could not achieve equity and excellence in education for poor children.

Studies conducted by researchers such as Gold (2007) discovered that teaching and learning had not improved under the act and that it did not close the achievement gap between inner city and white suburban students. Instead, teaching and learning became less effective. Gold attributes this ineffectiveness to districts and administrators placing great emphasis on improving test scores, the primary measure of student success. He further

argues that the reforms failed because school administrators and teachers rejected the reforms and, in some cases, modified the reforms to their needs and to an educational approach that was believed to be more appropriate for urban students. He advances his theory on the failure of the reforms, arguing that the difficulty and limited understanding of knowing how to implement No Child Left Behind as a reform added to its failure.

In some ways, No Child Left Behind encouraged ineffective teaching methods, leaving many teachers to believe that rote learning and the reiteration of the basics was an effective way to teach so as to achieve the act's standardized testing requirements (Gold, 2007). Upon further examination, Gold (2007) discovered that the schools in his study, although located in the same school district, used different methods of whole school reform; there was no single particular whole school reform model used by the school district.

Gold (2007) suggests that in order for urban school reform to become successful, teachers and administrators must first understand the role of social class and race and its relationship to education. Second, the educational environment in urban districts must consist of equal resources available to students. Third, they should have equal per pupil funding and address the condition of school buildings, health care, safety, and nutrition (Gold, 2007). Fourth, whole school reform models in high poverty school districts should not be experimental. Fifth, implementing reform in urban schools requires an appropriate authority structure. This structure must include leaders that possess the ability to manage and implement change. Finally, in evaluating the results of change, administrators' and teachers' self-evaluation should be included in the evaluation process. Further, the results and changes should be reviewed by outside experts acting as mentors and consultants. He

makes the suggestion that students' academic growth should be measured by individual growth, such as a portfolio of the student's individual accomplishments and performance based assessment, rather than the current form of standardized testing and evaluation.

Gold (2007) argues that standardized testing and evaluation fails because it relies on drills and rote learning. He further suggests that models that are successful in suburban school districts should serve as models for urban school reform. In addition, active teaching practices that correlate with improved student performance, including individualization, collaboration, and authentic assessments, should be used as a method to improve education in high poverty school districts (Gold, 2007). Fullan (2001;1988) takes the position that an initial source of the implementation problem is policy designers' commitment and desire to see a particular policy implemented, "irrespective of the fact that commitment to what should be changed often varies inversely with knowledge about how to work through a process of change" (Nudzor, 2009, p. 502).

A Theoretical Perspective of No Child Left Behind

From a theoretical perspective, Paul Manna (2010) presents the idea that "Given NCLB's theory of administration, it is most accurate to say that the law created different sets of collisions in each state" (Manna, 2010, p. 43). According to Manna (2010), three factors contributed to the nature of these collisions. First, much of the content of NCLB was built on the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994,¹¹ a major part of the Clinton

¹¹ The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 was a major part of President Clinton's administration to reform education. The act reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; Improving America's Schools Act, Pub. L. no. 103-382, Sec. 14512, 108 Stat. 3906.

Administration's education reform effort. Manna notes that "The prior ESEA reauthorization required states to expect all students to meet the same high state-defined standards, to evaluate students with tests aligned with those standards, and to report tests scores by student subgroups" (p. 44). The successful implementation of NCLB depended upon the successful implementation of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 and the fulfillment of its requirements. A study conducted by the General Accounting Office in 2002, found that the states were not prepared and that they were far from achieving the requirements of the Act. The report found that one of the biggest problems that states faced was the attempt to align testing with the standards, so as to develop a system that could test all student subgroups and report the results. The General Accounting Office concluded that, "because the majority of states have not met the requirements of the 1994 law, many states may not be well positioned to meet the deadlines for implementing the additional requirements in the 2001 legislation" (Manna 2010, p. 44).

Another variable contributing to the collision between NCLB and the states was the degree to which educational leaders either embraced the rigorous requirements of NCLB or created easier standards. Although NCLB required states to administer annual testing to measure yearly progress and achieve 100 percent proficiency by 2014, the act left it to the states to determine how much and how well students knew subject content, and how much annual improvement was expected of individual schools. Further, it became the states' responsibility to determine and to develop criteria that would determine and define a highly qualified teacher who met the requirements. NCLB did not create a single national standard for students, teachers, and schools. States' inability to implement the federal law became a contributing factor in the effort to improve education in their state. In the passage of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, an act similar to NCLB, federal education policymakers relied on the states to implement and achieve the objectives of the ESEA. Manna (2010) explains that,

“Despite being charged with implementing federal education policy in a state, these agencies have tended to possess little expertise in actually working on substantively important education initiatives, such as the development of standards, curriculum and tests. Instead the main purpose has been to distribute state and federal money to local communities and then monitor to ensure that those dollars have been spent appropriately”. (Manna, 2010, p. 49)

Manna posits that policy makers assumed that states and education agencies were capable and best positioned to carry out the federal law. He suggests two approaches that will perhaps hold schools accountable for performance. The first approach is the idea of market theory in which consumer preference—the parent—would determine the school’s success. Manna (2010) suggests “education reform proposals to expand school choice with voucher programs to fund private education or charter schools, which are public yet operate with freedom from many regulations affecting traditional public schools, are examples of this method of accountability” (Manna, 2010, p. 36) should be expanded. For Manna (2010), in taking such an approach, the measure of school success will be determined by the ability to attract students. Further, parents will be given the opportunity to evaluate data about the school and communicate with other parents concerning teachers, administrators, and school offerings as to whether the school meets parents’ standards and expectations.

Second, Manna (2010) suggests the development and construction of governmental administrative systems for monitoring and oversight. He remarks that “Rather than

exclusively relying on individuals and their choices, these systems require the construction of more elaborate government bureaucracies, rules, regulations, and performance goals” (Manna, 2010, p. 36). Such an approach allows civil servants, guided by laws and regulations, to be the judges of organizational performance.

Rather than avoiding the input of national, state, local, and nongovernmental approaches to administer standard-based reform, federal policymakers focused on the states alone to administer NCLB requirements. Instead of establishing a single uniform national system of school accountability, policymakers envisioned the creation of fifty different systems. This approach created many variations in the ways to achieve math and reading proficiency. Manna (2010) suggests that federal policymakers’ reliance on states to administer NCLB suggested several things:

First, “in passing NCLB, federal lawmakers needed to confront the reality that even though they had much license to argue for increasing accountability in K-12 education, favoring equity and excellence—they lacked capacity to design and implement such a system on their own. Secondly, even if the federal government did possess the capacity to administer standard and testing with NCLB, in relying heavily on states, the law’s authors implicitly recognized an important general principal about policy implementation”. (Manna, 2010, p. 38)

Third, “literature on federalism, public policy and administration indicates that federal policy initiatives such as NCLB, will be more successful when governments or bureaucracies charged with carrying them out have power to make important implementation judgments” (Manna, 2010, p. 39).

The Organizational Complexity of No Child Left Behind

According to Jennifer O'Day et al. (2007), in her examination of the organizational complexity of NCLB and school improvement, the policies that make the school responsible for accountability must contend with several inherent problems. There are important factors and concerns that must be considered when developing and implementing school accountability policies:

1. Although the school is the unit of intervention, the individual is the unit of action. While NCLB defines the school as the unit for monitoring, intervention, and change, it is the individual teachers, administrators, and parents who must change their actions in order to increase student learning. School-level accountability approaches bank on school members' identification with their organizational environment to motivate and direct individual action.
2. External control has the tendency to influence internal operations. Performance accountability policies seek to influence what happens inside schools from the outside. The limitation of such externally initiated change efforts has generated a vast amount of literature on policy implementation in education. In short, this literature finds that rules decreed from administration often have little impact on the core technology of teaching and learning (Elmore, 1996; Marion, 1999). Normative structures inside schools, such as the privacy of classroom practice, are often the determining factors not only in policy implementation but also the school's overall effectiveness.
3. Information becomes problematic in schools and is essential to school improvements. Current school accountability policies, such as the public reporting of student test scores, assume that stakeholders and participants who are armed with accurate information about

the achievement of students in school and in the instructional process will take whatever action is necessary to improve learning outcomes. But again, this simple assumption raises the following questions; “What are the most effective forms and uses of information in the school improvement process? What is the potential for the external accountability system to generate and disseminate the information needed to accomplish the accountability goals? What are the motivational and learning links between information on the one hand and individual and collective action on the other?” (Sadovnik, O’Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman, 2007, p. 27). O’Day et al. (2007) advances the argument for providing a framework for school accountability. They suggest that school accountability mechanisms will be successful and will improve schools as a functioning organization if the methods of intervention are able to:

1. Generate and focus attention on information relevant to teaching and learning.
2. Motivate educators and others to attend to relevant information and to expend the effort necessary to augment or change strategies in response to this information.
3. Develop the knowledge and skills to promote valid interpretation of information and appropriate attribution of causality at both the individual and system levels and
4. Allocate resources where they are most needed. (Sadovnik, O’Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman, 2007, p. 32)

Race to the Top: President Obama’s Initiative

In 2009, President Obama announced his plan to reform the nation’s system of education. The plan was designed to encourage reform in both state and local districts. The Education

Recovery Act funded the \$4.35 billion initiative as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The intended goal of the initiative was:

- *“Designing and implementing rigorous standards and high-quality assessments, by encouraging states to work jointly toward a system of common academic standards that builds toward college and career readiness, and that includes improved assessments designed to measure critical knowledge and higher-order thinking skills.*
- *Attracting and keeping great teachers and leaders in America’s classrooms, by expanding effective support to teachers and principals; reforming and improving teacher preparation; revising teacher evaluation, compensation, and retention policies to encourage and reward effectiveness; and working to ensure that our most talented teachers are placed in the schools and subjects where they are needed the most.*
- *Supporting data systems that inform decisions and improve instruction, by fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system, assessing and using data to drive instruction, and making data more accessible to key stakeholders.*
- *Using innovation and effective approaches to turn-around struggling schools, by asking states to prioritize and transform persistently low-performing schools.*
- *Demonstrating and sustaining education reform, by promoting collaborations between business leaders, educators, and other stakeholders to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps, and by expanding support for high-performing public charter schools, reinvigorating math and science education, and promoting other conditions favorable to innovation and reform.”* (President Barak Obama, 24 July 2009).

State applications for funding were scored on selection criteria worth a total of 500 points:

Great Teachers and Leaders (138 total points)

- Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance (58 points)
- Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals (25 points)
- Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals (21 points)
- Providing effective support to teachers and principals (20 points)
- Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs (14 points)
- State Success Factors (125 total points)
 - Articulating states' education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it (65 points)
 - Building a strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans (30 points)
 - Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps (30 points)
- Standards and Assessments (70 total points)
 - Developing and adopting common standards (from the Common Core State Standards Initiative) (40 points)

- Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments (20 points)
- Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments (10 points)
- General Selection Criteria (55 total points)
 - Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charters and other innovative schools (40 points)
 - Making education funding a priority (10 points)
 - Demonstrating other significant reform conditions (5 points)
- Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools (50 total points)
 - Turning around the lowest-achieving schools (40 points)
 - Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs (10 points)
- Data Systems to Support Instruction (47 total points)
 - Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system (24 points)
 - Using data to improve instruction (18 points)
 - Accessing and using State data (5 points)

In addition to the 485 possible points, the prioritization of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education is worth another fifteen points for a possible total of 500. Unfortunately, the state of New Jersey fell three points short of receiving Race to the Top funding after its initial application. This was attributed to an error by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's administration. A question on the application requested budget information comparing the 2008 and 2009 school years. The administration instead submitted information comparing the 2010 and 2011 school years. This fatal

mistake cost the state 4.8 points, in addition to losing points in other areas. Race to the Top provided no appeal process and as a result, New Jersey placed three points behind the tenth place winner.

The Philadelphia School System: A Case Study Analysis

The views and opinions of researchers such as Manna (2010), Gold (2007), and O'Day (2002) shed light on the weaknesses of accountability initiatives for education such as NCLB and Race to the Top, gives credibility to the argument for a better system of accountability in public education. A case study analysis of the Philadelphia school system provides insight on how to structure districts and schools for success within federal accountability mandates for public education. According to Sadovik et al., "The current wave of reform in Philadelphia bears the imprint of NCLB's press for immediate action aimed at improving low-performing schools and districts. The law, along with Pennsylvania's state takeover legislation, had increased the arsenal of radical options available to state and city political and educational leaders" (Sadovnik, O'Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman, 2007, p. 312).

Similar to the state of New Jersey and the Jersey City School District, the state of Pennsylvania took control of the Philadelphia school system in December 2001, citing the district's inability to manage its fiscal responsibility and students' poor academic achievement. The state of Pennsylvania replaced the existing school board with a School Reform Commission and amended its School Code. The change gave the newly created School Reform Commission, a five-member governance unit, with the power to change district policies and procedures. In the spring of 2002, School Reform Commission

members voted and agreed to establish and implement a complex diverse provider model (Hill, Campbell, & Harvey, 2000), one that would reflect the ability of a market force that could reinvigorate public education and the philosophical underlying intentions of NCLB. The commission selected and outsourced the management of 46 of the district's 264 schools to seven different external organizations (Bulkley, Mundell, & Riffer, 2004; Travers, 2003). The organizations were chosen to manage and partner with low performing schools that included:

- “Three for-profit EMO firms: Edison Schools, Inc., Victory Schools, and Chancellor Beacon Academies (each allocated approximately \$850 extra per pupil);
- Two universities; Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania (each given \$450 extra per pupil);
- Two locally based nonprofits: Universal Companies, a company development organization, and Foundation, Inc., a reform support organization (each given approximately \$650 extra per pupil)” (Sadovnik, O’Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman 2007, p. 299).

In addition, the commission established the Office of Restructured Schools, placing 21 low- performing restructured schools under its jurisdiction. Each school was given an additional \$550 per pupil. Additionally, four schools were designated to convert to independent charter schools and sixteen were provided additional resources to continue their successful efforts.

In all, a total of eighty-six low-performing schools were assigned to some sort of intervention treatment. Shortly after launching the diverse provider model, Paul Vallas of

the Chicago Public Schools was hired as the new CEO of the Philadelphia School District. Vallas expanded on a market-based approach, increasing the privatization of school management, outsourcing central office work, and increasing the number of charter schools to a total of fifty-six by the fall of 2007. At the end of the 2005-2006 school year, a third of the city's schools were under some form of private management including, a charter school or schools in which the management had been contracted out. The number of charter schools were increased through the integration of school development and construction.

Vallas and the Commission also partnered with external companies to create additional education options and magnet schools across the district. Many of the reforms were directed towards teaching and learning:

Expanded preschool programs, smaller classes in early grades, more plentiful supplies of texts and other curriculum, a mandatory core curriculum in four major subjects, longer daily periods of instruction in literacy and math, six-week formative Benchmark tests assessing student mastery of the curriculum and extended learning time for struggling students after school, on Saturdays, and in summer school. (Sadovnik, O'Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman, 2007, p. 299)

District leaders had created additional measures and tools to assess student and school performance. The new framework allowed for the replacement of the School Board with the newly formed School Reform Commission. The creation of the Commission had allowed CEO Vallas to focus his attention on solving district problems without being distracted by internal strife and division that normally plagues School Boards. Further, because of the powers given to the state by the state takeover law, combined with NCLB,

reform strategies easily moved forward. In addition, Vallas and the Commission had established a working relationship with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

The School Reform Commission introduced a hybrid/public approach in the effort to improve educational performance. By the end of the 2004-2005 school year, the School Reform Commission had voted to:

- “Contract with for-profit national firms to run all of the system’s seven disciplinary schools;
- Outsource special small schools for over age adolescent students to one for-profit and two nonprofit entities;
- Contract with a for-profit national company to run an extended day program for up to 1,400 6th grade students in 10 schools;
- Delegate management of one of the district’s comprehensive high schools to a local nonprofit, Foundation Inc.;
- Contract with four for-profit companies to assist with the transition of 12 high schools into small high schools;
- Sign agreements with five different ‘big name’ partners (Microsoft, the Franklin Institute, the University of Pennsylvania, the National Constitution Center, The College Board) to develop and run new or restructured high schools in conjunction with the district and to establish a small high school with peace orientated studies in partnership with the Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY);
- Convert a middle school to a charter high school managed by an external nonprofit group; and

- Contract with a national company to write a standardized high school curriculum in core subjects and with a second national firm to write the science curriculum for the primary grades” (Sadovnik, O’Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman 2007, p. 302).

In theory, Vallas and the Commission believed that the implementation of a hybrid/public model would create competition and innovation among providers, improve management, and give parents choices.

In its initial stage, Vallas and the Commission had established and supported the work of the external providers, creating a collaborative environment. He and the Commission remained focused on articulating the value of a collaborative partnership. A single point of contact was also created and the Office of Development and the district’s Human Resources Department worked hard to assist providers with the staffing of schools. This approach made it easier for providers to work through the bureaucracy and become true partners. The district and partners had agreed to keep discussions going and continued planning behind closed doors, eliminating disagreement and mistakes among the district and partners.

In addition, the competency of key staffers in the Office of Development was a contributing factor to the success of new initiatives. Formalizing district and partnership relationships by way of contracts approved by the SRC helped to clarify relationships and provide the district with the ability to terminate contracts with partners for non-performance and other infractions. When CEO Vallas arrived to the Philadelphia school district, fewer than half of new teachers were certified and were leaving the district after three years on the job. Grasping the seriousness of the situation, he, along with a capable team, put into place strategies to recruit and to retain new teachers and to change rigid

policies. Civic leaders took part in the district's sponsored Campaign for Human Capital. As a result of these initiatives, the percentage of certified district teachers increased from 89.9 percent in 2002-2003 to 95.3 percent in the 2006-2007 school years. Newly certified teachers increased from 54.8 percent in 2002-2003 to 92.4 percent in the 2006-2007 school years. The retention of new teachers improved as a result of implementing a system of new teacher coaches.

School training and accountability measures for principals in the area of "teacher retention, support from the new curriculum, and a more intensive induction program was implemented. Vacancies had plummeted. In the spring of 2006, only 20 to 30 classroom vacancies existed out of a teaching staff of more than 11, 000 teachers" (Sadovnik, O'Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman, 2007, p. 307). An additional key factor contributing to teacher retention was the development of alternative certification programs geared towards training teachers working on emergency or intern certifications. The district had also experienced an improvement in student test scores; student achievement in the elementary and middle grades had improved since 2002. According to Sadovnick et al. (2007),

"From 2002 to 2006, the percentages of students scoring in the proficient and advanced categories in reading, increased by 11 percentage points for 5th graders and 20 percentage points for 8th graders. In mathematics, gains had been more impressive; 5th grade scores increased about 23 percentage points over a four-year period while 8th graders increased about 19 percentage points. Scores for 11th graders, however, whose experience with the reforms began only in 2004-2005, rose only slightly over that same period with gains of just over 3 percentage points in math and 4.5 in reading. The number of schools meeting adequate yearly

progress under NCLB, using PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) test score data along with other mandated indicators, rose from 22 in 2002 to 133 in 2006 (49 percent of its schools) despite progressively more stringent standards for meeting that target”. (p. 309).

Aligning the new core curriculum to state standards and the use of a six-week benchmarking process that charted student progress contributed to improved test scores.

In addition, the district’s School Assistance Team assisted low-performing schools on guided self-studies, which contributed to their school improvement. As Mac Iver and Mac Iver (2005, 2006) point out, “Researchers at John Hopkins University who have analyzed math test score gains between 5th and 8th grades attribute the gains to increased coherence and coordination of curricula, increased focus on student outcomes, and increased resources for low-performing schools” (Mac Iver and Mac Iver, 2005, p. 13; Mac Iver and Mac Iver, 2006). Although there were improvements and gains in test scores, particularly in the fifth and eighth grades, the district recognized that additional work was needed to close the achievement gap between urban and suburban students.

In 2006, the percentage of students scoring proficient in the advanced categories on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) ranged from a low of about 33 percent of eleventh graders to a high of more than 44 percent of eighth graders. In addition, math percentages ranged from 27 percent of eleventh graders and about 42 percent of fifth graders. Test scores from standardized test in grades 3 through 10 in four subjects between fall 2002 and fall 2006 showed improvement in district performance “as well but indicate a general flattening of scores in fall 2006” (Sadovnik, O’Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman 2007, p. 309).

Although the Philadelphia framework for district and school improvement did bring about some success, it did not come without controversy and disagreement. First, because of the limited autonomy in the outsourced schools, there was an uncertainty about roles and responsibilities among partners. Secondly, although the district had included written accountability measures into partners' contracts, the language was vague: "The Accountability Review Council mandated by the state concluded that it had not been able to identify instructional or other accountability criteria that the EMOs were expected to meet with the additional funds—other than operating the schools" (Sadovnik, O'Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman 2007, p. 305). Contractors' accountability appeared to rely less on labor-intensive approach strategies to enforce adherence to performance indicators than on developing trusting relationships between the district and partners. Sclar (2000) argues that such an approach is common in a public/private provider relationship. According to Sclar (2000), any built up trust can make it difficult over time to hold contractors accountable or terminate a contract.

Third, it was believed that outsourcing made economic sense when the work could be done at the lowest expense. The additional per pupil cost of two of the EMOs and two nonprofits was far more than the federally funded Comprehensive School Reform organizations received. Further, according to a report conducted by the Accountability Review Council in 2007, the number of schools making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) that were managed by external partners had declined between 2004 and 2006. Graduation rates had slightly improved, but still remained very low. Very little progress was made in closing the achievement gaps between student subgroups across the board: "The Accountability Review Council's report (2007) noted that between 2002 and 2006, all sub-

groups registered gains in the percentage of students scoring advanced and proficient on the PSSA test, but the gap between their scores and those of white students remains substantial” (Sadovnik, O’Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman, 2007, p. 309).

Conclusion

Federal accountability for public education performance has presented a paradox. Policy initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top, are proof that the outcome of a policy may often differ from its intended purpose or misinterpret its directives or requirements. Although great effort is invested in the policy design process, implementation actors may pursue a different agenda when it comes to the implementation process. Edward, Morris, and Wilson (2004) provide a fundamental explanation for the failure in the design and implementation of accountability policy;

“The first reason why those who initiate change often fail to secure successful conclusion

to their dream is that they tend to be too rational. They develop in their minds a clear, coherent vision of where they want to be at, and assume that all they have to do is to spell out the logic to the world in words in one syllable, and everyone will be immediately motivated to follow the lead. The more vivid their mental picture of the goal the more likely they are to stir opposition and less successful they are likely to be in managing a process of change” (pp. 239-240). These factors can contribute to unsuccessful implementation of a policy.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A study of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) and its effect and impact on the Jersey City School District requires an examination of the administrators' perceptions, opinions, and beliefs at the district and school levels responsible for its implementation. It further calls for an examination of the factors that impede district and school effectiveness and student improvement.

The QSAC process focuses on five key areas within school districts: Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal management, Operations, and Governance. A case study analysis of participants within the bounded context of urban schools (Merriam, 1998) provided an understanding to the research inquiry. The following questions guided the study: 1. What were the legal and policy factors that led to the state takeover of the Jersey City School District and the implementation of the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum? 2. How do administrators in the Jersey City School District view QSAC and its effects on school improvement? 3. What structures or systems must exist to build district capacity, achieve district and school effectiveness and to establish a thorough and efficient system of education (as required by the New Jersey State Constitution)? The study involved interviewing, observing, and interacting with those individuals knowledgeable about and responsible for each of the QSAC components.

The study “involved using multiple stages of data collection, refinement and interrelationships of categories of information” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (2011), the benefits of the case study approach lies in its ability to allow for discoveries. Berg and Lune's (2011) research method provides a

systematic way of gathering enough information about particular organizations, allowing the investigator to enter into the life of the organization. The case study approach examines a program, an event, a process, an individual, or a group of individuals in depth. The cases are bound by time and activity, and the researcher collects detailed information utilizing a variety of data collection procedures over a period of time (Stake, 1995). In order to understand QSAC, it is important to understand the historical and legal background and fight for equality in education for the disadvantaged, the poor and urban students.

A phenomenological approach was used to identify the essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon as described by the study's participants. It is important to obtain information from these individuals in order to get diverse opinions and feedback for analysis.

[“Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 15).]

Historically, the fight for equality in education for the racially underrepresented and the poor and urban student, has its roots in the landmark Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), in which segregated schooling between blacks and whites was ruled unconstitutional overturning the decision in the *Plessey v. Ferguson* case (1896). The case of *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (1973), which determined that the Texas school funding system did not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, began the fight to equalizing school

funding in poor and urban school districts. In the state of New Jersey three rulings affected school districts throughout the state, particularly poor and urban school districts: *Robinson v. Cahill* (1972), which was the court's attempt to equalize school spending between wealthy and poor school districts; *Abbott v. Burke* (1981), which challenged the state system of school financing that had created disparities between poor and wealthy school districts; and the New Jersey State Takeover Law (1987), which allowed the state to take full control and operate school districts and schools.

An emphasis was placed on the in-depth interviewing method (Patton, 1997) to create a standardized open-ended interview process.

According to Patton's standardized open-ended interviewing process, the researcher develops a set of carefully worded and arranged questions that takes each participant through the same sequence and asks each respondent the same question (Patton, 1997). A single interview protocol was generated and carefully designed in order to ask participants the same questions. This standardized method provided an easier way to analyze the responses. Patton (1997) emphasizes that this process makes analyzing data easier because it allows the researcher to locate each respondent's answer to the same question quickly and organize similar questions and answers (Patton, 1997).

This method was chosen for this study for this very purpose. The questions were designed to elicit participants' opinions and beliefs. This approach allowed me to gain an understanding of the various opinions of the research inquiry. Opinion and belief questions uncover what people think about the world or a specific setting (Patton, 1997). This type of questioning synthesizes others' opinions and beliefs.

An inductive approach was used to generate a theory of the impact of the QSAC process, its implementation, and its effect on the Jersey City School District. Often discussed in the policy literature, the model developed for the study is based on the black box model (Easton, 1965). The model provided a framework for analyzing and understanding QSAC, its requirements, demands, and implementation process within school districts so as to affect desirable outcomes. The black box model has traditionally been used to analyze “relationships between political systems inputs, agency processing, and policy outputs” (Long & Franklin, 2004, p. 312). It was useful in this study towards understanding QSAC and its process.

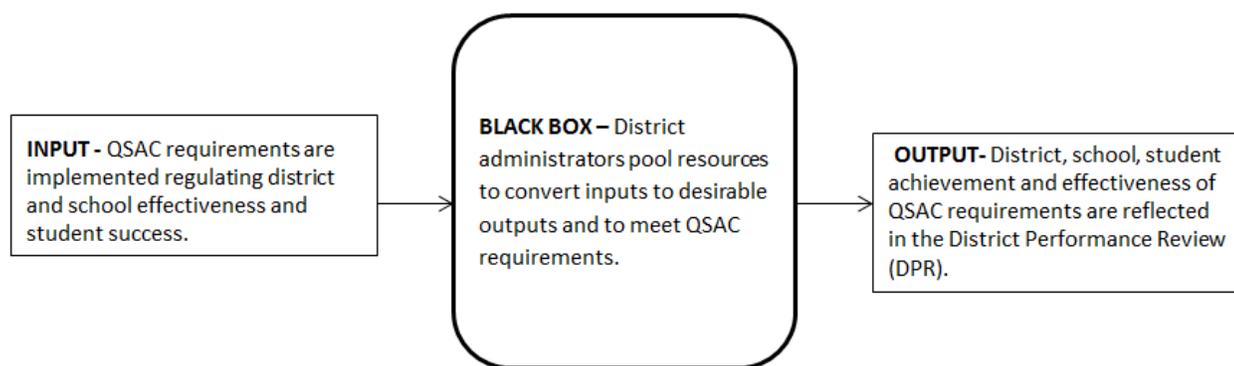


Figure 1 The black box model

As the figure above shows, the policy (QSAC) is the input, and the black box represents the district’s conversion of policy requirements into outputs that are reflected in the District Performance Review (DPR),¹² QSAC’s district’s self-evaluation process. A

¹² See QSAC New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum; A Guide for School Officials and the Public. Institute on Education Law and Policy, Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, <http://ielp.rutgers.edu>, May 2007, for a detailed explanation of the District Performance Review (DPR) and its process.

comprehensive review of district performance is required at least every three years. What is important is what goes on inside of the black box to achieve the desired output and answers questions about how information is disseminated, who shares the information, and what systematic approach, method, or process has been implemented to achieve the desired output. The DPR is developed and implemented in the following way:

1. *Development* - describes the Superintendent's process of forming the DPR committee to include one or more of the following: administrative staff, teaching personnel, Business Administrator, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, a member of the Teacher Union, one or more School Board members, or others with board approval.
2. *Participation* - describes the district Superintendent's assurance of participation and input of all members of the District Performance Review Committee, consultation with members in formulating responses to all quality performance indicators, and assurance that responses to indicators reflect the district's present circumstances and can be validated by data and the Statement of Assurance.
3. *Approval* - explains how the School Board is responsible for approving additional members to the committee, can establish a sub-committee to consult the DPR committee, monitor the DPR committee's progress by requiring periodic reporting to the Board at School Board meetings, and submitting a resolution to the Board for approval to submit to the DPR.
4. *Statement of Assurance* - The fourth step in the process describes what occurs upon the completion of the District Performance Review. The Superintendent and committee members sign the Statement of Assurance - with the School

Board's approval and the DPR is submitted to the County Superintendent's office by November 15th.

5. *Confirming* - The fifth process describes the Executive County Superintendent's review process of the Statement of Assurance, confirming the use of the District Review Committee to verify the data in the report and developing a recommendation for placement on the performance continuum. The Commissioner of Education makes a final determination based on the percentage of the Quality Performance Indicators satisfied.
6. *High Performing District* - This process explains that when a district satisfies between 80-100 percent of the indicators in the five components, the district is placed on the continuum as a High Performing District.
7. *District Improvement Plan* - This indicates that a district that satisfies less than 80 percent of the Quality Performance Indicators in one or more of the five components. The district must then submit a District Improvement Plan.
8. *Evaluation* - In a district achieving less than 50 percent in one or more of each of the Quality Performance Indicators, the Commissioner has the option to implement an in depth evaluation, providing technical assistance or implementing full state control.
9. *Evidence* - Any district disputing its score in one or more areas must submit an appeal to the Commissioner within seven days with evidence supporting its claim.

The Research Problem

On April 4 2011, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie issued Executive Order No. 58 which established a new education task force. The task force was charged with two interrelated responsibilities:

(1) “Review existing accountability systems, including the new Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJ QSAC) and to provide recommendations on a revamped accountability system, which would grant more autonomy to public schools and public school districts while maintaining strict measures of accountability in the areas of student performance, safety and fiscal responsibility” and (2) “Conduct a comprehensive review of all education-related statutes and regulations to determine the extent to which they increase the quality of instruction for students, improve academic achievement of students, improve teaching effectiveness within schools or improve the safety and well-being of students...or are overly prescriptive” (Education Transformation Task Force, 12 September 2011).

Although QSAC was considered to be an improvement over the past state systems of monitoring, particularly in state controlled school districts, according to the findings of the newly established task force, QSAC contains several limitations:

1. “QSAC focus on district capacity instead of student performance.
2. QSAC misdirects districts’ attention.
3. QSAC is premised on the false view that a comprehensive reform agenda can be disaggregated.
4. QSAC is a highly imperfect pathway for transition to local control.

5. QSAC provides inconsistent, and therefore unreliable, information.
6. QSAC process fails to distinguish between very different districts.
7. QSAC meshes poorly with NCLB.
8. QSAC has failed to drive district improvement” (Education Transformation Task Force, 12 September 2011).

Based on the task force findings, the research seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What were the legal and policy factors that led to the state takeover of Jersey City schools and the implementation of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC)?
2. How do administrators in the Jersey City School District view QSAC and its effects on school improvement?
3. What structures or systems must exist to build district capacity, achieve district and school effectiveness and to establish a thorough and efficient system of education (as required by the New Jersey constitution)?

Sample Methodology

The research design used a purposive sample. According to Schutt (2011), the purposive sample technique targets individuals who are knowledgeable about a particular topic or subject under investigation. Rubin and Rubin (2011) suggest that in selecting individuals using the purposive sample technique, informants should have knowledge about the cultural arena, situation, or experience and be willing to talk to and representative

of the viewpoints in the inquiry. However, the “purposive sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of the research findings” (Kunes, 1991, pp. 21-22). The original sample of this study consisted of 26 participants: three state level administrators, five central district administrators, and eighteen school level administrators including principals and vice-principals. Unfortunately, not all participants selected for the initial sample were willing to participate. State level administrators were selected because they are closer to the design of education policies and reform efforts. Administrators at the central district level were selected because of their relationship to the implementation process of education policies and reform efforts, and their responsibility for each of the five components of QSAC. Administrators at the school level—principals and vice-principals—were selected because of their assumed role in and understanding of the QSAC process.

To assure anonymity, each participant was assigned a number and participating schools were assigned a letter. Five administrators at the district level responsible for one of the five QSAC components participated in the study. At the school level, administrators from two of the district’s PK-05 schools participated: the principal of school P and the principal of school K, one principal from a PK-07 schools, and school R participated in the process. Principals from two of the PK-08 schools, the principal of school L, and the principal of school Q also participated. In addition, the principals of school B and school M, grades 06-08 participated. Four of the district’s high school principals, W, X, Y, H and F, in addition to the vice-principal of school X, participated in the study. Lastly, one school board member took part in the study. The study found the most success with administrators at the central district level, where more of an understanding about and command of QSAC and its process were found.

In total, twenty one (21) participants from the original sample participated in the study. According to Kale (1996) and Seidman (2006), resourcing in the sampling process can place limitations on what sampling is feasible. Since the implementation of QSAC, schools in the Jersey City School District have experienced a great deal of reorganization and change in administration at the district and school level. Limitations to this research are discussed further in the Limitations of the Research Methodology section.

Interviews

Bertaux (1981), using the term saturation of knowledge (p. 37), explains how researchers learn a great deal and become well informed from their first few interviews, because the researcher recognizes patterns in the interviewees' responses and experiences. It is a common practice for researchers utilizing a qualitative methodology to use interviews, observations, and content analysis and to interact with those who understand the participants' lived experiences. A popular process used in "clinical settings, counseling, and psychological testing" (Davidson 2012, p. 32), the topic of interviewing has been discussed and illustrated by Davison (2012), and in the work of researchers such as Babbie (2001; 2003), Bogdan & Knopp Bilken (2002), Denzin (1978), Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (2000), Leedy and Ormrod (2004), Patton (2001), Salkind (2003), and Sradley (1979) (all cited in Berg, 2007). The process of interviewing in the present study, the exchange of information and dialogue between the researcher and participants, allowed the researcher to examine an area of study in public education in which limited research has been conducted.

The primary purpose of this study was to discover how administrators and those responsible for QSAC's components perceived QSAC, its process and impact on the Jersey City School District. The research encouraged further inquiries that added great value to the research. Framing the interviews with an in-depth style of questioning offered a detailed account of respondents' perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As detailed by Davidson (2012), "Interviewing, in its most common form, is an individual face-to-face process that can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured" (Davidson, 2012, p. 33).

The study was largely connected to respondents' perceptions, opinions, and beliefs about, the effects of, and impact of QSAC on school districts and schools. The interviewing process allows the researcher to experience how the participant formulates his/her perceptions based on his/her lived experiences, not just what their perception is (Circourel, 1964; Dingwall, 1977; Silverman, 1993, 1997). This allows the researcher to gather more detailed information and explanations of participants' perceptions of the inquiry. The study used an open interviewing process or semi structured way of interviewing, in which all participants were asked the same questions, but allowed room for new ideas, information, and thoughts to develop during the interview process. The researcher, however, was careful not to influence the participants' ideas, thoughts, and opinions by not responding to their answers either negatively or positively. Although the researcher develops the interview protocol in order to establish consistency in the interview process, the sequence, wording of the questions and how the researcher asks the questions (Davidson, 2012) must be carefully designed and administered. This process is used to avoid influencing participants'

answers. The research protocol and interview questions were tested and revised several times to create consistency and to avoid influencing participants' answers.

Data Analysis

This study consist of “a set of interrelated constructs, definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena” (Kerlinger, 1972, p. 64). Throughout the data analysis process, reflective and analytical notes were written and recorded, prioritizing key issues and themes that resulted from respondents' answers during the interview process (Creswell, 2003). Interpretations of participants' responses were translated based on their individual experiences and perceptions of their lived experiences (Faenkell & Wallen, 1990; Locke et al., 1987). Various data and information sources were collected and analyzed “to build coherent justifications for themes” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196) using a thematic analysis found in both the data and literature (Charmaz, 2006).

Throughout the research, two themes evolved and remained dominant: achieving educational effectiveness and building district and school capacity. A review of the literature helped to refine the research questions and connect themes to the research findings. The primary data sources were interviews, in addition to data from the following assessments: the New Jersey 2013-2014 School Performance Report, New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK),¹³ and data from the High School

¹³ The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) is New Jersey's state test for grades 3 through 8. The test measures achievement in language arts literacy, mathematics, and science. In the 2014 school year, the language arts literacy and mathematics assessments for grades 3 through 8 were measured by the Common Core State Standards. The science assessment for grades 4 and 8 was aligned to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCS).

Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)¹⁴ for the following school years, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015. In addition, data and information from the following documents were examined and analyzed: the Jersey City Public Schools Strategic Plan 2014-17; District Forecast of Jersey City Public School Enrollment: Volume I: Submitted by Urbanomics, 26 November 2013; District Forecast of Jersey City Public School Enrollment: Volume II: Submitted by Urbanomics, 7 February 2014; Focus and Priority Schools: Updates and Progress Caucus Presentation Dr. Marcia Lyles, Superintendent, October 2014; and NJ Quality Single Accountability Continuum: Jersey City School District's Responses to the District Performance Review (DPR), Summary Sheet, and Statement of Assurance, 2014.

Further, the literature on the effects of poverty and social economic disparities in urban and poor school districts were examined, compared, and analyzed. Throughout the data analysis process codes from written transcripts, interviews, and theoretical assertions were made and documented by making comparisons to the data and connecting the data to the themes. Because of the similarities in the responses to the interview questions, perceived challenges to achieving QSAC requirements and its five components were identified. Common challenges were first identified, and were then coded as district challenges resulting in the following categories:

¹⁴The High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) is the assessment used to measure student achievement in reading and mathematics, in accordance with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. The test is administered to students in their junior year. The test was last administered in March of 2015 and served as the graduation test for all students who graduated in 2015.

- *Instruction and Program*: QSAC is largely tied to academic achievement. Because of past and continued external and environmental factors, students will continue to perform poorly on federal and state assessments.
- *Personnel*: The QSAC process is too overwhelming in large urban school districts due to the lack of personnel and the external and societal problems that are associated with large urban school districts.
- *Fiscal Management*: Because school districts are highly regulated entities, and because we have been successful in our budgeting practices, the process should be streamlined when the district is consistent in a QSAC component.
- *Operations and Governance*: Although the QSAC process contains a self-evaluation process, the DPR, a system that allows administrative feedback, must be developed and professional development must be addressed to better understand the process.

The research proceeded with additional coding and written analysis throughout the process, focusing on the commonalities found in the data. When conducting qualitative research, researchers such as Kildow (2000) also used interviews in the process of collecting data that was coded according to common themes and patterns. Similarly, the present study analyzed district and school administrators' perceptions, opinions, and beliefs in the Jersey City School District using structured interviews. Literature, archival information, and district and school data were triangulated with respondents' interviews, giving validity to the themes, patterns, and questions that emerged from the research findings.

Limitations to the Research Methodology

As with other research methods, there are limitations. The interviewing and qualitative methodology is no exception. As illustrated by Davidson (2012), “the interviewer is also a person with a personal history that is brought into the conversation” (Davidson, 2012, p. 34). Although the researcher in this study is not employed by the Jersey City School District, he maintains an affiliation with a local university within the district and is informed on matters and issues that affect and impact the school district and schools. Researchers such as Atkin and Silverman (1997) consider the methodology of interviewing as a hodgepodge of information constructed by researchers. During the interviewing process, some participants displayed hesitation in divulging or sharing certain information. One school administrator wanted to be reassured that she would remain anonymous. Respondents may be willing to share what they believe to be an appropriate answer or response, or might avoid sharing certain information because they believe that it is the response that the researcher wishes to hear (Bradburn, 1983).

Additional limitations to the study occurred at the state level. After sending multiple emails and making numerous telephone calls to a state level administrator at the New Jersey Department of Education, I was deferred to two of her subordinates. Following the state administrator’s directive, in addition to sending emails and making several phone calls to the subordinates, my efforts received no response. In addition, although I had provided administrators at the elementary and middle school levels with Institutional Review Board Approval (IRB), as directed by an administrator at the central district level and with a letter from the district giving approval to conduct interviews, efforts to gain access to several schools for the study were unsuccessful. Phone calls also went

unanswered. A recommendation was made by a central district administrator to contact the Chief of Staff for assistance. After numerous attempts, the newly appointed Chief of Staff responded and recommended that I identify and select other schools to participate in the study, since several of the original schools had failed to respond or declined to participate. I was reminded by the Chief of Staff that she “cannot force them to participate if they do not want to.” Access to the other identified schools was also unsuccessful.

It appeared that with a newly state appointed superintendent came a great deal of uncertainty of how to respond to a request for information, or the unwillingness to provide it, and that few administrators at the school level did not want to participate or did not wish to be bothered. During the research process, many of the administrators at the school level were reassigned to other schools or had retired. However, it was discovered that administrators at the school level in the QSAC process played the role of gathering student information and data that would be delivered to the central district administrators. Limited knowledge of and involvement in the QSAC process became evident when one high school principal deferred my questioning to her vice-principal. Because of a past position that the vice-principal held at the central district level directly engaging him in the QSAC process, he was more knowledgeable than most at the school level. It was at the central district level that administrators were very knowledgeable and directly involved in the process. The span of experience within the district at this level ranged from 25 to 40 years, with some administrators starting their careers within the district as teachers, advancing to central district administrators. The proceeding chapter examines the legal history to create equity, equality, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability for performance in public education.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE QUEST FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY IN NEW JERSEY

Introduction

The Jersey City school district's problems of performing effectively and efficiently and providing a thorough and efficient¹⁵ system of education reflect the nation's past and present struggles to provide equal educational opportunities, and to improve district and school effectiveness. In 1954, The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case of *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*¹⁶ that school segregation was unconstitutional. The decision represented a historical moment and an important victory in the fight for the civil rights of students in the south. The landmark case promised the equality of educational opportunities for all students. The decision overturned the separate but equal doctrine of the 1896 case *Plessey v. Ferguson*,¹⁷ which upheld the system of institutional segregation between blacks and whites. Although the *Ferguson* ruling concerned separate and unequal railroad facilities, it became the precedent for separate and unequal schools for blacks and whites, with respect to whites attending superior schools.

The Supreme Court's decision in the *Brown* case reversed the *Ferguson* decision; recognizing that education was not only a right, but was also essential to the common good

¹⁵ See Paul L. Tractenberg (1974), *Robinson v. Cahill: The "Thorough and Efficient" Clause*, 38 *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 38, 312-332.

¹⁶ *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* was the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, U.S. 483 (1954), in which the court declared that any state law establishing separate public schools for black and white students was unconstitutional.

¹⁷ *Plessey v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537. (No. 210) Argued: April 18, 1896. Decided: May 18, 1896, was the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision which upheld the constitutionality of states' laws that racial segregation of public facilities was allowed and became known as the *Separate But Equal Doctrine*. The *Separate But Equal Doctrine* remained the law until it was overturned by the 1954 Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.

and that separate could never be equal. Although the *Brown* decision attempted to correct educational inequalities decades after the court's landmark decision, inequalities in education between poor and wealthy school districts continued to exist throughout the nation's states.

San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez

An example of the legal battle for equality among urban poor and wealthy school districts was seen in the case of *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*,¹⁸ decided in 1973. The lower court in *Rodriguez* decided that education was a fundamental right and that the unequal financing of the school system was subject to strict scrutiny. However, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the decision of the lower court, reasoning that the Texas school funding system—a system that funded its school system through local property taxes, creating a funding disparity between the urban poor and wealthy—did not violate the Equal Protection Clause¹⁹ of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. The court reasoned that since children in poor districts were receiving an education, the Texas funding system did not create an “absolute deprivation” (Kozol, 1992, p. 207). The court further reasoned that, “the Equal Protection Clause does not require absolute equality” (Kozol, 1992, p. 207). The decision shifted the legal battleground to the state courts in states with equal education clauses embedded in their constitution. Similarly, schools in the state of New Jersey—and for more than two decades the school district of Jersey City—

¹⁸ 411 U.S. 1. *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (No. 71-1332) Argued: October 12, 1972. Decided: March 21, 1973.

¹⁹ The Equal Protection Clause is part of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The clause, which took effect in 1868, provides that no state shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction “the equal protection of the laws.”

continue to struggle to provide a quality education, equal to that of its suburban and wealthy counterpart and to improve district and school effectiveness with the implementation of various court decisions and education reform methods.

Robinson v. Cahill

Similar to the *San Antonio case*, the effort to establish a thorough and efficient system of education in the state of New Jersey began with *Robinson v. Cahill*²⁰ in 1972. The case began the long battle in New Jersey's school finance system with the attempt to equalize school spending between wealthy and poor school districts. Plaintiffs presented the argument that the existing state system of local school financing in New Jersey discriminated against poorer school districts. In 1973, the State Supreme Court ruled that the heavy reliance on local property taxes to finance local education did, in fact, discriminate against poor school districts. In 1975, the Public Education Act²¹ established a funding formula for the financing of public schools. Failing to provide funding for schools under the new formula in 1976, the New Jersey Supreme Court closed all public schools, displacing one hundred thousand students during the 1976 summer session. In an attempt to resolve an ongoing legislative debate, Governor Brendan T. Byrne approved and

²⁰ *Robinson v. Cahill* - 118 N.J. Super. 223, 287 A.2d 187 ... 118 N.J. Super. 223 (1972) 287 A.2d 187.; The New Jersey Supreme Court in *Robinson v. Cahill* affirmed the invalidation of the state's school finance statute on the basis of the thorough and efficient education clause of the state constitution; *Robinson v. Cahill*, 303 A.2d 273, 295-98 (N.J. 1973) (holding that local financing resulting in great disparities in spending per pupil violated the constitutional requirement of a thorough and efficient system of public education), *cert. denied sub nom. Dickey v. Robinson*, 414 U.S. 976 (1973).

²¹ The New Jersey Legislature in 1975 passed the Public Education Act. The purpose of the Act was "to provide to all children of New Jersey, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, the educational opportunity which will prepare them to function politically, economically and socially in a democratic society."

signed the New Jersey state income tax law. The law's intended purpose was to provide funding for education.

In 1990, Governor James Florio endorsed the Quality Education Act,²² with the intended purpose of reducing aid to wealthy school systems and increasing income taxes to \$1.1 billion. During the preceding year, Governor Florio signed a bill increasing property tax relief by diverting \$360 million from the Education Act. In 1992, the Education Law Center began litigation against the new bill, arguing that it fell short of court mandates and would increase the disparity between wealthy and poor districts. The court ruled in 1993 that the Act did not assure the elimination of financing disparities and argued that it would create great reliance on property taxes. The battle for school financing equality in an effort to reform New Jersey's poor school districts continued with the case of *Abbott v. Burke* and its proceeding cases.

Abbott v. Burke

In 1981, a complaint on behalf of 20 children attending public schools in Jersey City, Camden, East Orange, and Irvington was filed by the Education Law Center. The lawsuit challenged the state's system of financing public education under the Public School Education Act of 1975. The complaint alleged that the state's funding system was unconstitutional because it created significant expenditure disparities between poor urban and wealthy suburban school districts. As a result of such disparities, poor and urban school

²² The Quality Education Act of 1990 with its 1991 amendments, attempted to equalize tax burdens in all districts, provide relief to property owners, and to impose strict spending limitations. The funding system attempted to provide aid based on a district's capacity to meet the statewide standard of per-pupil expenditures.

districts were unable to meet the educational needs of their students. In 1985, the court ruled that the “Plaintiffs’ claims should be considered first by the appropriate administrative agency.”²³ In 1988, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the existing state system of school funding denied children in urban districts equal access to a thorough and efficient system of education guaranteed by the state’s constitution and it became the responsibility of the state of New Jersey to correct this inequality.

In 1990, the *Abbott II* decision required that states must ensure that poor school districts spend an equal amount of funding as wealthy districts. The court held in the *Abbott III* decision that the Quality Education Act did not meet the mandates of the *Abbott II* decision. In the 1997 *Abbott IV* decision, the court ruled that the regular education funding provisions of the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act were unconstitutional as applied to the special needs districts. Further, the act did not adequately address the unique educational disadvantages facing children attending schools in poor districts and therefore did not meet *Abbott II* mandates.

In *Abbott V* (1998), the court ordered a set of education programs and reforms that were widely recognized to be the most fair and just in the nation, to be implemented as reform efforts (Education Law Center, 2002). This framework included:

“Rigorous content standards-based education, supported by per-pupil funding equal to spending in successful suburban schools; universal, well-planned and high quality preschool education for all three and four year olds; supplemental (at risk) programs to address student and school needs attributed to high poverty, including intensive early literacy, small class size and social health services; new and

²³ See *Abbott v. Burke* 100 N.J. 269, 495 A.2d 376, N.J., 1985.

rehabilitated facilities to adequately house all programs, relieve overcrowding, and eliminate health and safety violations, school and district reforms to improve curriculum and instruction, and for effective and efficient use of funds to enable students to achieve state standards and state accountability for effective and timely implementation; and to ensure progress in improving student achievement” (Education Law Center, 2002).

To comply with the *Abbott IV* and *V* decisions, the state allocated millions of dollars in funding to equalize the quality of education between urban and suburban school districts. Further, the decision ordered the state to increase the spending level of New Jersey’s poorest urban school districts to the average spending level of the state’s one hundred richest and most successful school districts. Because of many years of social problems and the deprivation of a quality education experienced in urban school districts, the court ordered the state to spend beyond parity for education programs in urban districts.

Although *Robinson v. Cahill* began the long battle in New Jersey’s school finance, *Abbott* became the first decision in school finance reform to establish equality for the allocation of education resources to poor children. The decision began a new stream of school reform efforts in poor school districts and per-pupil spending. Millions of dollars were allocated and invested in early childhood programs and subsequently, whole school reform²⁴ initiatives, supplemental health and social services, extended-day and summer

²⁴ State regulations pertaining to schools in the Abbott districts presume that elementary schools will implement a national model of Whole School Reform (WSR) to assure universal literacy by third grade and attainment of the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) at every grade level. For eligible schools under certain circumstances, however, a school may apply to the Commissioner if it decides that its Abbott goals will be achieved better with an alternative WSR design (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:10A).

programs, a massive program of school construction, technology upgrades, and other initiatives were put into place.

With the *Abbott* decisions, the state of New Jersey found itself with the responsibility of implementing educational improvement plans. A political decision was made to outsource the task. The plan required that all *Abbott* districts develop a whole-school reform model with a private entity to improve the quality of education, particularly in poor and urban school districts. *Abbott* funding would pay for whole-school reform initiatives and the school and private entity would negotiate the terms of educational improvement plans.

The idea of whole school reform initiatives seemed problematic. Tractenberg et al. (2002) perceived such action and its process to be flawed. He viewed the effort as a confusing patchwork process that allowed developers to enter into contracts with schools, while at the same time bypassing central district approval (Tractenberg et al., 2002).

Many decisions resulted from the initial *Abbott* case. The 2000 and 2002 *Abbott* decisions, provided critical detailed and direction to the State on key aspects of the preschool programs, teacher qualifications, class size, enrollments, facilities and procedures for determining needed program funding.. The 2002 *Abbott IX* decision ratified a funding timeout agreement that existed between the Education Law Center and Governor Jim McGreevy. The 2003 *Abbott X* decision ratified the mediation agreements of *Abbott* programs. Within the same year the court ruled on unresolved budgeting issues that were in mediation. In the 2004 *Abbott XII* decision, the court lessened the required deadline for preschool certification. Budget issues were addressed in the 2006 *Abbott XV* decision and clarified in *Abbott XVI*. The 2007 *Abbott XVII* and 2008 *Abbott XVIII* court decisions

declined immediate funding for *Abbott* districts' school construction. The case was remanded to the court to decide if the School Funding Reform Act²⁵ (SFRA) was capable of ensuring a constitutional education in *Abbott* districts.

The remand court in 2009 found that SFRA was constitutional for all districts, recommending the preservation of the right of *Abbott* districts to obtain supplemental funding for special programs. In addition, the State Supreme Court's *Abbott XX* decision of 2009 agreed with and affirmed the remand court's decision. In June 2010, the Education Law Center filed a legal challenge arguing that the governors cut to aid violated the state's obligation to fully fund the formula upheld by the Supreme Court in the 2009 *Abbott* decision.

In January 2011, the state Supreme Court assigned Judge Peter Doyne to conduct hearings in order to determine if the state could provide a constitutionally mandated thorough and efficient education at the current funding level. Following his appointment and after a completion of hearings in March 2011, Judge Doyne ruled that the governor's budget cuts disproportionately hurt at-risk students. On May 24, 2011, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the state's failure to fund the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) caused instructional consequential and significant harm to at-risk students. The court also found that cutting funds to New Jersey school children was not a minor infringement to students' right to a thorough and efficient education, but a real substantial and consequential blow to

²⁵ The School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) was a statewide school funding formula enacted by the New Jersey Legislature in 2008. The SFRA was a "weighted student formula" that provided state and local funding driven by a "base cost," or the amount necessary per pupil to support the core curriculum of every school for every student regardless of need. In addition, SFRA's funding formula provides additional funding to support programs for "poor (at-risk) students, limited-English proficient (LEP) students, and students with disabilities, regardless of where those students live.

that right. Reaching this decision, the court ordered that the formula be fully funded in the 31 high-need urban districts by fiscal year 2012.

The New Jersey State Takeover Law

The New Jersey State Takeover Law²⁶ was first implemented in the Jersey City school district, the second largest school district in the state of New Jersey. In October 1989, central office administrators were removed from office. The Department of Education assumed control of the district, replacing the school superintendent with a state appointed superintendent and a state team of administrators. This was the first time that a state controlled district would attempt to provide a thorough and efficient education as stipulated in the New Jersey constitution. The literature suggests that the problems of Jersey City's public schools began with a mixing of politics and education dating back to the tenure of mayor and political boss Frank Hague who served as the mayor of Jersey City from 1917 to 1947 (Reecer, 1988; Smith, 1982). The district's trouble began when it failed to meet state certification as mandated by the thorough and efficient clause. Failing level 1 and level 2 monitoring requirements in 1984, the district moved into level 3, the final level. With the implementation of a preliminary 3 review of N.J.S.A 18A: 7A-14c in 1987, it was determined that the district could not achieve state certification standards.

Following the decision and pursuant to N.J.S.A.18A-14e, a comprehensive compliance investigation was initiated. The following deficiencies were discovered:

²⁶ Citing years of educational deficiencies in the Jersey City School District, the State Department of Education approved and voted to take control of the Jersey City school district on 4 October 1989, implementing the 1987 New Jersey State Takeover Law.

1. “No guiding policy framework existed; 2. Employment decisions including hiring, firing, promoting and transferring were not by merit, but by political patronage, unionism and cronyism; 3. The school board and senior administration had not developed an educational philosophy for the district, nor had they attended sufficiently to the establishment of goals and objectives, the assessment of students’ needs and the evaluation of personnel, programs, and student achievement; 4. The superintendent and senior administration had not been accountable by the school board for failure to perform; and 5. The organizational structure created by the superintendent was ill-designed and ineffective in ensuring the control, accountability, and success of educational programs”. (Cresap, 1988, p. 13).

In addition, the district was not meeting state testing requirements, which stipulated that 75 percent of ninth graders achieve academic proficiency. During the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 school years, the district’s four high schools were below the required standard: 30 percent in the 1985-1986 school year, and 41 percent in the 1986-1987 school year.

An investigation of the district’s finances also found that the district had failed to achieve efficient, effective, and suitable business practices and procedures. The district practiced inconsistent payroll distribution methods, leaving it vulnerable to the misappropriation of funds. School buildings and grounds were in poor condition. It was further discovered that the district was unable to follow the recommendations for improvement outlined in previous audits. Unable to correct their existing problems, a recommendation was made to create and make the Jersey City School District a state operated district pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 7A-14. The district challenged the state takeover to maintain local control at the expense of \$1.1 million in legal fees. An

administrative law hearing was held in July 1988. The burden was placed on the state to show that the state takeover was not arbitrary, unreasonable, or capricious (N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-14e).

In 1989, the court refused to allow the argument that the district was inequitably funded as a defense. The attempt to use such an argument was based on the findings of an *Abbott* ruling which found the state's funding formula unconstitutional, resulting in the failure to adequately fund poor school districts. According to the court, the issue here was whether Jersey City used what funds were available to them in such a way as to deliver a thorough and efficient education (Leir, 1988). On July 26, 1989, the court agreed with the findings and recommendations of the comprehensive compliance investigation, concluding that the district was "so lost in its own way that it cannot be counted on to lead the children to educational quality" (*McCarroll v. Board of Education of Jersey City*, 1989). The court recommended that the state of New Jersey take control of the failed Jersey City educational system. In his report to the New Jersey Department of Education, Tractenberg et al. (2002) noted that state takeover was more successful in documenting the areas of management and responsibilities rather than implementing education programs (Tractenberg et al., 2002). The report concluded that the dominant theme in a takeover process is usually fiscal and management operations and not how education is delivered.

With a primary focus on fiscal matters, the state takeover missed the mark on educational improvement. Trachtenberg et al. (2002) drew a second conclusion: since the law does not anticipate a long-term operation within school districts, the focus should be on building local capacity and returning control to the school districts. The primary problem, Trachtenberg emphasized, is execution. No provision in the state takeover law

achieves the task of an implementation plan of returning control to local districts. He further argued that state intervention failed to adequately address the task of providing quality educational programs in New Jersey's poor school districts.

In addition, the statute does not provide a plan for struggling districts short of government takeover. Further, no clear prescription exists of what is to be accomplished by state operation. Rather than intervening with the purpose of providing the districts with assistance in establishing quality educational programs, state intervention has resulted in a lengthy process towards achieving educational improvement. Under the New Jersey State Takeover Law (1987), New Jersey became the first state in the country to take over the operations of school districts: Jersey City in 1989, Paterson in 1991, and Newark in 1995. In 2013, the city of Camden school district became the fourth district to be taken over and controlled by the state. The takeover process launches the removal of the local Board of Education, eliminates the position of the chief school administrator and other top level administrative staff, and replaces the chief school administrator with an appointed state district superintendent. An initial responsibility of the newly appointed state superintendent is to reorganize the central administration.

In addition, the performance of all district principals and vice-principals must be evaluated. In his report, *Developing a Plan for Reestablishing Local Control in the State Operated School Districts*,²⁷ the most comprehensive report on state operated schools districts in New Jersey, Professor Paul L. Tractenberg, Director of the Institute of Education Law and Policy at Rutgers Law School, Newark, illustrated that the takeover

²⁷ The complete report on restoring local control to state operated school districts is available at *Developing a Plan for Reestablishing Local Control in the State-Operated Districts* (http://ielp.rutgers.edu/docs/developing_plan_full.pdf).

statute is insufficient in “specific goals, quantifiable benchmarks, or assessment standards, or procedures for state operated districts” (Tractenberg et al., 2002, p 8). Rather than establishing unique goals, quantifiable benchmarks and assessment standards are the control measures and determining factors about whether a district should be taken over. The statute “provide[s] no guidance specifically applicable to state-operated districts or reforms required in those districts, or a method of determining whether reforms are likely to be sustained after the return to local control” (Tractenberg, et al., 2002, p 8).

The New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJ QSAC)

With the failure of the state’s attempt to provide a thorough and efficient system of education in New Jersey’s poor and urban school districts, it became evident that the state takeover law was not achieving its intended goal. In addition, federal requirements for educational accountability were not being met, resulting in a recommendation by the Rutgers- Newark Institute on Education Law and Policy (Tractenberg, et al., 2002) to adopt a single system accountability method. The intent of a single system of accountability was to have clear standards and objectives. The primary purpose of the system, resulting in the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum²⁸ (QSAC), was to establish an exit strategy for state operated school districts, provide mechanisms that would allow for the return of various functions to the district that would lead to local control, while maintaining state intervention in problematic areas. According to Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy, the “Department of Education does not want to run school districts, but we have a

²⁸ The New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) is the New Jersey Department of Education’s monitoring and evaluation system for public school districts. Its rules are compliance with the provisions of P.L. 2005, c. 235 and P.L. 2007, c. 16, §39a, which amended N.J.S.A., 18A:7A.

responsibility to make sure they run well. QSAC was established on the principals of uniform monitoring standards, efficiency, prevention, early identification of significant problems and DOE involvement only for the time necessary and only in areas of need” (Davy, 2007, p. 30). The new standards and objectives are used to measure the performance of school districts including state controlled districts, with the intent to return local control to the school district.

Unlike previous accountability and performance initiatives, the new approach shifts monitoring and evaluation from compliance to assistance, capacity building, and improvement. It is a single comprehensive accountability system consolidating and incorporating the monitoring requirements of applicable state laws and programs, and complements federally required improvements. The system gives focus to monitoring and evaluating school districts in five key areas which, based on research, are key components of effective school districts. These components are:

1. Instruction and program
2. Personnel
3. Fiscal management
4. Operations
5. Governance

Districts with a performance satisfying 80 percent to 100 percent of the indicators in each component are designated as a high performing district. Districts satisfying between 50 to 79 percent of the indicators are required to develop and to implement an improvement plan for each area of deficiency. These districts may also be required to undergo an in-depth evaluation. The indicators for each component place a focus on various areas that are given

a value point with the possibility of achieving a score of 100 percent. Depending on the type of school district, the number of points in Instruction and Program can range from 108 to 120. The indicators for each of the five components are:

1. Instruction and Program:
 - Student Performance
 - Curriculum
 - Instructional Priorities
 - Mandated Programs
 - Early Childhood Programs
 - High School Practices/Graduation
2. Personnel:
 - Appropriate certifications and licensing of personnel
 - Personnel Policies
 - Professional Development
3. Fiscal Management:
 - Budget Planning
 - Financial and Budget Control
 - Annual Audit
 - Treatment of Restricted Revenue
 - Efficiency
4. Operations:
 - Public School District Facilities
 - Student Conduct, School Safety, and security
 - Student Health
 - Student Support Services
5. Governance:

- District Board Policies Promoting Student Achievement
- District Board Training, Disclosure, and Operation
- Ethics Compliance
- District Board Policies, Procedures and By-Laws
- Standard School Board Practices
- Annual Evaluative Process
- District Board/Administration Collaboration
- District Board Budget Priorities
- District Board Communication.

At the time of the 1989 state takeover of the Jersey City school district, the State Board of Education noted that the district was only achieving 37 percent of the state's monitoring indicators. After an examination of a 2006 QSAC monitoring report progress was noted, Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy recommended that the components of Governing and Financial Management be returned to the district. The district had "met 57% of the indicators in Instruction and Program, 58% of the indicators in Personnel, 74% in Operations Management, 89% in Governance and 92% in Fiscal Management" (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). Similarly, the other state-operated and Level 11 Districts scored as follows:

- Asbury Park met 15 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 28 percent in Personnel, 72 percent in Operations Management, 11 percent in Governance, and 36 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Camden (State Controlled in 2013), met six percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, five percent in Personnel, 39 percent in Operations Management, 11 percent in Governance, and 31 percent in Fiscal Management.

- Irvington met 30 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 45 percent in Personnel, 55 percent in Operations Management, 44 percent in Governance, and 42 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Salem City met 69 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 78 percent in Personnel, 87 percent in Operations Management, 56 percent in Governance, and 85 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Trenton met 11 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 22 percent in Personnel, 67 percent in Operations Management, 22 percent in Governance, and 60 percent in Fiscal Management.

Newark met 39 percent of the indicators in Instruction and Program, 32 percent of the indicators in Personnel, 86 percent of the indicators in Operations Management, 45 percent in Governance, and 66 percent in Fiscal Management.

Conclusion

The nations' past history and failure to provide equal educational opportunities to the poor, urban and underrepresented minorities, has had a lasting affect. Although many court decisions made great attempts to create equality in education among poor and wealthy student, decades after the *Plessey* and *Brown* decisions there exist more work to be done. The *Robinson* and *Abbott* decisions are proofs that inequalities in education, among poor and wealthy school districts, continue to exist in the state of New Jersey. In its attempt to achieve district, school and student improvement, the state of New Jersey, with the implementation of the New Jersey State Takeover Law, missed the mark on educational improvement. The idea to adopt a single system accountability method is the attempt to achieve what the law could not.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RESEARCH SETTING: THE JERSEY CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Population

Many factors can impede school districts ability to deliver a quality education, particularly in poor and urban school districts, this chapter will examine some of these factors. According to the *2010 U.S. Census*, Jersey City has a population of 247,597 with a population density of 16,736.6 persons per square mile. It is located in Hudson County, which is the most densely populated county in the state and it is the largest city in the county. Hudson County is known as the “Gateway to America” because of its history as the first stop for many immigrants processed through Ellis Island. Although Jersey City has changed from an industrial manufacturing center to a service-producing sector (business, health, and person services), the city is still a major port of entry as well as the place of settlement for recent immigrants.

Although there has been a shift in the population, Jersey City is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the country. The *2010 U.S. Census* shows a racial population makeup of 0.51 percent Black or African-American, 27.57 percent Hispanic or Latino, 25.85 percent White, 23.67 percent Native Americans, and 0.07 percent Asian. Only 6 percent of White children are enrolled in the city’s comprehensive high schools. The remainder of the city’s White students may be found in parochial schools or the highly selective college preparatory public schools.

Jersey City has a large Kenyan community, Egyptian Coptic, and Moroccan community. Indians, Pakistanis, Guyanese, Nigerians, Vietnamese, Chinese, Haitians, Polish, Italians, Irish, and Filipinos also populate this culturally and racially diverse city.

The district's student population consists of an enrollment of 10,663 Latino Americans, 9,137 African Americans, 4,660 Asian Americans, 3,158 Caucasians, 187 Pacific Islanders, 96 Native Americans, and 296 who identify as multiracial. Among its elementary and secondary school population, the district boasts a total female population of 13,630 and a male population of 14,563.

Income Levels of Families

According to the *2010 U.S. Census*, 15.1 percent of Hudson County is comprised of people with an income below the poverty level compared to 9.4 percent with an income below the poverty level in the state of New Jersey. The per capita income of the residents of Jersey City is \$32,122 compared to the state at \$35,678. The median family income for Jersey City families was \$51,612 compared to New Jersey's median family income of \$72,512. This latter figure is well above the United States' medium family income of \$55,970 (U.S. Census, 2010). Although New Jersey has a median family income of \$51,612 this wealth does not include Hudson County, which has the highest poverty rate in New Jersey.

The percentage of Jersey City's population living in poverty is 16.4 percent. Jersey City's population with an income below the poverty level is 21.1 percent, which is above the state average poverty level of 12.5 percent. The percent of the population with an income below 50 percent of the poverty level is 7.4 percent, compared to the state at 4.1 percent (City-Data.com, 2010). The percentage of children in Jersey City living in poverty is 16 percent, compared to 14.6 percent total in the state of New Jersey. Children living in these conditions are more likely to be exposed to violence and environmental

toxins in their neighborhoods, and experience delays in their physical, cognitive, language, and emotional development that will affect their readiness for school. In addition, they may experience social and psychological difficulty in adolescence and adulthood and are more likely to drop out of school, have children out of wedlock, and be unemployed.

Educational Attainment

According to the district's February 2014 Vital Facts report, the Jersey City School District is comprised of seventy-nine schools. These schools serve a predominantly minority population, comprised of low-income students and potentially first generation college students. An indication of the district's educational distress is demonstrated by its underachieving schools and the high percentage of adults 25 and older who do not hold a high school diploma. According to the report, 14.15 percent of adults have no high school diploma, 30.00 percent have a high school diploma, and 23.15 percent have completed some college or an associate's degree. The percentage of adults in the same age group that had a bachelors degree was 20.65 percent and 12.05 percent held advanced degrees.

There are four parochial high schools in the district. These schools offer a competitive education for students whose family can afford to pay tuition. The success of these schools in comparison to the high school graduation and college enrollment rates average 90 to 95 percent. The literature presents the idea that families in low-income areas may believe that college is not an attainable goal because they cannot afford it. Further, research has indicated that parents from low-income districts are less likely to have graduated from college and therefore are unfamiliar with the college admissions

requirements. Both parents with some college exposure and wealthier students are conditioned to succeed in pursuit of the college admissions and application process, controlling for differences in educational aspirations. Tables 2 reflects the Educational Attainment of the district's Population 25 Years and Over from the 2010 U.S. Census, Table 3 shows the graduation rates of Parochial High Schools within the district.

Table 2

Education Attainment Levels of Families

Population 25 and Older 155,460	Number	Jersey %	City %	New Jersey%	US %
No High School Diploma	33,885	21.58		14.15	15.35
High School Graduate	41,532	26.45		30.00	29.24
Some College or Assoc. Degree	31,549	20.9		23.15	28.06
Bachelors Degree	32,572	20.74		20.65	17.52
Masters, professional or doctoral degree	17,475	11.13		12.05	9.84

(Source: 2010 U.S. Census)

Table 3

Parochial High Schools in Jersey City

Schools	Population	Post-Graduation Plans
Hudson Catholic High School	396	95% 4yr College
Saint Anthony's High School	220	95% 4yr College
Saint Peter's Preparation School	891	90% 4yr College
Saint Dominic's Academy	451	90% 4yr College
Total	1,598	

(Source: Parochial High Schools in Jersey City – 2016)

Dropout Rate

According to New Jersey Department of Education's 2014 - 2015 data, Jersey City's highest dropout rate occurred among ninth grade minority students. The total dropout rate for ninth graders in the 2014-2015 school years was 34. Twenty - four tenth graders dropped out, 20 eleventh graders dropped out, and 16 twelfth graders dropped out. Districtwide, the total number of students that dropped out of the district's schools

was 160. The total dropout rate for ninth graders in the 2013-2014 school years was 109. Fifty - seven tenth graders dropped out, 34 eleventh graders dropped out, and 12 twelfth graders dropped out. Districtwide, the total number of students that dropouted out of the district's schools was 292. This fact is particularly significant for these students because they are dropping out into a labor market that no longer has a need for unskilled labor. Jersey City, unlike other districts in New Jersey, does not provide traditional transitional junior high schools or middle schools to prepare students for adapting from a group or class schedule to an individual schedule. The Jersey City school district's elementary schools are comprised of grades K-8 and high schools are comprised of grades 9-12. The average high school dropout rate for high performing schools in the same District Factor Group (DFG) is 0 percent for Science High School located in Newark and 0 percent for the Dr. Ronald McNair Academy (a competitive school with rigorous academics) located in Jersey City (N.J. School Performance Report, 2013). In 1975, District Factor Groups were created to compare students' academic performance on statewide assessments across demographically similar school districts. African Americans and Hispanics have the highest dropout percentage.

Although New Jersey's statewide graduation rate climbed to 89.7 percent in 2015; Henry Snyder High school graduated only 56.51 percent in the 2015 school year and 41.84 percent in 2014. James J. Ferris High School graduated 71.21 percent in 2015 and 66.67 percent in 2014; Lincoln High School graduated 61.26 in 2015 and 55.08 in 2014. William L. Dickinson High School graduated 77.04 percent in 2015 and 73.01 percent in 2014. The graduation percentages represent some of the lowest graduation rates among school districts in Hudson County. However, the more competitive Dr. Ronald

E. McNair Academic High School graduated 100 percent of its senior population in the 2015 school year and 98.73 percent in 2014. Districtwide, the Jersey City School District graduated a total 73.68 percent of its student population in the 2015 school year and 67.15 in 2014.

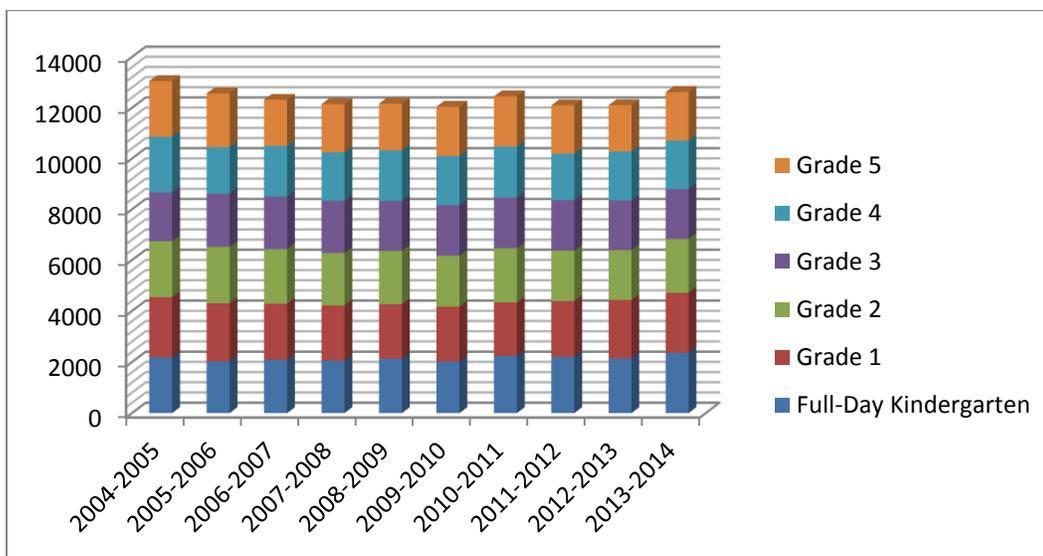
Growth in Student Enrollment

According to the *District Forecast of Jersey City Public Schools*, a report produced by the New York firm Urbanomics in February 2014, the district will experience a 25 percent increase in student enrollment by the year 2017. The report forecast that the expected increase in student enrollment will come from the downtown area. Most of the gain in enrollment will result from a large increase in the grade K-5 student population. To accommodate the increase in student population, the report makes the recommendation to reassign students in the Liberty Harbor North area of Jersey City to Liberty High School rather than Ferris High School. In addition, the report suggests that the district convert some Pre-K through 8 schools into K through 5 schools using two facilities that have been underutilized as middle schools. The study reflected past reports and concerns of an increase in student population in families with a pre-K student population.

The report's findings also indicates that a large capacity deficit over the next four years may translate into insufficient Pre-K slots to accomadate the increasing population. In 2005, a district facilities plan recommended the building of 13 Pre-K facilities, but to date only one has been completed. During the 2007-2008 school year,

it was reported that only space near Dickenson High School would be able to accommodate the growing student population.

During the 2012-2013 school year, the student population in Jersey City was 27,946. According to the district’s forecast, by 2017 the student population will increase to 34,841. This is an increase of 6,895 students, which translates into an annual increase of 1,723,75 students until 2017. Figure 2 reflects the differences in enrollment growth between variuos grades and provides support to the report’s findings.



	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Full-Day Kindergarten	2184	2025	2085	2048	2136	2017	2,245	2,198	2,141	2,361
Grade 1	2356	2279	2198	2170	2137	2157	2,089	2,192	2,294	2,356
Grade 2	2206	2223	2148	2063	2089	1999	2,128	1,982	1,960	2,119
Grade 3	1922	2093	2070	2058	1965	1985	2,003	1,988	1,956	1,962
Grade 4	2191	1830	1995	1905	1993	1943	2,009	1,828	1,928	1,911
Grade 5	2189	2115	1817	1900	1839	1938	1,974	1,909	1,822	1,910

Figure 2. Student Growth, 2004 - 2014

The district has plans to construct two buildings, one in the Heights and the other in the Greenville section of the city. The Greenville facility will replace the delapidating School #20 building. The study also recommends that more students be sent to three of

the district's high schools, Lincoln and Ferris, with fewer going to Dickinson. It also recommends transforming the new School #20 into a pre-kindergarten once construction is completed. The study further recommended that a lottery system be implemented for some seats in the high schools. Although a controversial issue, the study also recommends a change in the city's zoning which will have a great influence on which schools students could attend. The study further suggests that students in school zones 15 and 38 be sent to School #34. This will decrease the number of students attending Schools #23, #27, and #28, which are overcrowded. The study cautions that the needs of families and children should be carefully considered before any decisions are made. On April 11, 2017 the Jersey City Board of Education held a meeting on the issue of rezoning schools in the Heights. The Jersey City Board of Education is changing districts in the Heights to accommodate a new school, to resolve overcrowding in two schools in the Heights.

District Factor Grouping

Researcher David Berliner (2013) argues that there is a correlation between poverty and educating the poor and therefore, academic achievement can be heavily constrained by factors that are outside of the classrooms and schools (Berliner, 2013). He suggest that it is the out of school factors that play a powerful role and have a tremendous effect on the academic achievement of the urban and poor student. To factor and group school districts, the New Jersey Office of State Planning ranks New Jersey municipalities according to eight separate indicators that measure aspects of social, economic, physical, and fiscal conditions in each municipality. The indicators are then used as a factor in distributing certain need-

based funds. The indicators are: Percent Change in Population, Children on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Per Capital Income, Unemployment Rate, Equalized Three Year Tax Range, Equalized Valuation Per Capita, Pre-1940 Housing, and Percent Housing Substandard. The index ranges from most distressed (Rank 1) to least distressed (567), according to each of the eight indicators.

Jersey City is classified as Urban Level I, a densely settled and developed core community that serves as the administrative and business centers for the developed surrounding areas. Jersey City is ranked in the top 2 percent of the Municipal Distress Index. The city was designated as a low-wealth urban, special needs district. A district is categorized as such if it falls in the two lowest socio-economic groups of the Department of Education's districts classification system, or if 15 percent of its students are eligible for Aid to Families with dependent Children (AFDC) and at least 1,000 such students are enrolled in the district. The data shows that a large portion of the children in Jersey City live below the poverty line. These districts cannot be expected to achieve at the same academic level as wealthy and suburban school districts because of their social and economic differences and disparities. Schools are situated in neighborhoods in which the families can undermine all work in the school and classroom because families who live in impoverished neighborhoods lack basic necessities such as health care to raise a healthy student. Coupled with a poorly run and declining school system, school districts may find difficulty in educating students.

The existing inequalities in our educational systems are rooted in economic problems and social pathologies that are too deep to be overcome by schools alone (Berliner, 2013). According to Berliner (2013), childhood poverty is a violation of human

rights. He supports his position by citing Article 27 of the UN Charter,²⁹ which states that the government should “recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (Article 27 of the UN Charter). Article 27 further provides that “governments should assist parents to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programs, particularly, with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing” (Article 27 of the UN Charter).

Berliner suggests that we should examine how other nations help people exit from poverty, since as a nation we have few mechanisms for social mobility. He further notes that although there is a correlation between poverty and academic achievement, this correlation tends to be ignored and associated with other causal relationships. He questions why great attention and resources are concentrated on trying to fix what happens inside low-performing schools when the contributing factor of low performance may reside outside of the school (Berliner, 2013). Berliner (2013) suggests that attention and resources toward helping families in the communities that are served by urban and poor schools is needed.

Berliner (2013) also illustrates an important aspect of educational inequality in the United States between African American, Hispanic, and White students. That is, if poor and urban students are provided with the same educational opportunity as their affluent white counterparts, the result would culminate into the country becoming the seventh

²⁹ See UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*, New York: UNICEF, 2005.

highest scoring nation in mathematics, the second highest scoring nation in reading, and the fourth highest in science (Berliner, 2013).

Conclusion

A contributing factor to the disparities between African-American, Hispanic, and White students is how race and schooling are bound together. Studies show how segregation contributes to the disparities that exist between urban poor and wealthy students. Further, research has indicated that when considering the test scores of students who attend schools with few or no poverty-stricken students, these students perform well. Studies have also illustrated that where there are large populations of poor students, test performance is poor. Further, research have shown that if the incomes of poor families increase, they were given the opportunity to receive equal health care, and their communities were improved (better access to housing, less gang violence), perhaps the academic achievement of the poor and urban student would begin to look better.

CHAPTER SIX

CASE STUDY AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS

A 2012 New Jersey Department of Education report, which faulted the Jersey City school district for performing poorly in the Instruction and Program and Personnel areas of the QSAC monitoring system, suggested that the Department of Education might partly share blame in the district's poor performance. Under the QSAC system, the state Department of Education controls the areas of Instruction and Program and Personnel, areas that have mostly impacted the district, and have been controlled by the Department of Education since QSAC's implementation. The report detailed and criticized the district's failure to achieve the required 80 percent threshold in the two areas. Calculated from the 2010-2011 school year, the district scored 62 percent in Instruction and Program and 65 percent in Personnel. In 2009, three years prior to the 2012 report and while under continued state control, the district showed no significant difference in the two areas. The district scored 66 percent in Instruction and Program and 68 percent in Personnel. However, the 2012 report indicated improvement in the area of Operations at 100 percent, but showed a decrease in the area of Governance, an area controlled by the board, from 89 percent in 2009 to 45 percent in 2012.

According to the district's 2013-2014 QSAC scores, the district remained consistent, failing to achieve the 80 percent threshold in Instruction and Program. In that area, the district scored 68 percent, but showed significant improvement in the other areas: Fiscal Management at 92 percent, Governance at 100 percent, Operations at 100 percent, and Personnel at 100 percent. As a result of these achievements, on October 7, 2015, the New Jersey State Board of Education acted on Commissioner David Hespe's

recommendation to return the areas of Operations and Personnel to the Jersey City School District.³⁰ The district had previously won control of Governance and Finance, but Instruction and Program had not been returned. In his report, Commissioner Hespe cited plans to establish a working group that would include a variety of practitioners, community members, school officials, and other professionals to explore the possibility of returning that area to local control.

QSAC: A Case Study of the Jersey City School District

With forty years of experience in the Jersey City School District, participant #12 states that the Jersey City School District was the model for NJ QSAC. He outlined thirteen activities the district had been performing towards district and student improvement;

- Implementing whole school reform throughout the district with emphasis on school based improvement efforts
- Offering extended school day in all schools, as well as a special weekend program called “Super Saturdays”
- Offering summer school opportunities for all students
- Targeting special programs to ensure that students gain the skills and knowledge required in the Core Curriculum Content Standards
- Establishing task forces for student attendance and truancy

³⁰ Christie Administration Announces Return of Control of Operations and Personnel to Jersey City Schools, Commissioner Establishes Working Group to Create a Plan to Return Local Control to Jersey City Schools, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/news/2015/1007jcs.htm>.

- Stationing 10 attendance officers in the high schools
- Holding principals accountable for attendance objectives
- Creating a sanction and reward system for students attendance
- Refining dropout reporting procedure
- Establishing Liberty High School, a new alternative
- Working with the local community college, Hudson County Community College, to partner and to ensure a free two - year college degree for all public high school students. As a case study of the Jersey City School District., this section examines perceptions' of participants in each QSAC component.

Instruction and Program

The largest finding of the research reflects perceptions that as a system of accountability, QSAC largely consists of Instruction and Program which has had the greatest impact on the district and its schools. This finding is based on the belief that testing and assessment methods are solely controlled and designed by the State Department of Education. The process of controlling the testing mechanism or assessment process is perceived as putting the district at a disadvantage. The idea that QSAC largely consist of Instruction and Program is a shared perception at both the district and school level. Because of the districts' demographics, economic disparities and lack of resources, it is perceived that a separate or different testing system should exist. This thought has been expressed by several participants;

Those individuals absent from input in school districts on how students should be tested put the district and students at a disadvantage, because we are more familiar with our population. Because of a testing mechanisms designed and controlled by the state, absent input from school districts on how students should be tested, the district of Jersey City will continue to perform poorly in the area of Instruction and Program. (Participant #12)

This opinion is rooted in the belief that rather than dealing solely with accountability, QSAC must deal with the core issue: the classroom. In fact, the study found strong opinions among several administrators that:

The current state testing method puts urban and poor districts at a disadvantage, because their social and economic environments are different from students in suburban and wealthy districts. This is because students in wealthy environments are exposed to educational experiences that enhance their abilities to perform and to achieve well academically (Participants #8).

According to Jersey City School District's Vital Facts, the district has a total of 3,732 Special Education Students and a total of 3,215 English Language Learners.

The testing system is not conducive to special needs and special education students. There must be a better tool to analyze the performance of special needs and special education students. These students learn differently than other students, therefore, they are not on target with the state's standard curriculum. (Participant #5). With a large Special Education population it is a shared belief among participants that a separate testing system is needed, specifically for this population.

Prior to the implementation of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), discussed in chapter seven, there were three levels of which student Proficiency was measured and categorized. Achieving a score in the range of 250-300 falls into the category of Advanced Proficient. A score that falls in the range of 200-249 is considered Proficient in the subject area. A score within the range of 100-199 is considered to be below Proficiency, placing the student in the Partially Proficient category. This is important to this research, because with the implementation of the PARCC in the spring of 2015, student progress falls into one of five separate categories: Not Yet Meeting Expectations (Level 1), Partially Meeting Expectations (Level 2), Approaching Expectations (Level 3), Meeting Expectations (Level 4) and Exceeding Expectations (Level 5). District comparison data, 2015 – 2016 is examined in chapter seven.

Based on the district's *Focus and Priority School: Updates and Report* (October 2014) there are three PK-05 schools within the school district that have been classified as a Focus or Priority schools. The Alexander Sullivan School, a Focus school, has been classified because of low sub group performance. The Jotham Wakeman and the Frank Conwell schools have been classified as Focus schools because of large within-school gaps. Four of the district's PK-08 schools: Julia Barnes, Whitney M. Young, Mahatma Gandhi, and Chaplain Watters, are classified as Focus schools due to low sub-group performance. The James F. Murray School has been classified as a Focus school because of a large within-school gap. The Martin Center for the Arts has been classified a Priority school because of low student performance. Two of the district's sixth to eighth grade schools and the Ezra Nolan School have been designated as Focus schools because of a large within-

school gap and Franklin Williams was designated as a Priority school due to low student performance.

Among the secondary schools, Ferris High School has been classified as a Focus school because of a large within-school gap and Lincoln High School was classified as a “Priority school because of SIG funding. In addition, both Snyder and Lincoln High Schools have experienced low performance in student achievement. The system of measuring students’ progress is perceived as an ineffective way to measure student proficiency. For example, one respondent stated that “the testing system is not conducive to the environments of students in urban and poor school districts (Participant #3).” In fact one participant argued that “Given the opportunity two separate state tests should be administered, one for wealthy and suburban school districts and another for urban and poor school districts” (Participant #6). Another participant noted that, “The problem here is that when students answer questions on these assessments, there is no real correlation from one test to the other. The problem is that when students answer questions on the state assessments, there is no real alignment from one test to another. Statistically, there is no true correlation reflected in the testing structure” (Participant #13). With no correlation, alignment or connection from one test to another in content areas, it is perceived that students from urban and poor districts lack the skills to achieve within a state controlled system of testing.

As the study illustrates, under the federal accountability of No Child Left Behind, states were required to set annual proficiency standards in Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics. The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) requires Elementary and Middle schools to achieve scores of 59 percent proficiency in Language

Arts and Literacy and 66 percent proficiency in Mathematics. In addition, high schools are required to achieve Proficiency levels of 85 percent in Language Arts Literacy and 74 percent proficiency in Mathematics on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

There are sixteen schools within the district of Jersey City that are classified as Focus Schools or Priority Schools under New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's revamped accountability system. These schools fall under the following categories:

- Low Graduation Rates: High schools with a 2011 graduation rate lower than 75 percent.
- Largest Within-School Gaps: schools with the largest in-school proficiency gap between the highest-performing subgroup, and the combined proficiency of the two lowest-performing subgroups. Schools in this category have a proficiency gap of 43.5 percentage points or higher.
- Lowest Subgroup Performance: schools whose two lowest-performing subgroups rank among the lowest combined proficiency rates in the state. Schools in this category have an overall proficiency rate for these lowest-performing subgroups of 29.2 percent or lower (New Jersey Department of Education, 2013).
- Lowest-Performing: schools with the lowest school-wide proficiency rates in the state. Priority schools in this category have an overall three-year proficiency rate of 31.6 percent or lower.
- SIG school: schools that are part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program.

The bar graphs in this study capture a combined four-year percentage average of each school's student population performance at Advanced Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Proficient by grade levels. The graphs individually describe how students scored in Language Art Literacy and Mathematics, showing proficiency trends by grade span.

The Alexander D. Sullivan School: Proficiency Trends

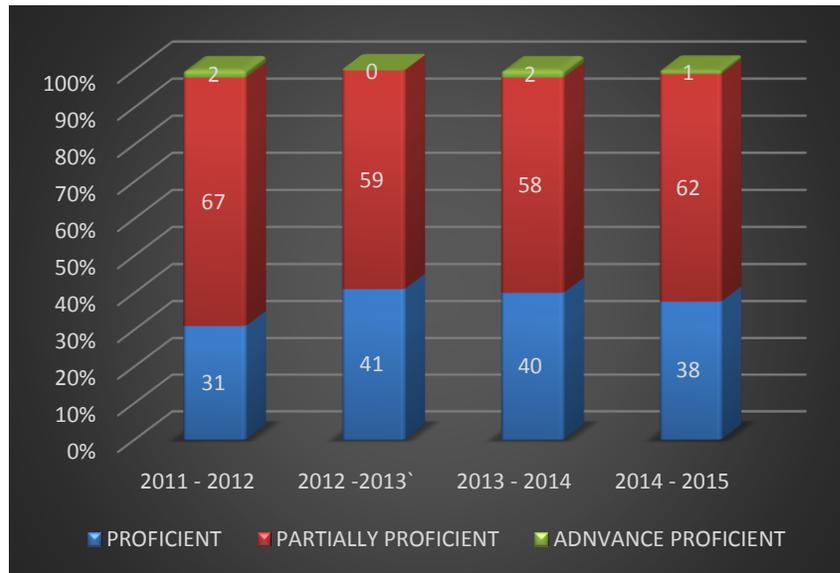


Figure 3. Language arts literacy, grade span PK-05

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

For the 2011-2012 school years, 2 percent of the student population at the Alexander D. Sullivan School achieved Advance Proficiency on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in language arts literacy, 67 percent performed Partially Proficient, and 31 percent performed at the Proficient level. Minimum improvement was seen during the 2012-2013 school year with 41 percent of students at Proficient, 59 percent of students at the Partially Proficient level, and 0 percent of the student population at the Advanced Proficient level.

The 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years showed very little improvement. For the 2013-2014 school year, 2 percent of the student population achieved Advanced Proficient, 58 percent Partially Proficient, and 40 percent Proficient. School year 2014-

2015 shows that only 1 percent of the student population achieved Advanced Proficient, 62 percent Partially Proficient, and 38 percent Proficient.

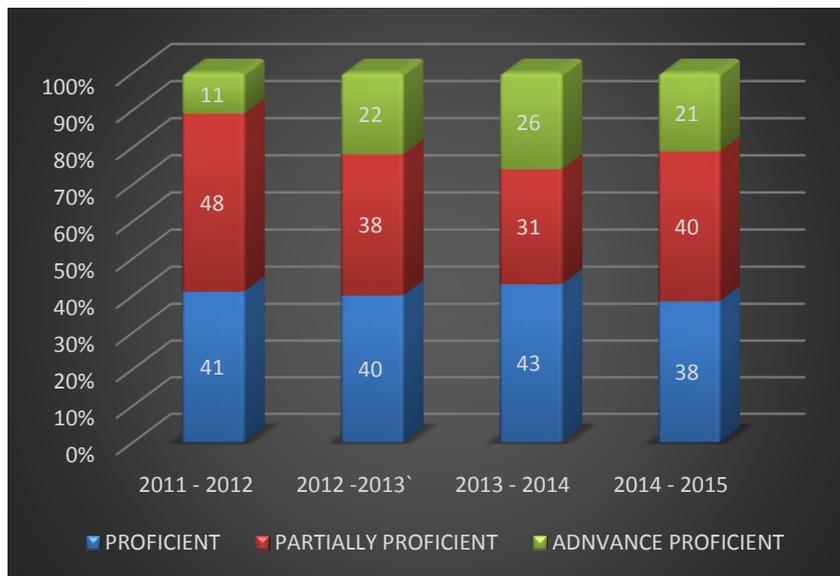


Figure 4. Mathematics, grade span PK-05

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The school achieved significantly better at the Advanced Proficient level in mathematics. For the 2011-2012 school year, 11 percent of the school's population achieved the Advanced Proficient level, while only 48 percent were Partially Proficient, and 41 percent were Proficient. During the 2012-2013 school year, 22 percent of the school's population achieved Advanced Proficient, 38 percent Partially Proficient, and 40 percent Proficient. The 2013-2014 school year showed that 26 percent of the school's population achieved at Advanced Proficient, 31 percent Partially Proficient, and 43 percent Proficient. Combining the 2013-2014 proficiency levels at 26 percent Advanced Proficient and 43 percent Proficient, the school had achieved the NJ ASK threshold of 69 percent proficiency in mathematics. Twenty – one percent of the student population achieved

Advanced Proficient during the 2014-2015 school year, 40 percent were Partially Proficient, and 38 percent were Proficient.

The Jotham W. Wakeman School: Proficiency Trends

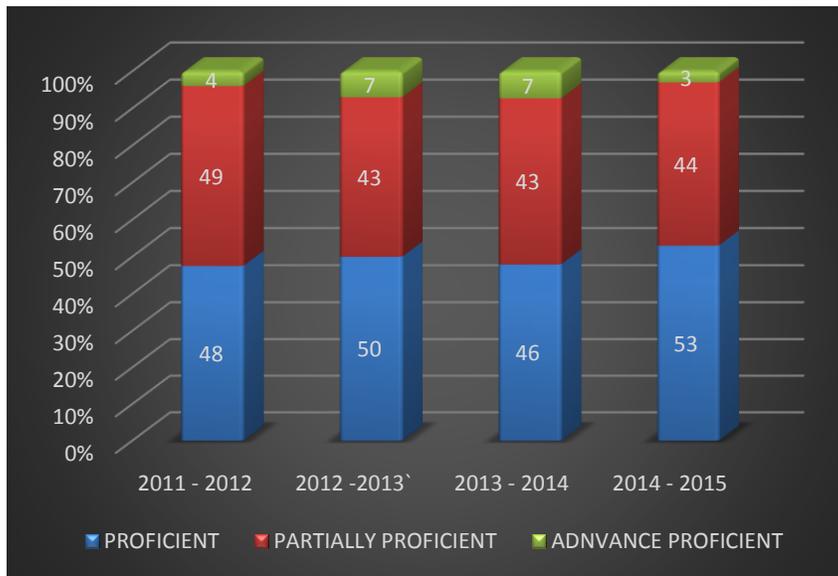


Figure 5. Language arts literacy

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The Jotham W. Wakeman School's proficiency levels were not much better than the Alexander D. Sullivan School. The 2011-2012 school year show that proficiency trends in language arts literacy were at 4 percent for Advance Proficiency, 49 percent of students were at Partially Proficient, and 48 percent were Proficient. For the 2012-2013 school year, 7 percent of the school's population scored within the Advanced Proficient category, 43 percent was Partially Proficient, and 50 percent achieved Proficiency. The 2013-2014 school year showed similar achievement with 7 percent of the students achieving the Advance Proficiency level, 43 percent at the Partially Proficient level, and 46 percent at the Proficient level. The 2014-2015 school year saw similar achievement levels with only

3 percent of students achieving at Advanced Proficient, 44 percent at Partially Proficient, and 53 percent of students achieving Proficient.

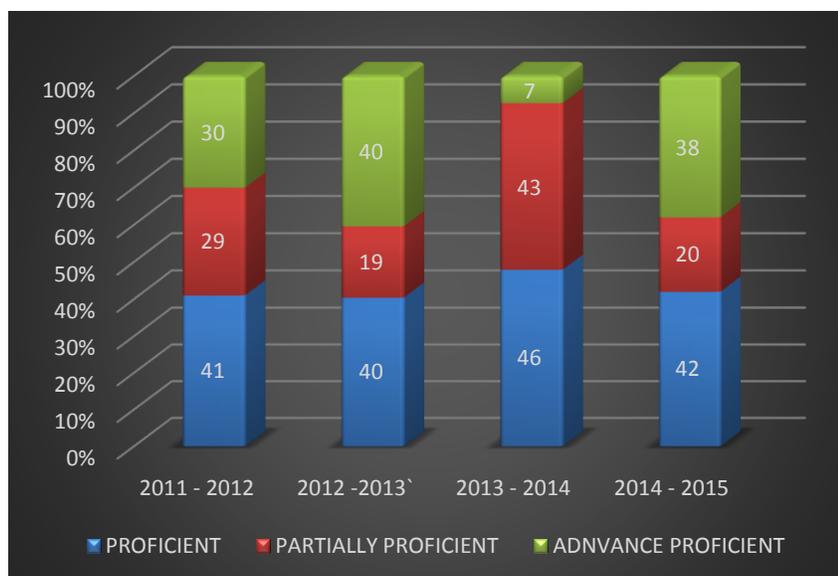


Figure 6. Mathematics

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Data for mathematics proficiency presents an interesting observation for three of the school years, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2014-2015 at the Advanced Proficient level. In the 2011-2012 school year, 30 percent of the school's population achieved at the Advance Proficiency level, 29 percent at the Partially Proficient level, and 41 percent at the Proficient level. In the 2012-2013 school year, 40 percent of the students achieved Advanced Proficient, 19 percent were Partially Proficient, and 40 percent were Proficient. Similarly, in the 2014-2015 school year, 38 percent of the school's student population achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, 20 percent at the Partially Proficient level, while 42 percent achieved at the Proficient level. The combination of percentages of students at both the Advanced Proficient and Proficient levels in all three years indicates that in those years the school achieved or exceeded the 69 percent NJ ASK threshold in mathematics.

The Frank R. Conwell School: Proficiency Trends

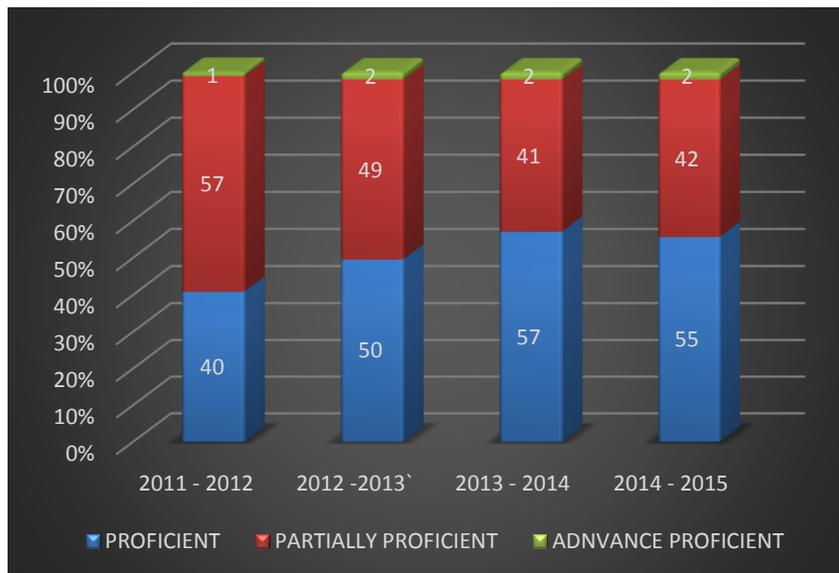


Figure 7. Language arts literacy

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

For the Frank R. Conwell School during the 2011-2012 school year, 1 percent of its student population achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, 57 percent were at the Partially Proficient level, and 41 percent at the Proficient level for language arts literacy. In the 2012-2013 school years, 2 percent achieved the Advanced Proficient level, while 49 percent achieved the Partially Proficient level and 50 percent were Proficient. In school year 2013-2014, again 2 percent of the student population achieved Advanced Proficient and 57 percent of the population achieved Proficient, hitting the 59 percent mark of the NJ ASK requirement for language arts literacy. Data for the 2014-2015 school years reflect that 2 percent of the students achieved at Advanced Proficient, 42 percent achieved at Partially Proficient, and 55 percent achieved at Proficient.

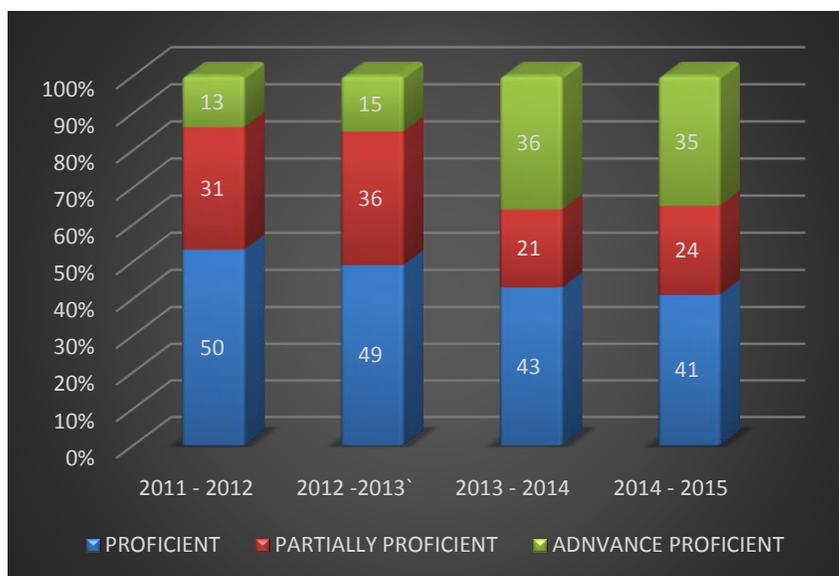


Figure 8. Mathematics

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

In mathematics, there were significant increases for the Frank R. Conwell School at the Advanced Proficient level throughout a four-year span. In school year 2011-2012, 13 percent of the school's student population achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, 31 percent at the Partially Proficient level, and 50 percent at the Proficient level. Improvement at the Advanced Proficient level continued in the 2012-2013 school year with 15 percent of the students achieving at that level, 36 percent achieving the Partially Proficient level, and 49 percent achieving the Proficient level.

The 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years saw a greater increase in the Advanced Proficient category. In the 2013-2014 school year, 36 percent of the school's student population achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, but there was a decrease in the number of students in the Partially Proficient level at 21 percent and 43 percent of the school's students achieved Proficient. The 2014-2015 school year shows similar achievement in the Advanced Proficient category, with 35 percent of the student population achieving at that level, 24 percent achieving at the Partially Proficient level, and 41 percent

achieving at the Proficient level. Combining the achievement scores for school years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 in the Advanced Proficient and Proficient categories together in each year indicates that the school exceeded the 69 percent NJ ASK requirement, at 79 percent for school year 2013-2014 and 76 percent for the 2014-2015 school years.

Whitney M. Young Jr. School: Proficiency Trends

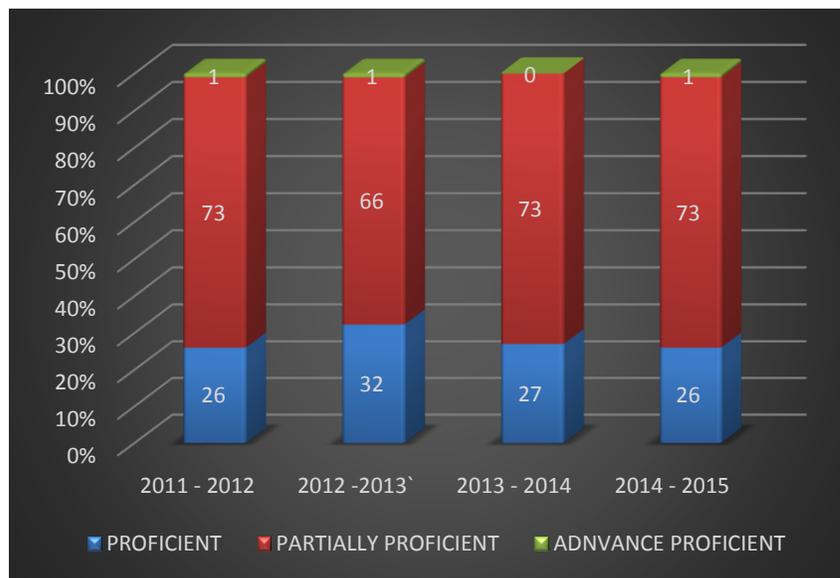


Figure 9. Language arts literacy, grade span PK-07

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Larger gaps in students' ability to achieve at the Proficient level appeared in the Whitney M. Young Jr. School for grade span PK-07, in comparison to grade span PK-05 in language arts literacy. During the 2011-2012 school year, only 1 percent of the student population achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, while 73 percent achieved at the Partially Proficient level, and 26 percent achieved at the Proficient level. In school year 2012-2013, again only 1 percent of the student population achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, while 66 percent were Partially Proficient, and 32 percent were Proficient

in language arts literacy. During school year 2013-2014, 0 percent of the number of students achieved the Advanced Proficient level, 73 percent were Partially Proficient, and only 27 percent were Proficient. Data for the 2014-2015 school year shows that 1 percent of the student population achieved Advanced Proficient, 73 percent achieved Partially Proficient, and 26 percent achieved Proficient.

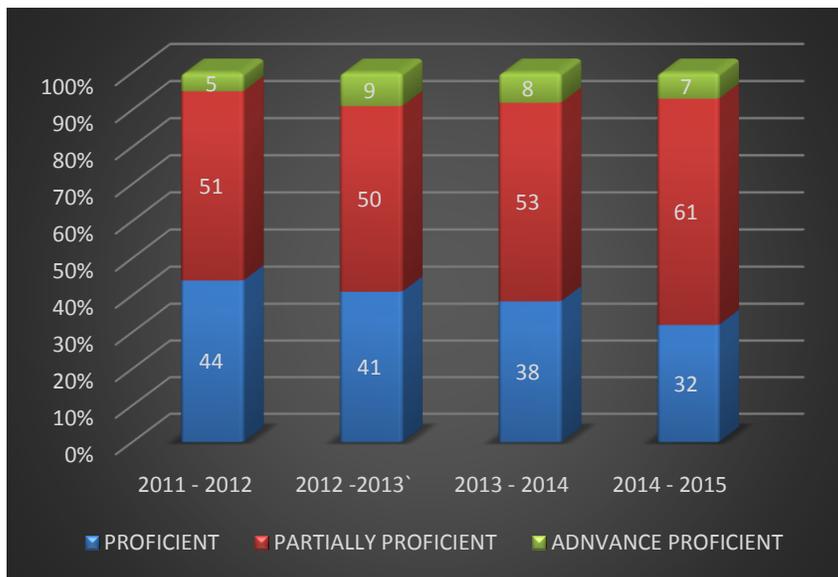


Figure 10. Mathematics, grade span PK-07

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Unlike the significant achievement in mathematics for grade Span PK-05, particularly at the level of Advanced Proficient, the same was not achieved in mathematics for grade Span PK-07. In school year 2011-2012, 5 percent of the school's students achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, 51 percent were Partially Proficient, and 44 percent were Proficient. School year 2012-2013 saw 9 percent of the school's students achieve at Advanced Proficient, 50 percent achieve at Partially Proficient, and 41 percent achieve at Proficient. Eight percent of the school's students achieved Advanced Proficient in school year 2013-2014, 53 percent were Partially Proficient, and 38 percent were

Proficient. For school year 2014-2015, 7 percent of the students achieved Advanced Proficient, 61 percent achieved Partially Proficient, and 32 percent achieved Proficient.

Mahatma K. Gandhi School: Proficiency Trends

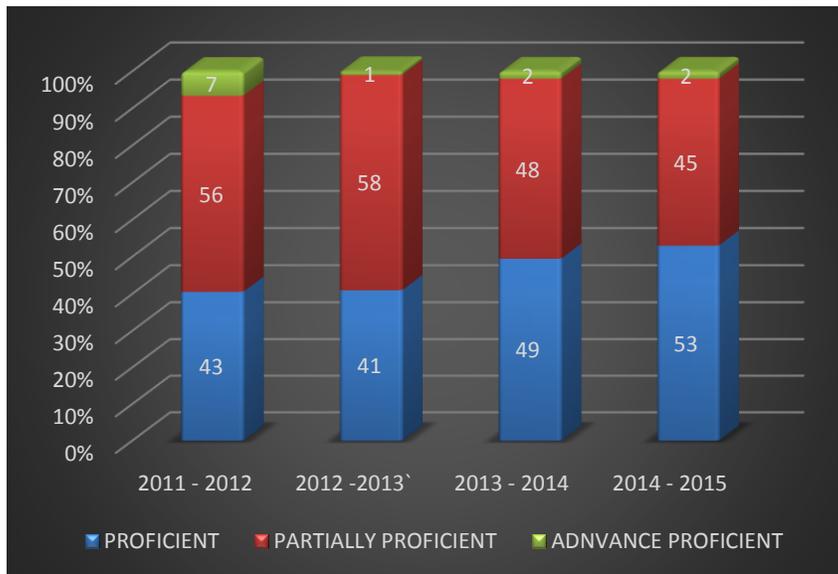


Figure 11. Language arts literacy, grade span PK-08

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Schools within the PK-08 grade span had experienced less success than the other grade spans, achieving the required threshold in both language arts literacy and mathematics. For the Mahatma K. Gandhi School in school year 2011-2012, 2 percent of the school's students achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, 56 percent achieved at the Partially Proficient level, and 43 percent achieved at the Proficient level in language arts literacy. During school year 2012-2013, 1 percent of the student population achieved at Advanced Proficient, 58 percent achieved at Partially Proficient, and 41 percent achieved at Proficient. There was no significant achievement shown in school year 2013-2014, with only 2 percent of the school's students at Advanced Proficient, 48 percent at Partially Proficient, and 49 percent at Proficient. School year 2014- 2015 results were somewhat

similar, with 2 percent of students at Advanced Proficient, 45 percent at Partially Proficient, and 53 percent at Proficient.

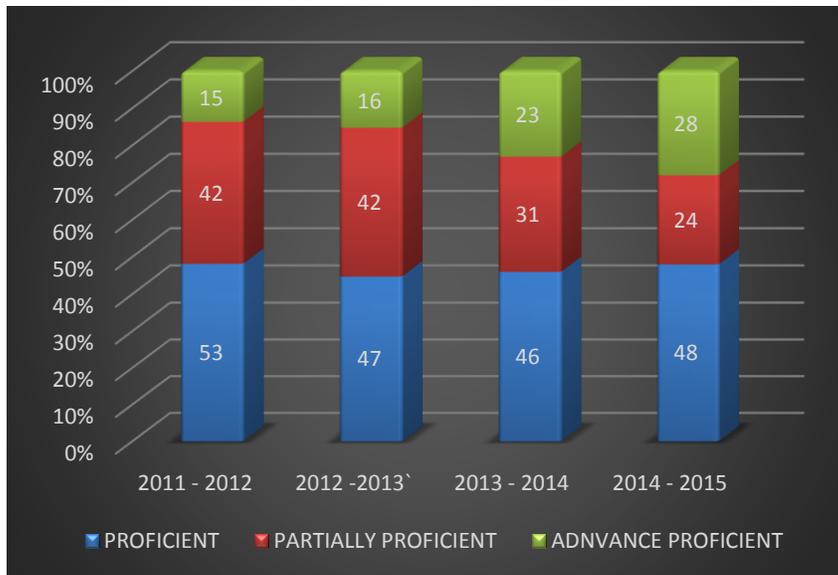


Figure 12. Mathematics, grade span PK-08

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Although the number of students at the Advanced Proficient level had improved over the years in mathematics, this number still did not satisfy the 69 percent required threshold of students' proficient in school years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. During the 2011-2012 school year, 15 percent of the school's students achieved at the Advanced Proficient level, 42 percent achieved at the Partially Proficient level, and only 43 percent achieved at the Proficient level. School year 2012-2013 saw 16 percent of the school's students achieve at the Advanced Proficient level, 42 percent achieve at the Partially Proficient level, and 47 percent achieve at the Proficient level. A larger number of students achieved Advanced Proficient at 23 percent during school year 2013-2014. Thirty-one percent were Partially Proficient and 46 percent were Proficient. A greater number of

students achieved Advanced Proficient at 28 percent during school year 2014-2015. Twenty-four percent were Partially Proficient and 48 percent were Proficient.

Chaplain Charles Watters School: Proficiency Trends

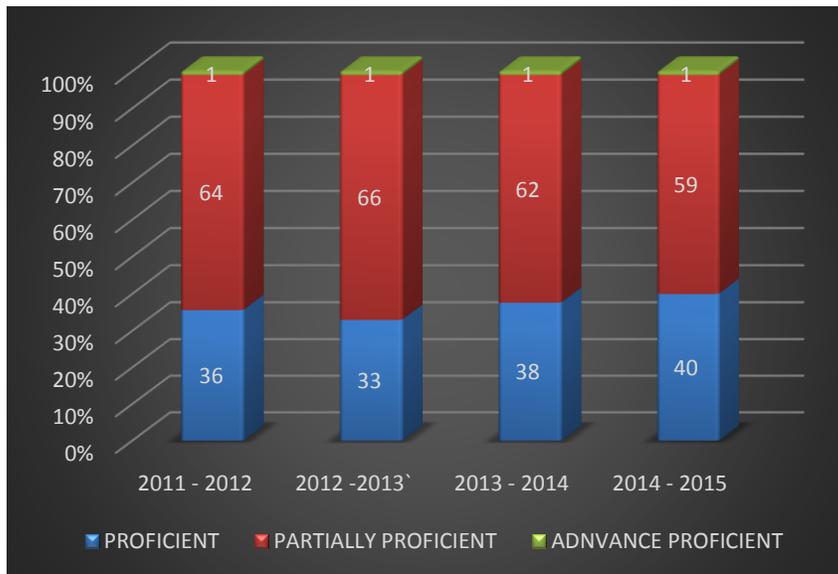


Figure 13. Language arts literacy, grade span PK-08

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Larger numbers of students at the Partially Proficient level appeared at the Chaplain Charles Watters School. In school year 2011-2012, 64 percent of the school's students tested in the Partially Proficient category while only 36 percent were Proficient and 1 percent were Advanced Proficient. During school year 2012-2013, 66 percent of the student population were Partially Proficient, 33 percent were Proficient, and 1 percent were Advanced Proficient. Similar achievement was seen in school year 2013-2014 with 62 percent of its students Partially Proficient, 38 percent were Proficient, and 1 percent was Advanced Proficient. Little change was seen in the 2014-2015 school year: 59 percent of students were at the Partially Proficient level, 40 percent were at the Proficient level, and 1 percent were at the Advanced Proficient level.

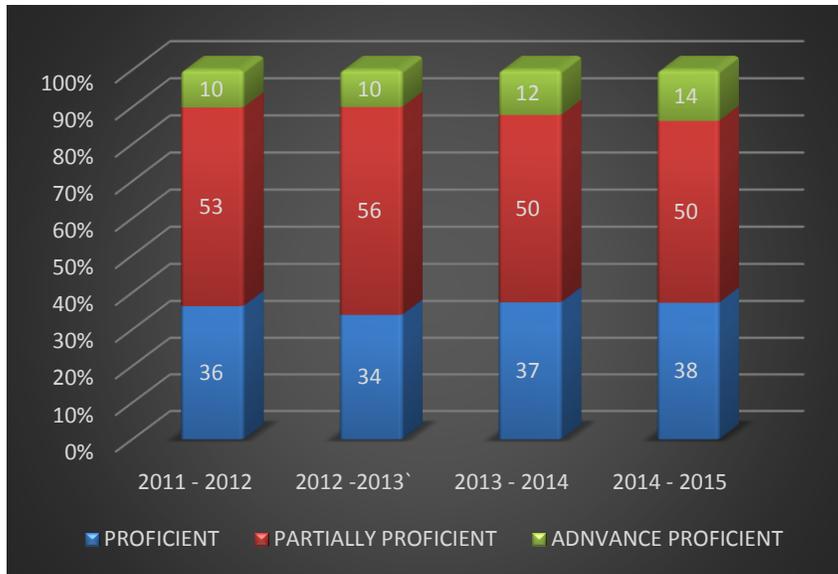


Figure 14. Mathematics, grade span PK-08

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The school's ability to achieve the required threshold of 69 percent in mathematics was unsuccessful during a four-year span. In school year 2011-2012, 10 percent of the school's students achieved at Advanced Proficient, 53 percent achieved at Partially Proficient, and 36 percent achieved at Proficient. School year 2012- 2013 saw the same number of students achieve at the Advanced Proficient level at 10 percent; 56 percent achieved at the Partially Proficient level, and 34 percent achieved at the Proficient level. A slight increase in the number of students occurred in the number of students achieving Advanced Proficient in the 2013-2014 school year with 12 percent of students achieving at that level, 50 percent achieving at the Partially Proficient level, and 37 percent achieving at the Proficient level. School year 2014-2015 also saw a slight increase in the number of students at the Advanced Proficient level with 14 percent of the school's students testing in that category, while 50 percent remained Partially Proficient and 36 percent remained Proficient.

Julia A. Barnes School: Proficiency Trends

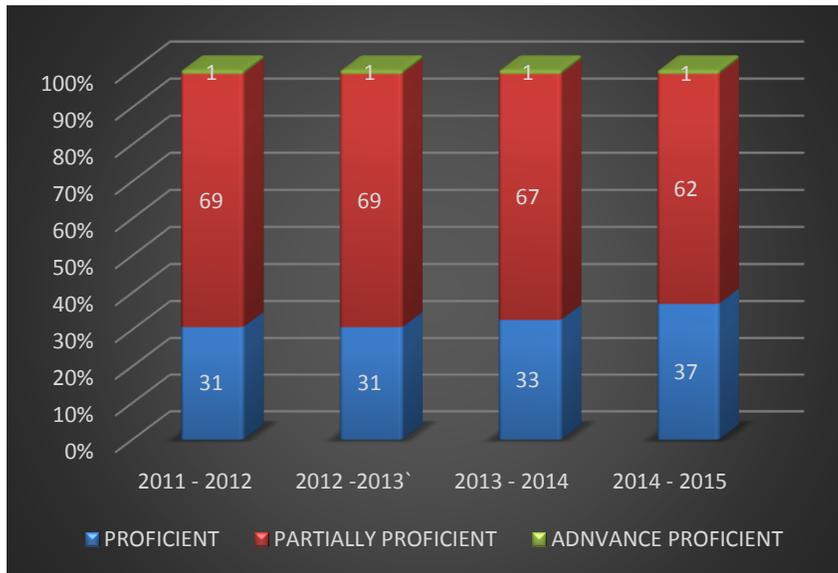


Figure 15. Language arts literacy

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Significant numbers of students in the Julia A. Barnes School tested Partially Proficient in the 2011-2012 school year for language arts literacy, measuring at 66 percent, while 31 percent measured Proficient and 1 percent measured at Advanced Proficient. Similarly, in the 2012-2013 school year, 69 percent of the school's students tested Partially Proficient and again only 31 percent of its students were Proficient. The number of students at Advanced Proficient mirrored the 2011-2012 achievement level at 1 percent. The 2013-2014 school year saw 67 percent of the school's student population fall into the Partially Proficient category, while 33 percent were Proficient and 1 were Advanced Proficient. The school found no marginal success in the 2014-2015 school in its attempt to achieve the NJ ASK requirement of 59 percent. In that year, 62 percent of the student population achieved Partially Proficient, 37 percent were Proficient, and only 37 percent tested at the Proficient level.

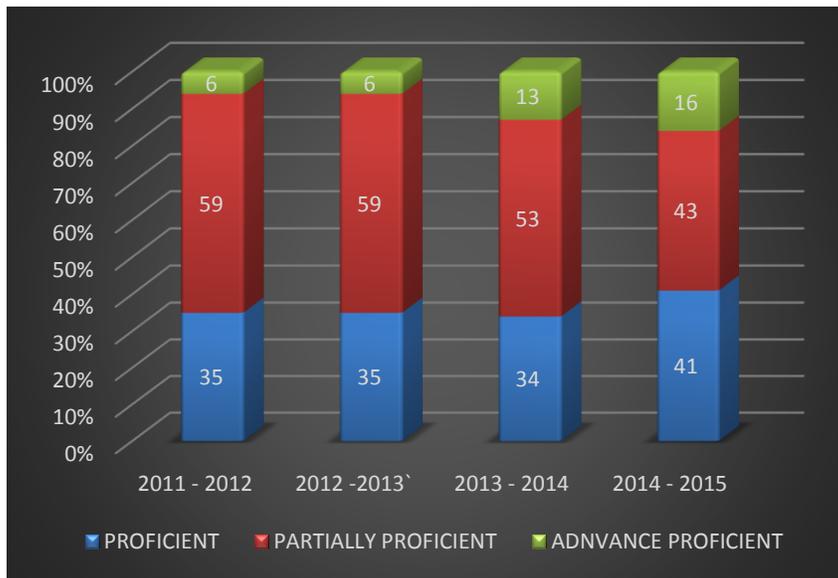


Figure 16. Mathematics

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The school's attempt to achieve a level of proficiency in mathematics at 66 percent was also not successful, although the number of students in the Advanced Proficient category had slightly increased within a four-year span. In the 2011-2012 school year, 6 percent of the school's population were Advanced Proficient, 50 percent were at the Partially Proficient level, and 35 percent were at the Proficient level. The 2012-2013 proficiency scores were the same as the 2010-2011 school years, with 6 percent of the school's students at Advanced Proficient, 59 percent at Partially Proficient, and 35 percent at Proficient. The number of students at the Advanced Proficient level in school year 2013-2014 a little more than doubled from the previous year to 13 percent, 53 percent were Partially Proficient, and 34 percent were Proficient. School year 2014-2015 saw an additional increase in the number of students at Advanced Proficient, with 16 percent of students in that category, 43 percent were Partially Proficient, and 41 percent were Proficient. Although significant increases were achieved at the Advanced Proficient level

during school years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, not enough improvement was achieved to meet the required 69 percent threshold for mathematics.

Ezra L. Nolan School: Proficiency Trends

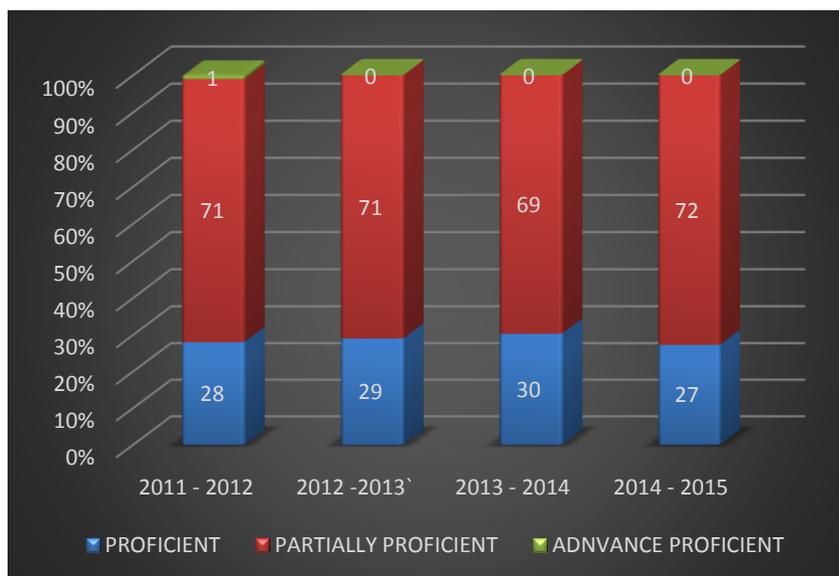


Figure 17. Language arts literacy, grade span 06-08

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The number of students Partially Proficient at the Ezra L. Nolan School showed an increase in both language arts literacy and mathematics in grade span 06-08. For the 2011-2012 school year, 71 percent of the school's student population was Partially Proficient, only 28 percent were Proficient, and 1 percent was Advanced Proficient. In school year 2012-2013, again, 71 percent of the student population was Partially Proficient, 29 percent was Proficient, and 0 percent was Advanced Proficient. The number of students Partially Proficient in school year 2013-2014 showed only a slight decrease at 69 percent, with only a slight increase in the number of students Proficient at 30 percent and 0 percent at Advanced Proficient. School year 2014-2015 showed a slight increase in the number of students Partially Proficient at 72 percent, a decrease in comparison to the number of

students Proficient in school year 2013-2014 at 27 percent, with 0 percent of students Advanced Proficient.



Figure 18. Mathematics, Grade Span 06-08

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The number of students Partially Proficient in mathematics was quite similar to the number of Partially Proficient students in language arts literacy. In school year 2011-2012, only 69 percent of the school's students achieved Partially Proficient, 26 percent were Proficient. However, an increase in the number of students who achieved Advanced Proficient was at 4 percent. Seventy percent of the school's students were at Partially Proficient in school year 2012-2013, 26 percent achieved Proficient, and the number of students that were at Advanced Proficient remained at 4 percent. In school year 2013-2014, 73 percent of the school's students were Partially Proficient, 24 percent were Proficient, and 3 percent were at Advanced Proficient. A similar picture for school year 2014-2015

was quite the same as previous years. Seventy-one percent of students in that year were Partially Proficient, 27 percent were Proficient, and 3 percent were Advanced Proficient.

Franklin L. William School: Proficiency Trends

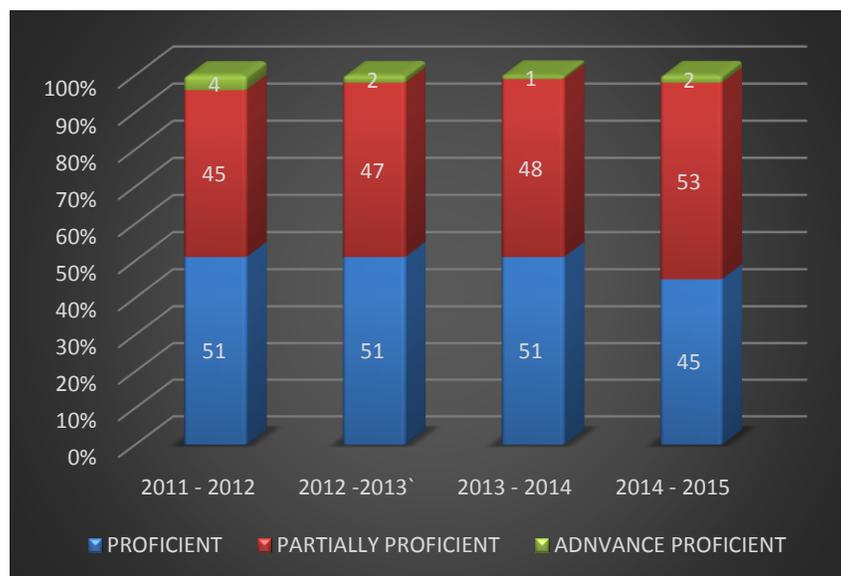


Figure 19. Language arts literacy

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Although the Franklin L. William School had experienced an increase in the number of Proficient students in comparison to the Ezra L. Nolan School, the school was unable to satisfy the NJ ASK 59 percent proficiency threshold. In school year 2011-2012, 45 percent of the school tested at Partially Proficient, 51 percent tested at Proficient, and 4 percent were at Advanced Proficient. The 2012-2013 school year saw a 47 percent increase of the school's population at Partially Proficient, the number Proficient remained at 51 percent with the number of students at Advanced Proficient decreasing to 2 percent. The number of students that were Partially Proficient continued to increase for school year 2013-2014, with 48 percent Partially Proficient, 51 percent Proficient, and 1 percent Advanced Proficient. School year 2014-2015 experienced a greater increase in Partially

Proficient students at 53 percent, 45 percent were Proficient, with only 2 percent Advanced Proficient.

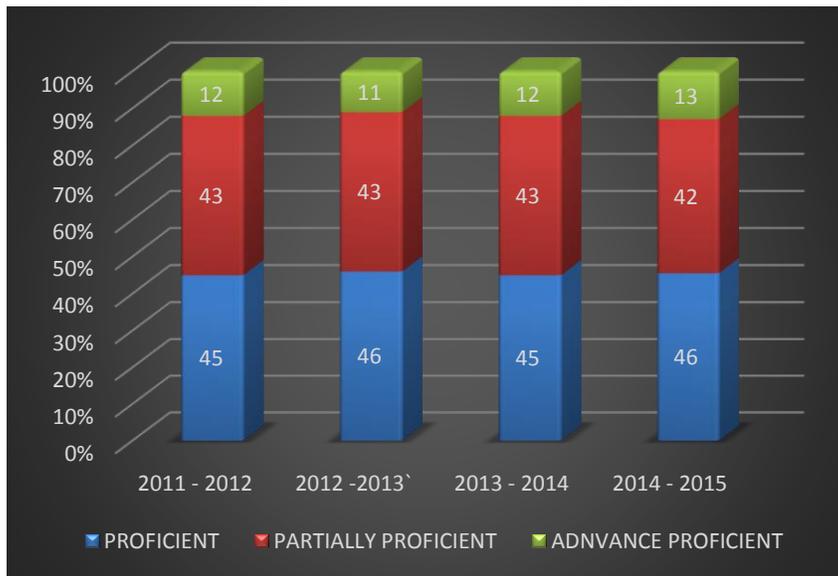


Figure 20. Mathematics

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Although the school had experienced an increase in the number of students at Advanced Proficient in mathematics, it did not satisfy the 66 percent required NJ ASK threshold. In school year 2011-2012, 12 percent of the school's students achieved at Advanced Proficient, 45 percent were Proficient, and 45 percent were Partially Proficient. In school year 2012-2013, 11 percent of the students achieved Advanced Proficient, while 46 percent were Proficient and 43 percent were Partially Proficient. School year 2013-2014 saw 12 percent of the school's student population at Advanced Proficient, 45 percent at Proficient, and 43 percent at Partially Proficient. The 2014-2015 school year saw a slight increase in the number of students achieve Advanced Proficient at 13 percent, 46 percent were Proficient, and 42 percent were Partially Proficient.

James J. Ferris High School: Proficiency Trends

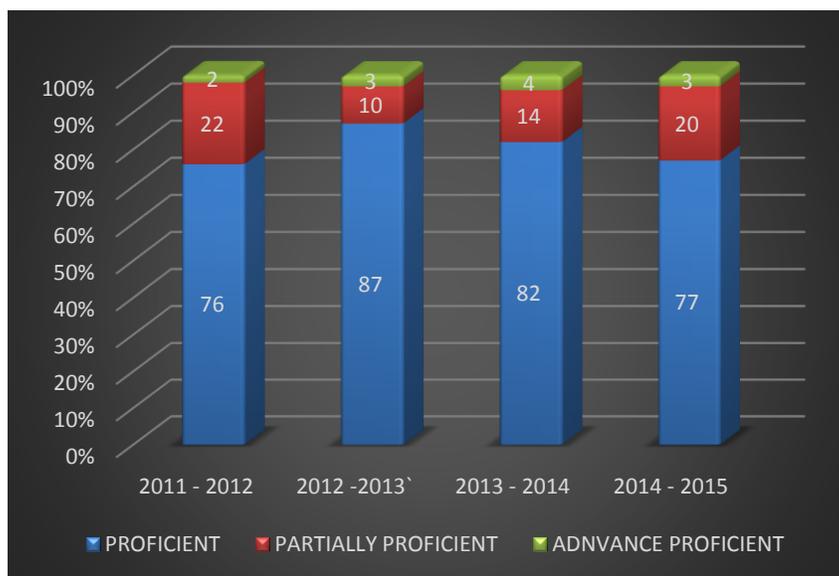


Figure 21. Language arts literacy, grade span 09-12

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Classified as Focus schools, James J. Ferris High, Abraham Lincoln High, and Henry Snyder High School, the latter two of which are Priority schools, found sporadic success at achieving proficiency over the years, particularly in language arts literacy. The number of students proficient in language arts literacy in school year 2011-2012 had missed the mark. Only 76 percent of students at James J. Ferris were Proficient, failing to achieve the required 85 percent proficiency threshold required by the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Twenty-two percent of the school's students were Partially Proficient and only 2 percent were Advanced Proficient. However, the school found success during school years 2012-2013 and 2013- 2014. In the 2012 - 2013 school year, 87 percent of the school's students were Proficient, 10 percent were Partially Proficient, and 3 percent were Advanced Proficient. Although 82 percent of the students were proficient in school year 2013-2014, 4 percent were at Advanced Proficient, bringing the number of students

Proficient to 86 percent and 14 percent to Partially Proficient. The number of students Proficient in school year 2014-2015 had declined to 77 percent, with 3 percent Advanced Proficient and 20 percent Partially Proficient.

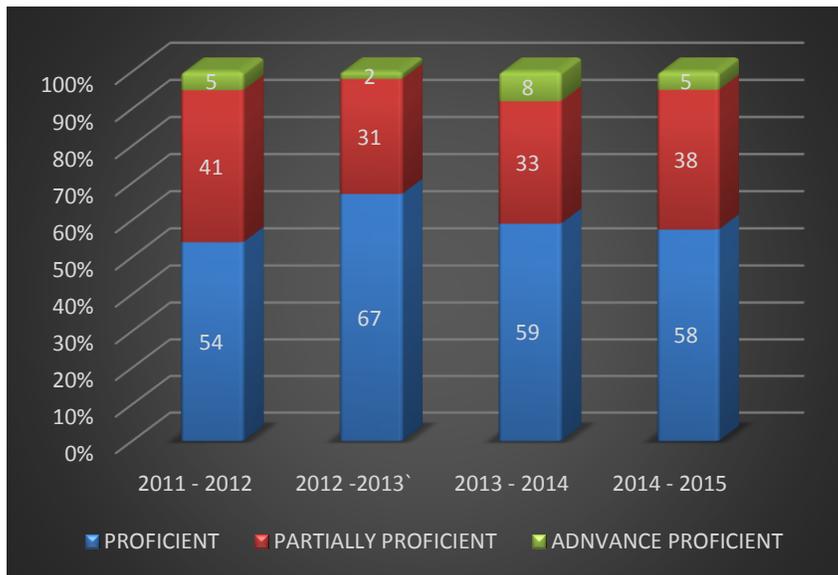


Figure 22. Mathematics, grade span 09-12

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The school's progress towards achieving proficiency at 74 percent in mathematics was met with little success. Data for school year 2011-2012 showed that only 54 percent of the school's students were Proficient, 41 percent were Partially Proficient, and 2 percent were Advanced Proficient. Although the number of students who were proficient had somewhat increased in year 2012-2013 at 67 percent, it did satisfy the required 74 percent threshold of students being proficient. Thirty-one percent of the school's students were Partially Proficient and only 2 percent were at Advanced Proficient. School year 2013-2014 saw a decline in the number of students Proficient, compared with the number Proficient in the previous school year, with 59 percent of its students Proficient. Thirty-three percent of the school's students were Partially Proficient and 8 percent were

Advanced Proficient. School year 2014-2015 yielded very little improvement from its previous years. Only 58 percent of the school's students were at Proficient, 5 percent were Advanced Proficient, and 38 percent were Partially Proficient.

Students in the state of New Jersey are administered the New Jersey Biology Competency Test (NJBCT), which measures their knowledge and skills in Biology as required on the Biology section of the Science Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS). The test measures students' knowledge in Biology at the end of different benchmarks. In 2008, public high school students enrolled in a requisite Biology course were required to take the End of Year Biology Test, replacing HSPA science and renamed the New Jersey Biology Competency Test (NJBCT) in 2010. Scores range from Advanced Proficient/Pass 250-300, Proficient/Pass 200- 249, and Partially Proficient/Not Pass 100-199.

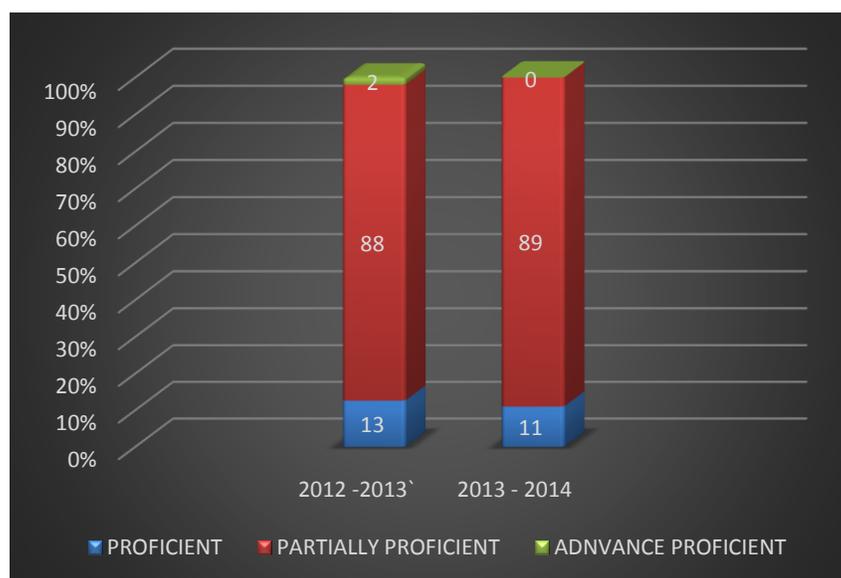


Figure 23. Biology, grade span 09-12

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Available data reported for students tested at James J. Ferris High School show that for school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, there were no students tested. However, data for school year 2012-2013 reflects that a large number of the school's students were Partially Proficient at 88 percent, 13 percent were Proficient, and 2 percent were Advanced Proficient. In school year 2013-2014, 89 percent of students were Partially Proficient, 11 percent were Proficient, and 0 percent were Advanced Proficient.

Abraham Lincoln High School: Proficiency Trends

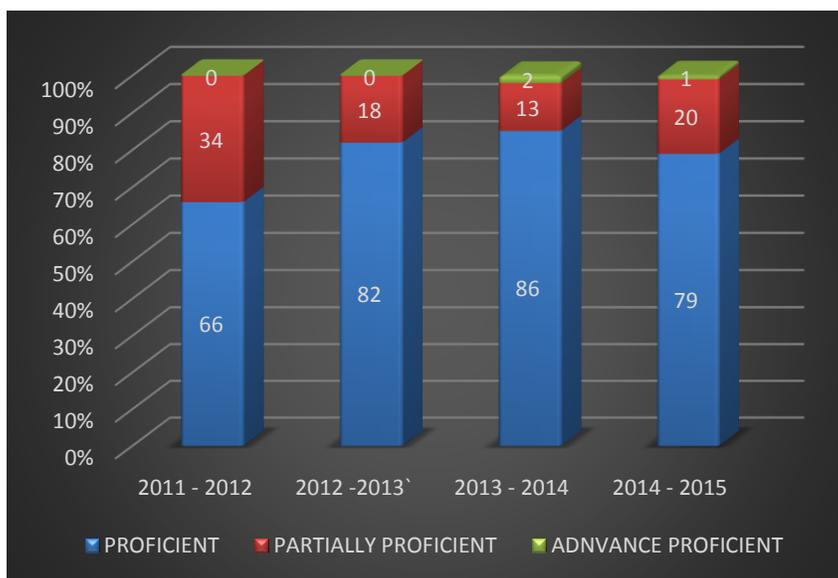


Figure 24. Language arts literacy

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The Abraham Lincoln High School showed similar progress to that of James J. Ferris's attempt to achieve proficiency in language arts literacy. In school year 2011-2012, 66 percent of the school's students were Proficient, 34 percent were Partially Proficient, and 0 percent of the school's students were at Advanced Proficient. The 2012-2013 school year showed significant progress towards achieving proficiency. Although the school had not achieved the required proficiency level, 82 percent of the school's students were

Proficient (a significant improvement from the previous year), 18 percent were Partially Proficient, and 0 percent were Advanced Proficient. However, the number of students at the proficiency level had been achieved in school year 2013-2014, with 86 percent of students Proficient and 2 percent at Advanced Proficient. This translates into at least 88 percent of the school's student population being Proficient in language arts literacy, with 13 percent Partially Proficient. School year 2014-2015 saw a decline in the number of students' proficient compared to the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. According to data for that year the number of proficient students had declined to 79 percent, with 20 percent Partially Proficient, and 1 percent Advanced Proficient.

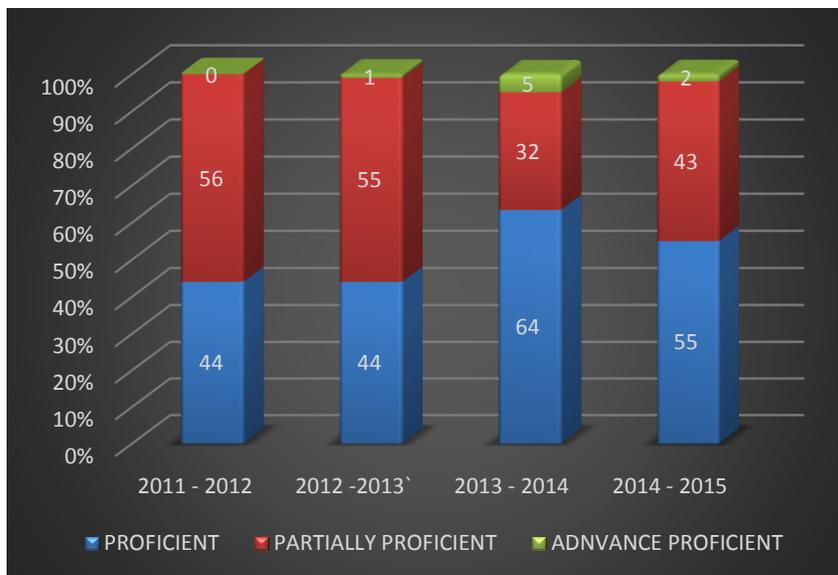


Figure 25. Mathematics

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Data for the school in the area of mathematics paints a bleaker picture, indicating that for school year 2011-2012, only 44 percent of the school's students had achieved Proficiency, 56 percent were Partially Proficient, and 0 percent was Advanced Proficient. Data for the 2012- 2013 school year paints a similar picture, with 44 percent of students

Proficient, 55 percent Partially Proficient, and 1 percent Advanced Proficient. School year 2013-2014 showed significant progress moving towards achieving the required threshold of 74 percent proficiency, but it failed to achieve it. Sixty-four percent of the school's student population was Proficient in that year, 32% Partially Proficient and 5 percent Advanced Proficient. In school year 2014 – 2015, 55 percent were Proficient, 43 percent were Partially Proficient, and 2 percent were Advanced Proficient. The school had no available proficiency data for biology.

Henry Snyder High School: Proficiency Trends

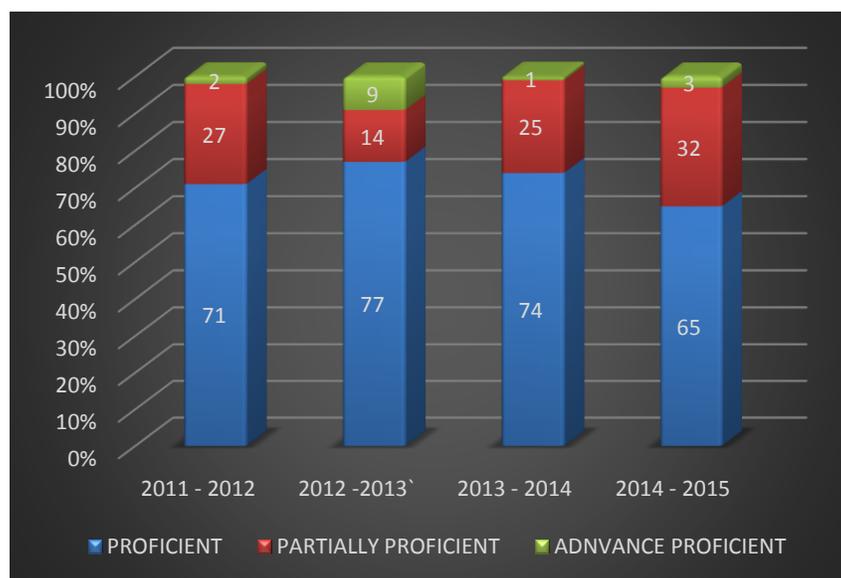


Figure 26. Language arts literacy

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Difficulty achieving proficiency requirements for the Henry Snyder High School in language arts literacy and mathematics was similar to that of James J. Ferris and Abraham Lincoln High Schools. In the 2011-2012 school years, only 71 percent of the

school's student population was Proficient in language arts literacy, 27 percent were Partially Proficient, and 2 percent were Advanced Proficient. School year 2012-2013 saw a slight increase with the number of students Proficient at 77 percent, 14 percent were Partially Proficient, and 9 percent were at Advanced Proficient. The 2013-2014 school year showed a slight decrease in the number of students proficient compared to the previous year, with 74 percent of the school's students Proficient. Twenty-five percent of the school's students were Partially Proficient and 1 percent was Advanced Proficient. The 2014-2015 school years had experienced more of a decline in the number of students' proficient. In that year, the number of students at Proficient had decreased to 65 percent, 32 percent be Partially Proficient, and only 3 percent were Advanced Proficient.

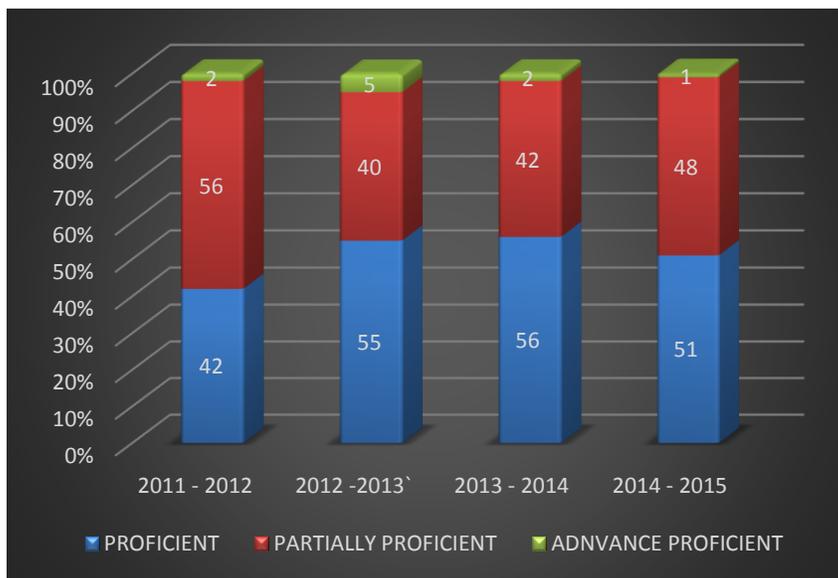


Figure 27. Mathematics

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

Less progress was achieved towards achieving proficiency in mathematics. Data in that subject for the Henry Snyder High School shows that in school year 2011-2012, only 42 percent of the school's students were Proficient, 56 percent were Partially Proficient,

and 2 percent were Advanced Proficient. Fifty-five percent of the student population was Proficient in school year 2012-2013, 40 percent were Partially Proficient, and 5 percent were Advanced Proficient. There was no significant change in the number of students Proficient in school year 2013-2014, with only 56 percent of the school's student population achieving proficiency. The number of students at proficiency had continued to decline in school year 2014-2015 with 51 percent of the student population Proficient, 58 percent Partially Proficient, and 1 percent Advanced Proficient.

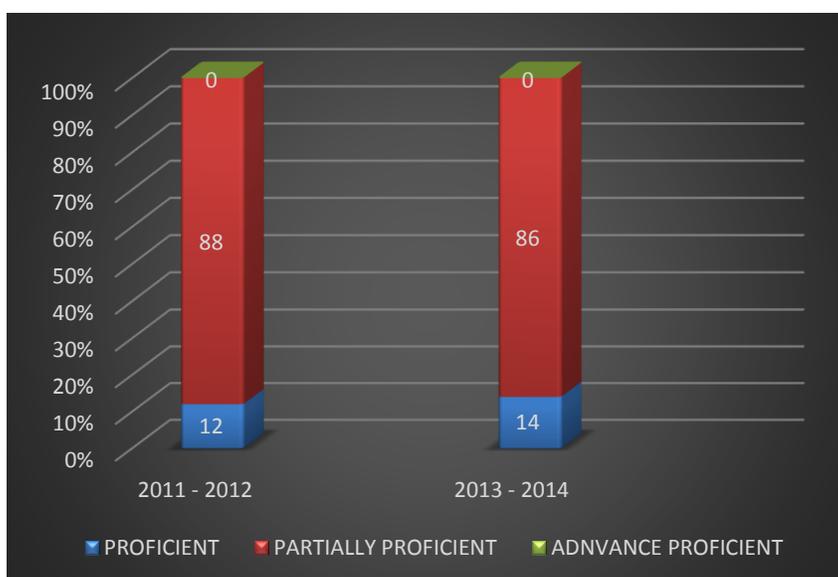


Figure 28. Biology

(Source: The New Jersey School Performance Reports)

With large numbers students Partially Proficient in biology, data show that the school tested in that area for only two school years: 2011-2012 and 2013-2014. The 2011-2012 school years show that 88 percent of the school's student population was Partially Proficient, 12 percent were Proficient, and 0 percent were Advanced Proficient. The 2013-2014 school years showed no difference in moving towards proficiency, with 86 percent

of students at Partially Proficient, only 14 percent Proficient, and 0 percent Advanced Proficient.

Personnel

Although the research found perceptions at the central district level that QSAC is a successful monitoring and evaluation tool that serves as a process for capacity building and educational improvement, despite the overwhelming belief that it is largely connected to Instruction and Program, the perceptions and opinions of school administrators (Principals and Vice-Principals) reflect a difference in responses and opinions. The district of Jersey City has successfully achieved the required indicators under the QSAC component for Personnel scoring 100 percent for academic year 2013-2014 the most recent score for that area. This represents that the district met QSAC's three indicators for that component; appropriate certifications and licensing of personnel, Personnel Policies and Professional Development. This further represents that teachers and principals are Highly Qualified and have met the requirement that, "The district recruits and retains qualified and appropriately licensed individuals to support student achievement and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS). The district complies with all applicable laws and regulations (2002)."³¹ Highly qualified is a provision and was an intended goal of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 with its language originating from Title II. Despite achievement in this component there appears to be a disconnect among administrators at the school and

³¹ Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals:
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg20.html>.

district level. Effective inclusion of personnel (Principals and Vice-Principals) at the school level in the QSAC process did not appear to have happened. As a result, administrators expressed dissatisfaction with QSAC as an accountability policy attempting to assist in district and school improvement, and instead perceived it as an interference with school administrators' daily routine of operating a school. One respondent stated that, "I wish they would just leave us alone with this QSAC business and let us get to the business of educating students and running our schools. Gathering information for central district is too time consuming and disrupts the normal routine of administrative responsibilities and duties" (Participant #15). The study found that at the school level, the role of administrators was limited to gathering information that was disseminated to central district administrators. Further, it was found that administrators at this level were not as knowledgeable about QSAC and its process, as were administrators at the central district level. For example, a principal who was interviewed found that answering many of the questions were difficult. She responded: "Can't discuss if you don't understand and haven't gone through the process" (Participant #8). This response not only reflected her lack of knowledge on QSAC, but her exclusion from the process by district level administrators. At one school my questions were deferred to one administrator's subordinate who was more knowledgeable about QSAC and its process. The more knowledgeable administrator had at one point worked at the central district level, immersing himself in the QSAC process at the district level. Although administrators at the school level understood its purpose, they had lacked an in-depth understanding of the accountability process in its entirety. One interesting finding was participants' feelings about past federal and state

methods to improve district accountability, district and school performance. It had appeared that over the years various efforts to improve district and school performance (State Takeover Law, Whole School Reform, and No Child Left Behind), had created dissatisfaction and discontent. Attempting to achieve the requirements of federal and state reforms had taken its toll, placing the QSAC process in the same context. Another respondent noted that, “the process provides no autonomy. I don’t know why it was implemented. I don’t believe that it merge well with the district’s commitment to students or state and federal policies. I don’t believe that anyone understands the process” (Participant #12). Another echoed this by stating that, “the QSAC process can be more achievable in smaller districts, because it is too overwhelming in large school districts such as Jersey City and in similar school districts, due to the lack of personnel” (Participant #10).

The respondents’ perceptions and comments in reference to QSAC and its process are consistent with the theory of Goal Conflict. Perceived goal conflict, or simply goal conflict, is defined as the degree to which individuals feel that performance expectations (i.e. goals) with respect to the multiple dimensions of a task, or among tasks, are incompatible (Locke et al., 1994; Slocum et al., 2002, as cited in Cheng et al., 2007, p. 222). This occurs when one goal is perceived to be interfering with the achievement of another goal or goals (Edmmons & King, 1998). Two conditions give rise to such conflict: first, “When the assigned goals are not contemporaneously congruent or correlated, as otherwise the attainment of one goal will not interfere with the attainment of another. Second, in situations where individuals are required to achieve multiple stretch targets with limited resources (e.g. time and cognitive effort), they are more likely to perceive there to

be a goal conflict as the achievement of one goal might come at the expense of failing to achieve other goals” (Cheng et al., 2007, p. 222; Banker et al., 2004).

Goal conflict might also arise in three stages: first, when there are levels of difficulty in attempting to achieve the goal. Second, when there are discrepancies associated with a goal assigned by an external party and a personal goal (e.g. Vance and Colella, 1990). Third, when the individual assigned to the goal must complete several others within a given timeframe. An example of this, as the research found, is when school administrators are responsible for managing the day to day operations of his/her individual school, but devote numbers of hours fulfilling requests for data and other information for the completion of federal and state reports. The process does not allow school level administrators to prioritize their duties and responsibilities; they must give attention simultaneously to their daily responsibilities and duties along with the district’s request for QSAC data. Cheng et al. (2007), posit the idea “that where individuals are assigned multiple goals for a particular work task, they will form a perception of overall goal difficulty associated with these various goals” (p. 225). The perception of goal difficulty likely “depends on the way they weigh and integrate their assessments of the degree of difficulty associated with each of their assigned goal” (Cheng et al., 2007, p. 226). Further, an individual’s perception of goal difficulty can be attributed to and influenced by a lack of self- confidence and his/her ability to accomplish the individual task or goal (Locke & Lathan, 1990; Wright, 1990).

Fiscal Management

For three consecutive years the district has received successful QSAC scores in the component of Fiscal Management. However, in the 2014 – 2015 school year the district missed the 80% mark as reflected in the in the district’s 2015-2016 budget report.³² The report includes Title 1³³ allocations. Although no information was found for the categories of school, enrollment, contracted salary and benefits, the non-salary and total operational cost for school years 2011-2012, the district score in Fiscal Management was 95 percent. For school years 2012-2013, the district scored 92 percent and for school years 2013-2014, a score of 100 percent, exceeding the required 80 percent in that area. According to a respondent:

A great deal of success in the QSAC area of Fiscal Management can be attributed to the process itself, because it encourages consistency in achievement (Respondent #11).

The tables in this section examines three categories: 1. School, 2. Enrollment, and 3.Total Operational Cost over a four year period:

³² See Jersey City’s School District’s Original School Based Budget, Title 1 Allocation for 2015-2016 for reference and a complete explanation.

³³ Title 1 funds aim to bridge the gap between low-income students and other students. The U.S. Department of Education provides supplemental funding to local school districts to meet the needs of at-risk and low-income students.

Table 4

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

School	2011 – 2012 (QSAC SCORE = 95%)		2012 – 2013 (QSAC SCORE = 92 %)		2013 – 2014 (QSAC SCORE = 100%)		2014 - 2015 (QSAC SCORE =74%)	
	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost
PS#003	488	5,793,028	497	6,167,624	490	6,090,038		
MS#004	831	8,705,828	841	9,267,868	847	9,232,269		
PS#005	536	6,853,008	503	7,461,851	522	7,042,752		
PS#006	701	8,264,731	723	9,305,576	713	8,575,281		
MS#007	809	10,320,180	917	11,134,546	915	11,017,140		
PS#008	708	8,621,785	707	9,051,990	703	9,082,323		
PS#011	759	7,690,385	758	8,225,699	806	8,058,919		
PS#012	367	4,624,584	306	5,251,835	296	4,869,123		
PS#014	410	6,441,322	501	6,896,705	521	7,204,481		

(Source: Jersey City School District's 2015-2016 budget report)

Table 5

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

School	2011 – 2012 (QSAC SCORE = 95%)		2012 – 2013 (QSAC SCORE = 92%)		2013 - 2014 (QSAC SCORE = 100%)		2014 – 2015 (QSAC SCORE =74%)	
	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost
PS#015	690	9,014,050	770	9,999,178	824	10,203,441		
PS#016	278	3,538,416	316	3,718,018	327	3,726,868		
PS#017	1,118	10,649,747	1,141	11,809,307	1,135	11,321,921		
PS#020	523	5,245,360	536	5,858,601	535	5,569,204		
PS#022	546	6,874,391	566	7,407,612	578	7,108,229		
PS#023	1,193	13,672,351	1,188	14,911,000	1,188	14,148,548		
PS#024	884	9,482,750	893	10,111,963	918	9,390,947		
PS#025	715	7,725,422	689	8,419,821	670	8,231,932		
PS#027	1,066	10,101,222	1,055	10,864,641	1,103	10,740,316		
PS#028	927	9,613,775	921	10,520,761	942	10,580,658		

(Source: Jersey City School District's 2015-2016 budget report)

Table 6

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

	2011 – 2012 (QSAC SCORE = 95%)		2012 – 2013 (QSAC SCORE = 92%)		2013 - 2014 (QSAC SCORE = 100%)		2014 – 2015 (QSAC SCORE =74%)	
School	Enrollm ent K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollm ent K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollm ent K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollm ent K-12	Total Operational Cost
PS#029	259	3,578,684	274	3,922,577	302	3,987,544		
PS#030	658	7,874,967	653	8,454,661	656	8,252,239		
PS#031	157	3,811,429	135	4,054,130	128	3,997,178		
PS#033	379	4,140,820	369	4,665,212	373	4,232,020		
PS#034	588	6,501,978	584	6,928,994	502	6,894,376		
PS#037	622	7,820,457	640	8,113,662	643	8,171,233		
PS#038	831	8,194,337	840	8,734,246	845	8,904,160		
PS#039	382	6,117,361	371	6,644,599	379	6,118,146		
MS#040	379	4,598,217	271	5,094,140	245	4,848,629		
MS#041	376	4,796,817	349	5,520,274	364	5,183,096		

(Source: Jersey City School District's 2015-2016 budget report)

Table 7

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

	2011 – 2012 (QSAC SCORE = 95%)		2012 – 2013 (QSAC SCORE = 92%)		2013 – 2014 (QSAC SCORE = 100%)		2014 – 2015 (QSAC SCORE =74%)	
School	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost	Enrollment K-12	Total Operational Cost
Academy 1	451	5,358,857	462	5,458,320	479	5,202,387		
Liberty High School	211	3,350,090	214	3,601,766	198	3,585,657		
Dickinson High School	2,111	21,820,894	2,072	23,531,309	2,211	22,779,637		
Ferris High School	1,463	18,461,040	1,352	19,641,361	1,240	18,802,715		
Lincoln High School	788	11,285,262	846	12,477,037	838	11,718,476		
Snyder High School	949	11,618,666	882	12,885,430	1,018	11,959,235		
McNair Academic High School	758	7,692,104	766	8,465,286	718	8,795,444		
Infinity High School	188	2,717,878	264	2,840,786	263	2,943,724		
SUB TOTAL SCHOOL BASED	25,099	292,962,193	25,172	317,428,387	25,436	308,570,286		
Innovation High School			106	1,343,366	215	1,617,189		
TOTAL		292,962,193	25,278	318,771,753	25,542	310,187,474		

(Source: Jersey City School District's 2015-2016 budget report)

Participant # 11, an administrator with the responsibility of overseeing the district's financial management welcomed the QSAC process, presenting that "the process confirms the district's self assessment (DPR), it is a review of the working relationship between the district administrator and auditor on matters of fiscal management, to ensure a system of compliance and checks and balances". Not only is the QSAC process viewed as a system that ensures compliance in fiscal management, "it encourages consistency towards achieving effectiveness in compliance with regulations and requirements" (Participant #11). The available data in the tables above reflects the district's consistency in achieving effectiveness in compliance with regulations and requirements of QSAC in the area of fiscal management. Reflecting on the idea that school districts are highly regulated institutions, although the QSAC process was welcomed by one participant in the area of fiscal management, it is believed that the process should be streamlined in each area when there is continuous success and achievement in a particular component. For example, "if the district in its budgeting and fiscal management practices is consistently successful in achieving an unqualified audit³⁴, the process should be streamlined or the district should be left alone" (Participant #11).

By the year 2010, the average per pupil expenditure equaled \$18,850 for Abbott districts, which was \$3,200 above the national average. Education Commissioner Cerf cites a 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress report that revealed that the state of

³⁴ In an unqualified report, the auditors conclude that the financial statements of your business present fairly its affairs in all material aspects. The opinion embodies the assumptions that your business observed compliance with generally accepted accounting principles and statutory requirements. Also known as a clean report, such a report implies that any changes in the accounting policies, their application and effects, are adequately determined and divulged. This opinion does not tell that your business is in good economic health. It merely states that your financial report is transparent and thorough and has not hidden important facts.

New Jersey ranked 50th out of all 51 states “in closing the achievement gap between high and low income students in eighth grade reading. In 2010, only 36% of fourth graders in the state’s most disadvantaged districts tested at the proficient level or better on the state reading assessment, 23 percentage points below the state average and 45 points behind the state’s most advantaged school districts” (Education Funding Report 2012, p. 10). Although a fraction of New Jersey’s economically disadvantaged students score at the basic level or higher than the national average, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress report, “many of our children are performing below a level required to meet life’s challenges and opportunities” (Education Funding Report 2012, p. 10), in the state of New Jersey. The Commissioner’s report found that when measuring college readiness, the gap between Whites, Hispanics, and African Americans is equally disturbing. In the 2011-2012 school years, the city of Newark allocated \$17,533 per student. However, only 9.8 percent of the city’s SAT test takers met the benchmark for College Readiness. More alarming, the city of Asbury Park spent \$23,940 per student resulting in none of its SAT test takers meeting the benchmark for College Readiness. According to his report, over half of New Jersey’s White students met the College Readiness Benchmark in 2011, compared to only 14 percent of African American students—a gap of 38 percentage points—and only 21 percent of Hispanic students—a gap of 30 percentage points. Attempts to close the achievement gap in the state of New Jersey, according to Commissioner Cerf, is the failure to successfully implement the terms of *Robinson* and *Abbott* by investing billions of dollars since their decisions. According to figures released by the Department of Education in May 2013, the New Jersey schools’ per pupil spending averaged \$18,891 in 2013, reflecting an \$866 or 5 percent increase from

2012. The department's report found that wealthy districts such as the Avalon Borough school district were at the top of the list at \$43,775 a student. As illustrated in the table below, according to the top per pupil spending school districts for 2015, seven districts spent \$30,000 and twenty-two spent more than \$25,000 per pupil:

Table 8

Top Per Pupil Spending School Districts—2015

County	District	District spending	Enrollment	Spending per pupil
Cape May	Avalon Boro	\$4,649,908	106	\$43,775
Bergen	Bergen County Vocational	\$70,909,248	2,105	\$33,685
Cape May	Stone Harbor Boro	\$3,506,631	105	\$33,301
Hunterdon	Hampton Boro	\$3,368,983	108	\$31,153
Monmouth	Asbury Park City	\$76,685,941	2,486	\$30,845
Monmouth	Keansburg Boro	\$46,799,818	1,535	\$30,485
Ocean	Seaside Heights Boro	\$5,117,832	170	\$30,178
Cape May	Cape May City	\$3,869,689	135	\$28,761
Bergen	Moonachie Boro	\$11,163,183	389	\$28,733
Somerset	Somerset Co Vocational	\$15,246,783	541	\$28,194
Monmouth	Henry Hudson Regional	\$9,971,452	355	\$28,066
Hunterdon	South Hunterdon Regional	\$11,381,889	413	\$27,536
Bergen	Alpine Boro	\$5,954,061	217	\$27,459
Monmouth	Shore Regional	\$17,375,577	656	\$26,492
Monmouth	Monmouth Regional	\$26,783,145	1,023	\$26,178
Atlantic	Margate City	\$15,699,478	602	\$26,060
Ocean	Beach Haven Boro	\$1,712,021	66	\$26,027
Bergen	Carlstadt-East Rutherford	\$13,662,232	526	\$25,994
Sussex	High Point Regional	\$26,302,698	1,024	\$25,679
Atlantic	Atlantic City	\$183,301,283	7,139	\$25,676
Cape May	Wildwood Crest Boro	\$7,227,938	282	\$25,598
Camden	Camden City	\$348,609,005	13,631	\$25,575
Hudson	Hoboken City	\$60,610,053	2,389	\$25,371
Cape May	Cape May Co Vocational	\$17,199,863	680	\$25,287
Monmouth	Deal Boro	\$4,028,042	159	\$25,266

According to the New Jersey Department of Education Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending³⁵, the Jersey City school district's 2011-2012 Actual Costs Amount per pupil was at \$17,649. For the 2012-2013 school years, the Actual Costs Amount per pupil was \$18,331, and for the 2013-2014 school year, the Actual Cost Amount per pupil equaled \$18,807. According to the district's 2014-2015 approved Budget, the districts per pupil cost calculations for the 2014-2015 budget year was less than similar districts with smaller student daily enrollments, but with a larger per pupil spending cost. The Jersey City school district per pupil cost was lower than similar districts at \$17,859. For the school district of East Orange, with an average daily enrollment of 10,493, per pupil cost for the 2014-2015 school year was at 17,922, and for Camden City with a daily enrollment of 13,383, per pupil spending was at \$20,849. Similarly, with an average daily enrollment of 7,135, the school district of Atlantic City's per pupil cost was at \$20,826.

New Jersey Education Commissioner Cerf in his report presents that although schools must have sufficient dollars to succeed, legislatures, politicians, and past governors believed that financial equality among school districts would culminate into equal success. However, they tend to ignore one basic equally important piece of the school financing puzzle: "how well education dollars are spent matters" (New Jersey Education Funding Report, 2012, p. 8). The Commissioner's point was well observed by participant #11, "despite pouring millions of dollars into the district the state has been unable to solve the problems of overcrowded classrooms, dropout rates, and truancy and student discipline". He further noted that "although state control, particularly under *Abbott*, has increased spending and added new programs, student improvement in the form

of test score for many of the district's schools has risen slowly than expected" (Participant #11). "The state expected to come in and perform a miracle, however, the process has taken nearly 28 years of state control of the Jersey City School District" (Participant #11). The school district of Jersey City has expanded since the initial intervention by the state. At the time of state takeover in 1989 the district had 33 schools, 3,300 teachers and staff members with a budget of 180 million dollars. Currently, the district has 79 schools, a total 4,695 students, 27,000 teachers and staff members. Although the district has increased in size its 2015 – 2016³⁶ school year budget was \$112,161,139, reflecting a decrease of \$67,838,861 from its 1989 budget. One particular observation made by participant #11 is that state intervention has ended a great deal of cronyism and nepotism and "that its oversight, particularly under QSAC, has encouraged school districts to develop sound fiscal management practices in their budgeting process" (participant #11). Data for the following school year reflected similar spending trends. According to the 2016 state's annual Taxpayer's Guide to Education Spending, New Jersey school districts last year spent on average \$20,385 per student. Statewide, per pupil cost fluctuated from a high of \$60,129 in one small school district to \$10,181 per pupil for a small charter school in Jersey City. The data below reflects education spending of the fifty highest school districts, including education spending of the highest spending of vocational and charter schools;

³⁶ Districts' adequacy budgets, due to rising costs and significant growth in New Jersey's low-income population, grew by 28% statewide between 2009 and 2016. Local revenues increased by 18%, and state aid grew by a mere 5%.

1: Avalon | \$60,129**Grades:** K-8***County:** Cape May**Average daily enrollment:** 75**Revenue Sources:** State: 12% | Local Taxes: 65.6% | Federal: 0.7% | Tuition: 9.7% | Other: 12%**2: Stone Harbor | \$38,451****Grades:** K-8***County:** Cape May**Average daily enrollment:** 84**Revenue Sources:** State: 10.5% | Local Taxes: 73.8% | Federal: 0.9% | Tuition: 14.8%**3: Greater Brunswick Charter School | \$35,981****Grades:** Charter School**County:** Middlesex**Average daily enrollment:** 387**Revenue Sources:** State: 63.7% | Local Taxes: 23.6% | Federal: 5.1% | Other: 7.6%**4: Asbury Park | \$35,636****Grades:** K-12**County:** Monmouth**Average daily enrollment:** 2,380**Revenue Sources:** State: 86.3% | Local Taxes: 8.6% | Federal: 4.4%**5: Bergen County Vocational | \$35,568****Grades:** County Vocational**County:** Bergen**Average daily enrollment:** 2,159**Revenue Sources:** State: 17.5% | Local Taxes: 46.5% | Federal: 2.2% | Tuition: 33.7% | Other: 0.1%**6: Beach Haven | \$33,533****Grades:** K-6**County:** Ocean**Average daily enrollment:** 63**Revenue Sources:** State: 15.8% | Local Taxes: 82.9% | Federal: 1.3%

7: Carlstadt- East Rutherford | \$33,000**Grades:** 9-12**County:** Bergen**Average daily enrollment:** 496**Revenue Sources:** State: 14.9% | Local Taxes: 83.8% | Federal: 1.3%**8: Long Beach Island | \$32,913****Grades:** K-6**County:** Ocean**Average daily enrollment:** 236**Revenue Sources:** State: 20.6% | Local Taxes: 75.8% | Federal: 2.2% | Tuition: 1.4%**9: Margate | \$32,129****Grades:** K-8**County:** Atlantic**Average daily enrollment:** 492**Revenue Sources:** State: 16% | Local Taxes: 77.2% | Federal: 1.5% | Tuition: 5.3%**10: Somerset County Vocational | \$31,485****Grades:** County Vocational**County:** Somerset**Average daily enrollment:** 512**Revenue Sources:** State: 19.8% | Local Taxes: 69% | Federal: 2.5% | Tuition: 8.6% | Other: 0.1%**11: Keansburg | \$31,436****Grades:** K-12**County:** Monmouth**Average daily enrollment:** 1,559**Revenue Sources:** State: 84.7% | Local Taxes: 11% | Federal: 4.3% | Tuition: 0.1%**12: Henry Hudson Regional | \$31,378****Grades:** 7-12**County:** Monmouth**Average daily enrollment:** 302**Revenue Sources:** State: 20% | Local Taxes: 77.6% | Federal: 2% | Tuition: 0.5%**13: Alpine | \$30,765**

Grades: K-8

County: Bergen

Average daily enrollment: 221

Revenue Sources: State: 9.8% | Local Taxes: 89% | Federal: 1.2%

14: Cumberland County Vocational: \$30,310

Grades: County Vocational

County: Cumberland

Average daily enrollment: 370

Revenue Sources: State: 58.4% | Local Taxes: 29.1% | Federal: 3.7% | Tuition: 8.8%

15: Lakeland Regional | \$29,531

Grades: 9-12

County: Passaic

Average daily enrollment: 1,025

Revenue Sources: State: 25% | Local Taxes: 55.6% | Federal: 1.1% | Tuition: 3.4% |
Use of Fund Balance: 1.4% | Other: 13.5%

16: Camden | \$29,455

Grades: K-12

County: Camden

Average daily enrollment: 10,758

Revenue Sources: State: 91.7% | Local Taxes: 3.1% | Federal: 4.7% | Tuition: 0.1% |
Other: 0.4%

17: North Wildwood | \$29,411

Grades: K-8

County: Cape May

Average daily enrollment: 322

Revenue Sources: State: 18.8% | Local Taxes: 69.4% | Federal: 3.7% | Tuition: 8.1%

18: Monmouth Regional | \$29,229

Grades: 9-12

County: Monmouth

Average daily enrollment: 1,018

Revenue Sources: State: 20.9% | Local Taxes: 75.2% | Federal: 1.2% | Tuition: 0.1% |
Other: 2.6

19: Shore Regional | \$28,920

Grades: 9-12

County: Monmouth

Average daily enrollment: 631

Revenue Sources: State: 13% | Local Taxes: 80.1% | Federal: 1.5% | Tuition: 0.7% | Other: 4.7%

20: Mercer County Vocational | \$28,522

Grades: County Vocational

County: Mercer

Average daily enrollment: 478

Revenue Sources: State: 24.4% | Local Taxes: 56.2% | Federal: 3.2% | Tuition: 16.1% | Other: 0.1%

21: Hampton | \$28,411

Grades: K-8

County: Hunterdon

Average daily enrollment: 121

Revenue Sources: State: 41.1% | Local Taxes: 53.6% | Federal: 2.6% | Tuition: 2.2% | Other: 0.5%

22: Montague | \$28,407

Grades: K-8

County: Sussex

Average daily enrollment: 338

Revenue Sources: State: 34.9% | Local Taxes: 60.2% | Federal: 4.8% | Other: 0.1%

23: Hoboken | \$28,217

Grades: K-12

County: Hudson

Average daily enrollment: 2,396

Revenue Sources: State: 41.5% | Local Taxes: 54.5% | Federal: 3.5% | Tuition: 0.1% | Other: 0.4%

24: Burlington City | \$28,165

Grades: K-12

County: Burlington

Average daily enrollment: 1,776

Revenue Sources: State: 67.2% | Local Taxes: 23.4% | Federal: 3.1% | Tuition: 6% | Other: 0.3%

25: New Horizons Charter School | \$27,701

Grades: Charter School**County:** Essex**Average daily enrollment:** 432**Revenue Sources:** State: 80.3% | Local Taxes: 12.4% | Federal: 7.2% | Other: 0.1%**26: East Orange | \$27,699****Grades:** K-12**County:** Essex**Average daily enrollment:** 10,145**Revenue Sources:** State: 89% | Local Taxes: 7.7% | Federal: 3.1% | Other: 0.2%**27: Colts Neck | \$27,571****Grades:** K-8**County:** Monmouth**Average daily enrollment:** 957**Revenue Sources:** State: 15.9% | Local Taxes: 80.6% | Federal: 3.5%**28: Franklin Lakes | \$27,484****Grades:** K-8**County:** Bergen**Average daily enrollment:** 1,190**Revenue Sources:** State: 13.9% | Local Taxes: 78.9% | Federal: 1% | Tuition: 6.2%**29: Spring Lake | \$27,298****Grades:** K-8**County:** Monmouth**Average daily enrollment:** 276**Revenue Sources:** State: 13.9% | Local Taxes: 83.3% | Tuition: 1.3% | Use of Fund Balance: 1.5%**30: Mendham Township | \$27,205****Grades:** K-8**County:** Morris**Average daily enrollment:** 717**Revenue Sources:** State: 14.6% | Local Taxes: 84% | Federal: 1.1% | Tuition: 0.3%**31: New Hanover | \$27,189****Grades:** K-8**County:** Burlington

Average daily enrollment: 245

Revenue Sources: State: 55% | Local Taxes: 29.3% | Federal: 15.5% | Other: 0.2%

32: Harding | \$26,988

Grades: K-8

County: Morris

Average daily enrollment: 433

Revenue Sources: State: 10.5% | Local Taxes: 87.7% | Federal: 1% | Tuition: 0.9%

33: Hudson County Vocational | \$26,915

Grades: County Vocational

County: Hudson

Average daily enrollment: 2,142

Revenue Sources: State: 43.4% | Local Taxes: 48.5% | Federal: 6.8% | Tuition: 1.3%

34: Bethlehem | \$26,831

Grades: K-8

County: Hunterdon

Average daily enrollment: 389

Revenue Sources: State: 18.6% | Local Taxes: 50% | Federal: 1% | Tuition: 0.2% | 30.2%

35: High Point Regional | \$26,737

Grades: 9-12

County: Sussex

Average daily enrollment: 1,000

Revenue Sources: State: 34.5% | Local Taxes: 60.3% | Federal: 1.4% | Tuition: 3.8%

36: Wildwood Crest | \$26,627

Grades: K-8

County: Cape May

Average daily enrollment: 300

Revenue Sources: State: 17.2% | Local Taxes: 80.4% | Federal: 2.3% | Other: 0.1%

37: Teaneck | \$26,486

Grades: K-12

County: Bergen

Average daily enrollment: 3,717

Revenue Sources: State: 15.6% | Local Taxes: 82.6% | Federal: 1.7% | Tuition: 0.1%

38: Lakewood | \$26,477**Grades:** K-12**County:** Ocean**Average daily enrollment:** 6,262**Revenue Sources:** State: 32.8% | Local Taxes: 51.9% | Federal: 12.7% | Other: 2.6%**39: Califon | \$26,452****Grades:** K-8**County:** Hunterdon**Average daily enrollment:** 110**Revenue Sources:** State: 20.1% | Local Taxes: 77.5% | Federal: 1.6% | Tuition: 0.8%**40: Morris Hills Regional | \$26,415****Grades:** 9-12**County:** Morris**Average daily enrollment:** 2,786**Revenue Sources:** State: 22% | Local Taxes: 76.8% | Federal: 1% | Tuition: 0.3%**41: Mountain Lakes | \$26,265****Grades:** K-12**County:** Morris**Average daily enrollment:** 1,548**Revenue Sources:** State: 14.9% | Local Taxes: 52.2% | Federal: 0.8% | Tuition: 32.2%**42: Brigantine | \$26,176****Grades:** K-8**County:** Atlantic**Average daily enrollment:** 811**Revenue Sources:** State: 21.2% | Local Taxes: 75.6% | Federal: 2.5% | Other: 0.7%**43: Pascack Valley Regional | \$26,143****Grades:** 9-12**County:** Bergen**Average daily enrollment:** 2,093**Revenue Sources:** State: 13.9% | Local Taxes: 84% | Federal: 0.9% | Tuition: 1.1% | Other: 0.1%**44: Red Bank Regional | \$26,120****Grades:** 9-12

County: Monmouth

Average daily enrollment: 1,205

Revenue Sources: State: 15.6% | Taxes: 70.6% | Federal: 1.7% | Tuition: 12.1%

45: Deal | \$26,080

Grades: K-8

County: Monmouth

Average daily enrollment: 167

Revenue Sources: State: 53.8% | Local Taxes: 44.5% | Federal: 1.7%

46: Neptune Township | \$25,920

Grades: K-12

County: Monmouth

Average daily enrollment: 4,395

Revenue Sources: State: 60.7% | Local Taxes: 32.1% | Federal: 2.4% | Tuition: 4.8%

47: Princeton | \$25,902

Grades: K-12

County: Mercer

Average daily enrollment: 3,590

Revenue Sources: State: 16.1% | Local Taxes: 75.3% | Federal: 1.5% | Tuition: 5.5% |
Use of Fund Balance: 0.1% | Other: 1.5%

48: Passaic County Vocational | \$25,892

Grades: County Vocational

County: Passaic

Average daily enrollment: 3,331

Revenue Sources: State: 31.9% | Local Taxes: 13% | Federal: 4.1% | Tuition: 43.9% |
Use of Fund Balance: 4.8% | Other: 2.3%

49: South Hackensack | \$25,830

Grades: K-8

County: Bergen

Average daily enrollment: 357

Revenue Sources: State: 11.3% | Local Taxes: 87.1% | Federal: 1.5% | Tuition: 0.1%

50: Tewksbury | \$25,779

Grades: K-8

County: Hunterdon

Average daily enrollment: 602

Revenue Sources: State: 18.3% | Local Taxes: 80.6% | Federal: 1% | Tuition: 0.2%

(Source: Taxpayer's Guide to Education Spending, 2016)

Operations and Governance

According to available data for the 2009-2010 school year the district of Jersey City received scores of 93 percent in Operations Management and 56 percent in Governance, an area in which the district continued to decline in the 2010-2011 school years. In the following school year, 2011-2012, the final full year of state appointed Superintendent Dr. Charles Epp's term, the district failed to meet the required 80 percent mark of QSAC indicators in the area of Governance. The district had achieved 45% in Governance, an area in which the district initially scored 89 percent in its 2007 report and 100 percent in Operations. The Commissioner refused to give the district control of the following areas: Instruction and Program, and Personnel and Governance, citing in a letter to then-interim Superintendent Franklin Walker "at this time, I am not prepared to recommend that the State Board of Education restore any of the three areas under local control" (Neidenberg, 2012, p. 3). The district received poor scores in two additional categories: the inability to have 95 percent of its student population score proficient in the area of Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics, and continuous failure to achieve the required benchmarks in the areas. Only 52.4 percent of the district's student population had attained proficiency in Language Arts Literature and 47 percent in Mathematics. In addition, only 73 percent of the district's student population had graduated.

On the issue of Governance Commissioner Cerf criticized the district's failed business practices, citing that such practices "inhibit student learning and the effective management of the district" (Neidenberg, 2012, p. 3). Although the district scored 100 percent in Operations in 2012, it achieved a disappointing score in Governance. On September 4 2012, Dr. Marcia Lyles, who had formally served the Christian School District in Delaware, took the helm as the new Superintendent of the Jersey City School District. Her appointment did not come without controversy, stemming from a questionable hiring process orchestrated by Steve Fulop, then a Ward E Councilman and later elected Mayor in 2013. Despite such controversy, the district's 2013-2014 school year QSAC scores had improved to 92 percent in Fiscal Management, 100 percent in Governance, 100 percent in Operations, and 100 percent in Personnel. The district scored 68 percent in Instruction and Program.

While some administrators believed that QSAC provides the district mechanisms to examine what is being done and to further look at internal capacity needs as mentioned previously, there is the perception among others that districts are already highly regulated and that the state itself imposes many requirements on them. As a responding school board member indicated "I think a lot of time is spent on monitoring and compliance.

Another respondent argue that "there must also be a systematic way to accomplish and to get the required results of QSAC" (Participant # 12). While the QSAC process measures performance it is the belief of several administrators that a holistic approach to educational improvement is needed. "To effectively govern the district, the system must include a method for community and family feedback on what the community and families see as the success or failure of the schools and district, how do we know that the school, district,

administrators and teachers are effective” (Participant #12)? Further, there must be a stronger relationship with the teacher union and school board; these entities are persuasive and are powerful in shaping the thinking of teachers, parents and the community (Participant #12). One participant suggests that the district must aid the school board before the start of school year to move forward in its responsibilities. “The school board must become an integral part of the districts’ policy making process, because they vote on various school items, therefore, they must be in a stronger position” (Participant #11).

Although the research found different perceptions on the effectiveness of QSAC, several participants at the central district level felt that as an accountability tool, QSAC was effective in holding district administrators responsible for district and school effectiveness and school improvement. As one participant explained:

As a selected method to evaluate school districts, QSAC has been effective at holding school districts accountable. It is effective at ensuring that districts do what they are supposed to do to become effective school districts. The system ensures that the district is in compliance with federal and state regulations by monitoring district affairs. (Participant #9). The primary purpose of QSAC is to hold school districts accountable and to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations. It is the consensus of several administrators that this has been achieved.

However, state intervention in the Jersey City School District, according to board member Susan Mack, “has been a quagmire” (Neidenberg, 2012, p. 1). As discussed earlier, a 2012 Department of Education report criticizing the district for its persistent low scores in the areas of Instruction and Program and Personnel, suggests that the state may have shared in the blame for such failure. Under QSAC, the state Department of Education

had controlled the two areas since its implementation. Neidenberg (2012) states that, “Accountability seems somewhat muddled under the present setup in Jersey City, despite QSAC’s stated intentions to promote it. In fact, a JCI investigation found the current bureaucracy has created an atmosphere of blame—trading and confusion between the two sides” (p. 1). There appears to be a disconnect between the state and school districts in structuring and developing accountability processes, as expressed by a district administrator;

There must be systems put into place developed by the Department of Education and school districts that will support internal and external relationships and engagement. A holistic method of measuring effectiveness must be developed. There must exist structural functions, the way we get things systematically accomplished and to get the required results. Changing organizational thinking must also occur. We must ask the question; what are we doing and what do we need to do to improve? (Participant #18). Although another respondent, a school board member, understood QSAC and its process, indicating that “as board members we (Superintendent and the Board) must ensure that all evaluations are completed in a timely manner, focusing on operations and governance and voting on the Statement of Assurance and the District Performance Review prior to submission to the County Superintendent” (Participant #20). Another respondent felt strongly that “at the beginning of each school year, expectations must be communicated by the Superintendent to all staff. Accountability and working together towards common goals are important to meet federal and state requirements” (Participant #18). One respondent felt very strongly that the district’s Superintendent must set

the overall tone for the district. “He/She must communicate to all the expectations and goals for each school year. This is very important to meet the requirements of QSAC” (Participant #20). A school board member felt that, “all school administrators and teachers should be on the same page in order to accomplish federal and state requirements” (Participant #21).

From an organizational and theoretical perspective, Luther Gulick (1936) understood the importance of the different skills and abilities of organizational members, and how to utilize these different skills to achieve and to affect organizational goals. This is also an important aspect of the functioning of school districts and schools. He explained such importance and the idea that structure, authority, and expertise should coordinate work. As such, organizations and institutions must become creative in developing strategies and methods, allowing for each individual’s skill to fit its goals and purpose (Gulick, 1936). Herbert Simon (1946) provides a structural theory of the organization, introducing the idea that to be effective, efficient, and successful, an organization should consist of (1) Specialization defined as an all group effort, a process in which different people accomplish different tasks in an attempt to achieve efficiency and effectiveness within the organization (Simon, 1946). Within Simon’s theory is an organizational hierarchy described as (2) Unity of command: the arranging of organizational members according to an order of authority. Unity of command establishes a degree of efficiency, and preserves unity, loyalty, and honesty. (3) Span of Control: Simon theorized that organizational efficiency could be maintained through the supervision of small numbers of subordinates. Further, he believed that organizations must be organized by purpose, process, clientele

and place. How an organization is structured is important to how it functions, establishing clear standards for performance, organizational vision, and organizational culture. This thought follows the perception of one participant that, “school districts and its leaders must have input and a shared responsibility along with the state, in developing and the design of systems or mechanisms, because it is the schools and school districts that are familiar with its particular student population, social and economic make-up” (Participant #16).

Organizational members are bounded by cultural norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that predict how the organization will respond or react to certain situations (Ott, 1989). While similar organizations and institutions might respond similarly to the same initiatives, similar results may be difficult to achieve in organizations with different missions, technologies, and environments. School districts are comprised of individual schools. What has been successful in one school district may not work in another. Further, they are social entities interacting with individuals and groups of people with the goal to achieve organizational and district and school effectiveness and accountability.

Organizational relationships are an important element towards establishing a system of effectiveness, performance, and accountability (Dilulio, 2005). Within effective and successful organizations there is a moral factor that creates fundamental attitudes and loyalties within the organization. It is through the existence of carefully designed, effective, and fair policies and procedures that organizations create moral factors and strong cultures. Organizational theory presents the idea that those organization members’ different skills and abilities are important to the organization’s effectiveness. Effectiveness in the operation and management of school districts and individual schools is observed by the

architects of QSAC and has become an important component of its process. However, a respondent indicated that:

QSAC leaves no room for autonomy and there must be such a process. There must be a systematic approach towards measuring district and school effectiveness. Such an approach must include 1. Staff Evaluation, 2. Teacher Evaluation, 3. The system must be designed to examine what districts are doing, 4. The system must provide administrative leadership training and 5. There must be a feedback system to address professional development. A systems approach must be taken to include an outside and internal means and expertise to measure, audit and evaluate progress (Participant #14).

The management of organizations and institutions has become a profession that has increased in difficulty, responsibility, and complexity, earlier pioneers in the study of management such as Oliver Sheldon (1928; 1930) had noted this change. The call for effective management of institutions and organizations has become evident in all disciplines and requires highly skilled individuals with expert skills to move organizations and institutions forward. Such insight calls for the expertise of each individual. School districts and schools are no exception to such a belief.

The organizational structure and relationships within most educational systems mirror a classic bureaucracy in which information flows in a top-down fashion. These systems must be given a closer examination and begin to be observed as complex organizations or systems. According to Ling Lee and Jung-Yang (2001), "Contingency theory suggests that the fit between contextual factors and the design of management control systems is relative to superior organizational performance" (p. 84). Accountability

for performance measurement systems encourage a link between strategies and measurements (Chenhall, 2005, 2008; Ittner et al., 2003; Kaplan, Norton, Ferneau, & Shields, 1999, 2001; Otley, 1999) with the intention of “linking operations with strategy and objectives to achieve” (Ling Lee & Jung-Yang, 2011, p. 84) the organization’s intended goals. An examination of formal organizational structures within a bureaucratic framework in the public administration literature, particularly the earlier literature, assumes that the organization is unified and operates within a structure consisting of rational actors (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1970). A closer examination of this theory reveals that this idea is often not the case. The implementation of public policy then becomes a complex task (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; 1987). According to respondent #18, “There must be structural, organizational and operational functions, leading to a systematic approach to accomplish and to achieve required results of federal and state mandates.”

Conclusion

The findings help to understand the perceptions of administrators in the Jersey City School District, who are responsible for the implementation of QSAC as an accountability for performance policy and its impact on school districts and schools. The research examined QSAC within a policy framework helping us to understand perceptions and the effectiveness of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum in the Jersey City School District. Two important questions developed from the research findings; (1). What do the findings tell us about the district’s achievement scores? (2). Is QSAC set up so low income school districts similar to Jersey City are doomed to be run by the state forever? As the data on student performance illustrates, state intervention has resulted in a lengthy process

towards achieving educational improvement and failed to provide quality education (Trachtenberg et al., 2002). The data further indicates the district's long history and its struggle to sustain and to continue to improve student performance. Such failure has been associated with social and economic disparities surrounding the school district and the city of Jersey City. Chapter seven examines these questions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

What do the findings tell us about the district's achievement scores?

The data in chapter five on school performance reflects the district's ongoing struggle to sustain and to continue to achieve student improvement. Academic improvement differentiated across grade spans. Greater gains were achieved in the lower grades at the Advance Proficient level in Mathematics, more than grade span 9 – 12. Although grade span 9 – 12 had experienced improvement in Language Arts Literacy, which differentiated between high schools, it did not achieve QSAC's required threshold. The primary finding of the study is respondents' belief that a state controlled testing system has created a disadvantage for students in poor and urban school districts. This perception is grounded in the belief that QSAC is largely connected to Instruction and Program. Further, that the failure in student improvement is associated with social and economic disparities in the district.

In addition, policy makers at the state level are less familiar with a district's student population and its environment, and those individuals in school districts who are directly involved with students better understand their population and environment. The position

of administrators is consistent with the findings of researchers such as Jean Anyon (2005) who connect and associate inadequate educational systems in urban and poor school districts with the failure of social policies and their inability to abolish social inequities. She presents that such policies are ineffective towards eradicating educational inequality; instead they work towards maintaining and reproducing social inequities (Anyon, 2005). Anyon's (2005) position is consistent with respondents' belief that "individuals absent from the policy process and input in school districts' affairs and how students should be tested put the district and students at a disadvantage because of a testing mechanisms designed and controlled by the state. One participant represented this view; "absent input from school districts on how students should be tested, the district of Jersey City will continue to perform poorly in the area of Instruction and Program" (Participant #12). As one respondent stated "the state testing method puts urban and poor districts at a disadvantage, because their social and economic environments are different from students in suburban and wealthy school districts (Participants #8).

Although sociological research explains how schools as social institutions attempt to fill societal needs by creating equal learning environments, it further suggests that there are institutions with systems in place to maintain control and power within society. Structural functionalism attempts to explain how social institutions—family, economy, educational, and political systems—fill social needs and create social stability. Associated with French sociologist Emile Durkheim³⁷ and a term later used by Talbot Parsons,³⁸

³⁷ Emile Durkheim is often cited as and considered to be the first to establish social science as an academic discipline and, along with Max Weber, to have formally established the field of modern sociology.

³⁸ Although considered to be a structuralist functionalist scholar, Parsons explained that the term functional or structural functionalist were inadequate ways to describe his theory. He described structural functionalism as a particular stage in the methodological development of the social science and that functionalism is a universal method.

structural functionalism examines the structures and workings of society and defines it as a living organism, comprised of interdependent working parts that work together to function as a total body. Functionalists believe that it is the role of institutions to create a balanced society. From a functionalist perspective Talcott Parsons (1959) examined education within a modern, liberal, democratic framework, examining educational systems as social systems with different groups and roles. For Marx³⁹ and Weber,⁴⁰ society consists of groups with various interests.

The research suggests that the current system of accountability under QSAC leaves no room for autonomy, which according to respondents must exist. Further, “there must be structural functions to systematically achieve the required results of accountability for performance policies” (Participant #12). School districts and schools have become social systems assuming a larger role in society. They shape students’ thoughts and opinions about what is important for developing communities and societies. The idea of schools and school districts as social institutions and systems was shared by another respondent “we must include a method for community and family feedback on what the community and families see as the success or failure of the schools and district. Further, there must be a stronger relationship with the teacher union and school board” (Participant #10). As one

³⁹ Karl Marx interpretation about society, economics and politics which became known as Marxism. It is described a society in which progress is made through class struggles, in which conflict exists between an ownership class that controls production and a laboring class that provides the labor for production.

³⁹ Max Weber profoundly influenced the fields of social theory and social research and is often considered as one of the founders of sociology, along with Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx. Weber’s primary intellectual concern was to understand the process of rationalism, secularization, and disenchantment. He associated the three with the rise of capitalism and modernity, which in his opinion is the result of a new way of thinking about the world.

respondent stated “QSAC deals with process rather than dealing with the core issue of the classroom” (Participant #12).

Improving Student Learning:

Respondents’ belief that QSAC is largely connected to Instruction and Program reflects the district’s inability to effect student improvement. On average, students in the Jersey City School District spend a total of six hours and fifteen minutes in the classroom in grades PK-5, seven hours and fifteen minutes in grades PK-8, and six hours and five minutes in grades 9-12. Schools have become students’ extended families and an integral part of transforming society. Responses during the interview process indicated that in order to have any meaningful success towards achieving accountability for performance initiatives, the educational process in the Jersey City School District must begin to develop meaningful, effective relationships. Educators, communities, and policy makers “must understand the context in which students live and are educated; without an understanding of this idea, educator’s work alone not in partnership with other important people in student’s lives” (Epstein, 2001, p. 5). School districts are the best place to engage the community, but such involvement must be a grassroots effort.

Interesting opportunities exist within the Jersey City school district. There are three institutions of higher education within the vicinity of the district: New Jersey City University, St. Peter’s University, and Hudson County Community College, which presents an opportunity for the creation of a unique policy community or policy network. Frank Fischer (2003) explains, “The concept of a policy network, in contrast, is more restricted to a subset of community members who interact with each other on a regular—

even routinized—basis, sharing more specific knowledge-based understanding about problems and solutions” (Fischer, 2003, p. 33).

The way in which education policy is designed and who is involved in its process must be closely examined. Making the transition from high school to college through a “seamless approach to public education at all levels” (Boswell, 2000, p. 3) must be carefully considered. This brings the core issue to the forefront: respondents claim that the QSAC process has ignored what happens in the classroom. Many of the district’s graduates enroll in one of the three local higher education institutions: New Jersey City University, Saint Peters University, and Hudson County Community College. Because they exist in the same city and share the same students, these institutions are more likely familiar—or will become familiar—with the challenges present in the Jersey City school district. Higher education and public education has existed as two separate entities. However, efforts to bring higher education and public education together can be seen in programs such as GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), Upward Bound, and College Bound programs. These programs exist in school districts such as Jersey City, the cities of Newark, Paterson, Camden and also Mercer and Burlington counties. They provide a twenty (20) Saturday and a six (6) week summer program on college campuses located within these districts. Students receive academic instruction, after school tutoring, and visit colleges and universities. Collecting school report cards and district assessment data captures students’ academic achievements. Students enrolled in these programs are recruited from underachieving schools within the school district. These programs are funded for a period of five years through a federal competitive grant process. Over the years, cuts in federal funding have threatened these programs.

Although these programs make great efforts to provide students with a precollege experience, they are not truly integrated systems that bring both higher education and public education together. Boswell (2002) notes that, “The American K-12 and Higher Education systems are among the world’s least – linked education structures” (p. 4). Evidence of this can be seen in the differences between high school graduation standards and college admissions standards. In their junior year, high school students must take state mandated exams, which measures academic skills learned from middle school to their sophomore year. These assessments are not used to determine college acceptance or skills that are necessary for succeeding in college. However, prior to graduating from high school, students take the American College Test⁴¹ (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test⁴² (SAT), which measures academic skills learned in high school. The results of these tests have an effect on what type of college or university students are accepted.

Once admitted into college, students are administered a college placement exam, which is an assessment of a student’s skill level for college course placement or indicative of a need for remediation. College placement exams do not cover content matter that is on the exams mandated by the state, ACT, or SAT. Boswell (2000) notes that, “A system of uncoordinated test and requirements can create significant barriers for students, particularly poor and minority students who are most likely to come from high schools that do not do a good job of preparing students for college success” (p. 5). However, in comparison to achieving only 37% of the state’s indicators at the time of the 1989 state takeover, and

⁴¹ The American College Testing (ACT), a college readiness assessment, is a standardized test for high school achievement and college admissions.

⁴² Similar to the ACT, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is a standardized test administered for entry into colleges and universities in the United States.

achieving 58% Instruction and Program in 2007 after an examination of a QSAC monitoring report, “QSAC has been effective at holding school districts accountable and ensures that districts are in compliance with federal and state regulations. The process has been successful at monitoring district’s affairs” (Participant #9). Further, “it encourages consistency in achievement” (Participant #11). Although public education and higher education exist in two separate governing structures, creating a policy education network of local and state policymakers is a step in the right direction to improving district and school effectiveness and student learning.

Rethinking a Cultural Myth

Contrary to the research findings and respondents’ opinions that economic and social disparities within the district affect students’ ability and greatly impact the district, the study found a school within the district that had continuous academic success: School H. Although general admittance is based on PSAT scores, teacher recommendations, academic performance from the 6th through 8th grade, and extracurricular activities, administrators at this school had developed a culture which plays an important role in student achievement and success. Not only does the school dispute the impact of economic and social disparities on the district and schools, its success defy the Cultural Deficit Model.⁴³ Its students come from the same social and economic backgrounds as most in the Jersey City School District. In addition to standards set by the school; dress code, community service requirements and maintaining academic standards, the school has

⁴³ The “Cultural Deficit Model” places blame and locates the underachievement of students of color from lower socioeconomic strata schools within the confines of the student, family, and communities. The theory attributes the lack of student success to characteristics that are rooted in the urban and poor students’ culture and community.

partnered with stakeholders such as Rutgers University, the Hudson County Science Fair, Junior Science and Humanities Competition, Siemens Westinghouse and the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. According to the New Jersey School Performance Report Card for the 2011-2012, 2012 – 2013, 2013 – 2014 and 2014 - 2015 school years, the school has achieved 100 percent of the requirements in Academic Achievement, 100 percent in College and Career Readiness, and 100 percent in Graduation and Post-Secondary preparedness. According to available data for the past four years, the school also achieved 100 percent in language arts literacy and 100 percent in mathematics and biology on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). The school’s academic achievements are illustrated in the bar graphs below.

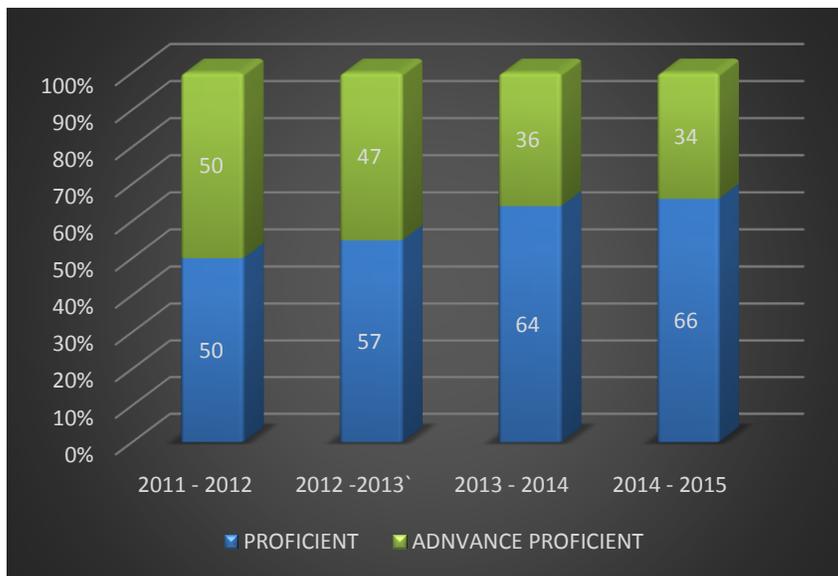


Figure 29. Language arts literacy

(Sources: New Jersey School Performance Reports)

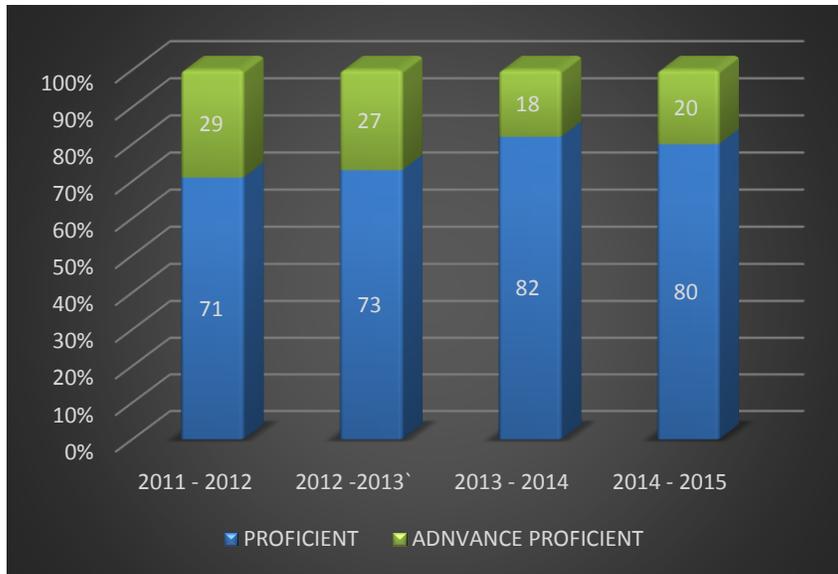


Figure 30. Mathematics

(Sources: New Jersey School Performance Reports)

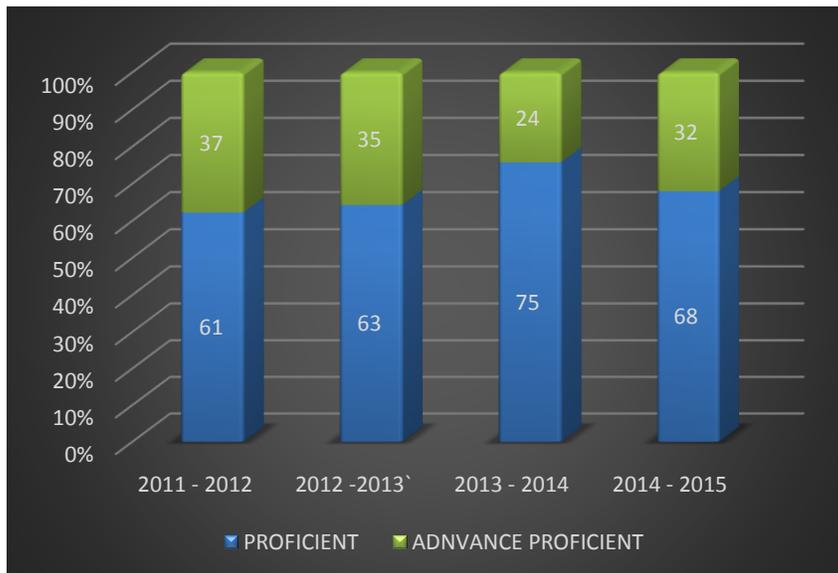


Figure 31. Biology

(Source: New Jersey School Performance Reports)

The data illustrates that the school's students were well prepared and that none were Partially Proficient. Achievement in each performance area was similar for School F, with 100 percent in Academic Achievement, 100 percent in College and Career Readiness and

100 percent in Graduation and Post-Secondary preparedness. The school also achieved 100 percent in language arts literacy and mathematics on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK). Although an entrance exam is required prior to attending these schools, students live in the same social and economic environment as students attending the district's least competitive schools. Similar pockets of excellence can be found in school districts similar to Jersey City; this calls for an inquiry into the following question, is failure to achieve the requirements of accountability for performance policies and mandates in state controlled school districts, a complete matter of state controlled testing, social, and economic disparities, or is it the inability of school districts to establish meaningful stakeholder relationships engaged in the process of creating educational effectiveness?

Is QSAC set up so low income school districts similar to Jersey City are doomed to be run by the state forever?

To conclude that QSAC is set up so that low income school districts similar to Jersey City are doomed to be run by the state forever will be an inaccurate conclusion. Instead, "QSAC has encouraged consistency towards achieving effectiveness in compliance with regulations and state requirements" (Participant #11). At the time of the 1989 state takeover of the Jersey City school district had only achieved 37 percent of the state's monitoring indicators. With a primary focus on student improvement in 1989, the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) was administered to students in their freshman year assessing students in three areas; Reading, Writing and Mathematics. If a student failed the examination it could be taken each year until the student succeeded. In 1993, the

assessment became the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT 11) testing only eleventh grade students. In school year 1997 – 98, in the area of Reading the district’s 11th graders scored at 74.9 %, in Writing 78.5 % and Math 69.8 %. Ten years after the state takeover, in school year 1998 – 99, in the area of Reading the district’s 11th graders scored at 69.8, a -5.1 decrease from the 1997 – 1998 school year %, in Writing 85.0 %, a +6.5 increase and Math 75.9 %, a +6.1 increase. For the first time since state intervention the district met the state standard at 85% in Writing. The 1998 – 99 Math and Writing scores represented an all time high since the 1989 state takeover and the failure to meet state monitoring indicators.

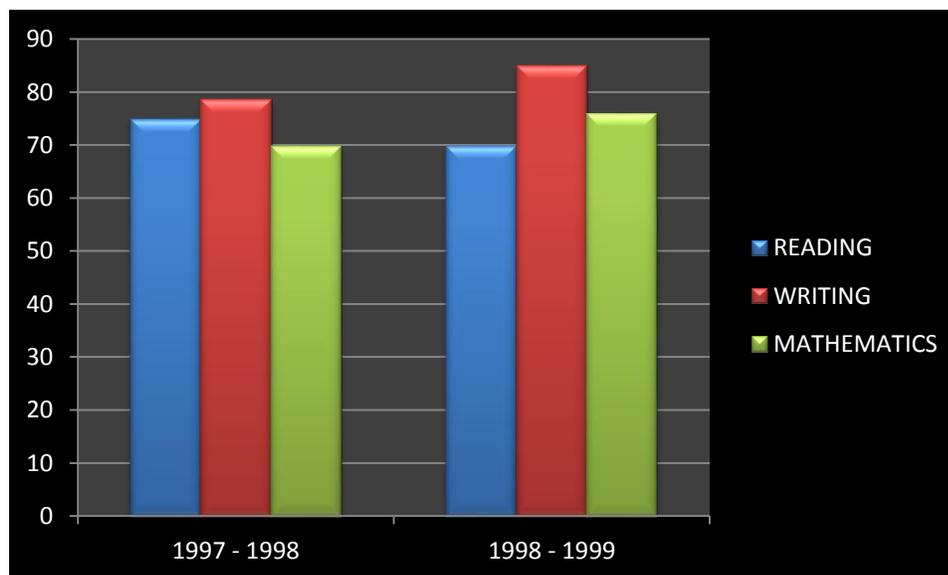


Figure 32. Jersey City HSPT Results

(Source: New Jersey Department of Education)

Unlike past state initiatives such as the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT), the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK), QSAC shifted monitoring and evaluation from compliance to

assistance, capacity building, and improvement. Rather than primarily concentrating on content areas; Reading, Writing and Mathematics as past initiatives had done, QSAC gave focus to five components important to district and school success; Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management, Operations and Governance. “QSAC established consistency towards achieving effectiveness in Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management, Operations and Governance. It gave us a combination of compliance and performance” (Participant # 11). The process provided districts with a focus on building local capacity and returning control to school districts (Trachetenberg et al., 2002). As discussed in chapter 1, in 2007, after an examination of a QSAC 2006 monitoring report the district had “met 57% of the indicators in Instruction and Program, 58% of the indicators in Personnel, 74% in Operations Management, 89% in Governance and 92% in Fiscal Management” (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). In 2013, the year the state took control of the Camden school district, Paterson and Newark were deficient in three of the five areas of QSAC and Jersey City two. The information below show these districts’ 2013 status under state control;

Jersey City

- Student Enrollment: 28,000
- State Assumed Control: 1989
- Status: District is now under partial state control. A locally elected board is responsible for governance and finance. The state is responsible for curriculum, operations, and personnel. A state-appointed “highly qualified professional” oversees the district, but a superintendent runs it day-to-day.

Paterson

- Student Enrollment: 29,000
- State Assumed Control: 1991
- Status: State is responsible for all district functions. A locally elected board serves an advisory role.

Newark

- Student Enrollment: 38,000
- State Assumed Control: 1995
- Status: State is responsible for all district functions except operations. A locally elected board serves an advisory role.

Camden

- Student Enrollment: 13,700
- State Assumed Control: 2013
- Status: State would assume responsibilities for all district functions in late June, pending state board approval.

(Source: New Jersey Department of Education, 2016)

Although the district continued to struggle to meet the 80% threshold in the area of Instruction and Program at 68%, its most recent QSAC scores, 2014 – 2015, although Fiscal Management decreased to 74%, great gains were achieved in Governance 100%, Operations 100% and Personnel at 100%, a significant improvement since meeting only 37% of the state’s monitoring indicators at the time of the 1989 state takeover of the district. In an article titled “Jersey City to Reclaim Control of Schools, 26 Years after State Takeover” by Sarah Gonzalez on October 7, 2015, an assessment by the state Board of Education determined that the Jersey City School district is ready to regain full control of its school system. The decision was made after a review of the district’s progress and

achieving QSAC requirements. “Slowly over the last three decades – and more quickly, over the last three years – we have rebuilt our academic credit. And we’ve done it one student at a time, one class at a time, one cap and gown at a time” (Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop, October, 7, 2015).

The district had already regained control of its Governance, Personnel, Fiscal and Operations Management. The final QSAC area to be regained is Instruction and Program. At the time of the state Board of Education’s decision to return full control to the district, Education Commissioner David Hespe indicated that the return to full control of district affairs has been a long time coming. “We’re seeing the kind of success, particularly under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Marcia Lyles that is pointing toward a new beginning for the community” (Education Commissioner David Hespe, October 7, 2015). After a 2011 Supreme Court ruling which mandated additional aid to the state’s 31 poorest school districts to comply with the 2008 school financing law, in 2016, Paterson, Newark and Jersey reported increases in graduation rates and improvement in student performance. The Commissioner was also confident that in 2016, the Jersey City School District will celebrate return of local control. According to one respondent, a central district administrator, “Regarding QSAC, the District is just about to go back to local control, it might be happening in early spring, 2017” (Participant #12).

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC);

Discussed earlier in the research, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers or (PARCC) is a consortium of states, consisting of educators and administrators. In September of 2010 the PARCC consortium was awarded “Race to the

Top” assessment funds by the U.S. Department of Education to help in the development of K -12 assessments in Mathematics and Language Arts Literacy, based on the Common Core Standards. The assessments cover students between Grade 3 and Grade 11 and are used as indicators of student needs and progress. The assessment was administered in 2015 and 2016 marking the second year of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), providing the Jersey City School District with a comparison two year data. PARCC assessment places student achievement and readiness for college and careers in four different categories; Not Yet Meeting Expectations (Level 1), Partially Meeting Expectations (Level 2), Approaching Expectations (Level 3), Meeting Expectations (Level 4) and Exceeding Expectations (Level 5). The goal of school districts is to achieve level 4 – Meeting Expectations and level 5 – Exceeding Expectations. The tables below reflect two years (2015 and 2016) of comparison data of the district’s Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC);

Table 9

Comparison of New Jersey’s Spring 2015 and Spring 2016 PARCC Administrations English Language Arts/Literacy												
	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (Level 1)		Partially Meeting Expectations (Level 2)		Approaching Expectations (Level 3)		Meeting Expectations (Level 4)		Exceeding Expectations (Level 5)		2015 %>= Level 4	2016 %>= Level 4
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Grade 3	24%	23%	22%	20%	25%	21%	27%	29%	3%	7%	30%	36%
Grade 4	12%	14%	20%	18%	30%	26%	32%	34%	6%	8%	38%	42%
Grade 5	12%	10%	21%	20%	33%	28%	32%	37%	3%	5%	35%	42%
Grade 6	14%	11%	20%	17%	31%	29%	29%	34%	6%	9%	35%	43%
Grade 7	19%	15%	20%	15%	27%	23%	26%	30%	8%	16%	34%	47%
Grade 8	22%	17%	20%	19%	23%	24%	31%	34%	5%	5%	36%	39%
Grade 9	33%	22%	21%	18%	22%	22%	18%	25%	6%	12%	24%	37%
Grade 10	36%	27%	19%	16%	17%	19%	22%	27%	7%	11%	28%	38%
Grade 11*	20%	14%	21%	15%	27%	18%	28%	38%	5%	14%	33%	52%

(Source: Jersey City Public Schools - Partnership for Assessment of College and Career Readiness; September, 2016)

Table 10

Comparison of New Jersey's Spring 2015 and Spring 2016 PARCC Administrations Mathematics												
	Not Yet Meeting Expectations (Level 1)		Partially Meeting Expectations (Level 2)		Approaching Expectations (Level 3)		Meeting Expectations (Level 4)		Exceeding Expectations (Level 5)		2015 %>= Level 4	2016 %>= Level 4
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Grade 3	18%	17%	24%	24%	30%	23%	24%	26%	5%	9%	29%	35%
Grade 4	12%	17%	31%	28%	30%	24%	25%	27%	3%	4%	28%	31%
Grade 5	13%	14%	29%	26%	31%	27%	24%	27%	3%	6%	27%	33%
Grade 6	14%	16%	29%	26%	29%	28%	25%	25%	3%	5%	28%	30%
Grade 7	14%	8%	29%	24%	32%	44%	23%	25%	2%	3%	25%	28%
Grade 8*	30%	32%	27%	29%	25%	23%	17%	16%	1%	0%	18%	16%
Algebra I	21%	11%	32%	15%	19%	22%	26%	47%	2%	5%	28%	52%
Algebra II	45%	44%	25%	21%	17%	14%	13%	18%	1%	2%	14%	20%
Geometry	19%	17%	43%	43%	24%	22%	14%	14%	1%	3%	15%	17%

(Source: Jersey City Public Schools - Partnership for Assessment of College and Career Readiness; September, 2016)

An examination of tables 9 and 10 show some gains in both points and percentages on every grade level in English Language Arts Literacy. A majority of the district's Focus and Priority schools showed overall gains and was more significant at the high school level. Progress in Mathematics was much more modest and in many grades actual point gain was not as great. However, the district appears to be making progress. With almost thirty years of state intervention, on July 5, 2017 the state Board of Education voted to initiate the state's present partial intervention from the Jersey City public school district, allowing the district to develop a transition plan to reestablish local control. The state Board of Education voted to adopt Commissioner Kimberley Harrington's proposal to initiate the state's withdrawal "from partial intervention" in Jersey City's public schools and to allow the district "to develop a full transition plan" that would reestablish the control by the local school board.

Barriers to Achieving Accountability for Performance Policies in Public Education;

As presented in the preceding chapters, the call for quality, equality and a greater accountability and performance in the nation's educational systems was highlighted in the famous 1993 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*". The report was the likes of such Presidential Committees as President Truman's Commission on Higher Education for Democracy and Eisenhower's Committee on Education and Beyond High School. With legislative movements such as President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and President Obama's Race to the Top (2009), and the Students Success Act (2015) reauthorizing programs under titles I-IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 through FY2019. The trend of the federal government to hold administrators and educators responsible and accountable, and improve performance in our states' systems of education has become more imperative.

Chapter two of this study illustrated a paradox of federal accountability for performance in public education, with an examination of the 2001 federal law of No Child Left Behind. The intention of this new law was to ensure improved performance, to implement a method of accountability, and to eliminate the achievement gap in America's educational system by 2014. The chapter provided a theoretical perspective, its organizational complexity and provided a case study analysis on how to achieve within a system of federal accountability for public education. Federal accountability for performance in public education has provided the framework for state accountability for performance measures in public education.

As researcher Paul Mana (2010) illustrated, policy makers assumed that states and education agencies were capable and best positioned to carry out the federal law. The designers of such policies have very little knowledge about the effects of legislation on poor children. (Radin, 2006). The research analysis in this study illustrated what respondents perceived as barriers to achieving QSAC requirements towards district and school success;

“The Jersey City School District has a long history of being state controlled since 1989. With any outside accountability policy, assessment or monitoring system come objectivity, lack of understanding of the process, and sometimes resistance”.

“The process provides no autonomy. I don’t know why it was implemented. I don’t believe that it merge[s] well with the district’s commitment to students or state and federal policies. I don’t believe that anyone understands the process”.

“Those individuals absent from input in school districts on how students should be tested put the district and students at a disadvantage, because we are more familiar with our population”.

According to Ryan (2006), the educational hierarchical structures of educational institutions play a major role in their ability to affect change. In his analysis, Ryan (2006) explains that policymakers and school administrators formulate education policies, excluding the input and thoughts of teachers and school personnel responsible for the execution of such policies. These policies may come in the form of new standardized tests and curriculum standards that limit teachers’ autonomy in the classroom. Educators begin to lose their uniqueness under the pressures of such centralized reforms that feature subject-based curriculum and testing systems (Ryan, 2006). Such pressures can began to chip away a school’s learning philosophy and culture, overload teachers with work, not allow teachers the opportunity to learn together, and begin to destroy the school’s vision.

Any effort at inclusiveness is superficial. Stakeholders that are important to a successful educational process, particularly in the urban and poor districts, will only be included to preempt any conflict between local educators and government. Excluding or limiting such individuals makes it impossible for them to play a meaningful role. The participants in this study were well aware of the importance of internal and external stakeholder relationships in their efforts to achieve district and school effectiveness. They have acknowledged that the failure to link important stakeholders to school improvement efforts will continue to have a negative affect on educational effectiveness and policy outcomes. To foster such a process and make it achievable, policymakers and educational leaders must devise mechanisms and methods that will allow for such a process. Such insight is plausible and educators and policymakers should analyze this further.

The research findings indicate that the federal and state process of designing accountability policies has a tradition of excluding stakeholders who are important to the education process. Administrators in the Jersey City School District shared that relationships with the Department of Education, school district, teachers union, and school board must be improved. A collaborative relationship between these entities can bring favorable results. Respondents view these entities as integral parts of a process that affect the school district, schools, and students. The goal is to develop relationships that will bring improved results and initiatives and collaborative processes, to policy development that can result in district and school effectiveness and student improvement.

According to Freedman (1984) “A stakeholder in an organization is (by definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). Although the idea of stakeholder

legitimacy needs further exploration (Parent & Deehouse, 2007; Neville et al., 2011), attention must be given to stakeholders' legitimacy in public education and its role in district, school affairs, and student improvement. Mitchell et al. (1997) presents the argument that "legitimacy is a social good, it is something larger and more shared than a mere self-perception, and it may be defined and negotiated differently at various levels of social organizations" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 867).

Santana (2011), Mitchell et al. (1997), and Gordy (1993), all share the idea that stakeholder legitimacy is a social construct influenced by societal norms, behaviors, values, principals, and strategies. Although many definitions of what a stakeholder is have been proposed, other definitions take a more pragmatic approach defining stakeholder legitimacy. Donald & Preston, (1995) define stakeholder legitimacy as "persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity" (Donald & Preston, 1995, p. 85). Without question, school boards, teacher unions, and families within school communities all have a legitimate claim to district and school affairs. Mitchell et al. (1997) proposed a normative theory to stakeholder identification based on three variables: "1. The power to influence the firm; 2. Legitimacy of stakeholders' relationship with the firm and 3. The urgency of the stakeholders claim on the firm." Mitchell et al. (1997, p.864), drawing on the work of Etzioni (1964), defines power as a party's means to impose their will upon others by physical or material means or through prestige, esteem, or social means. He takes the definition of legitimacy from the work of Suchman (1995), defining it as a "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Mitchell et al.'s (1997)

concept of stakeholder identification and salience is his response to competing definitions of stakeholders and “who and what really counts” (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 853-854).

The study found that central district administrators believed that as the governing body of local school districts, the State Department of Education is perceived as a legitimate entity with the power to impose its will on school districts. Its legitimacy is rooted in a “socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574) of what students should learn, what student proficiency should be, and what district and school effectiveness should be. As such, because of their position of authority, demands are attended to with urgency. (Mitchell et al., 1997). Similar perceptions and opinions were found in reference to the teachers’ union and school board, which are perceived as influential and persuasive entities. They are the power players in school districts’ educational affairs, the legitimate stakeholders, and an integral part of the district’s policy-making processes.

The changing educational environment, how it relates to and interacts externally and internally with students, families, communities and members within its structure, demands new and innovative ways to achieve effectiveness and greater accountability. Failure in public education must be framed as a public and social problem. The application of John Kingdon’s⁴⁴ theory on public policy and policy development is worth an examination. He identifies three policy streams, the problem stream, the policy stream and the politics stream.

⁴⁴ John W. Kingdon, *Agenda, Alternatives, and Public Policy* (1984). Kingdon published a second edition in 1995 in which he adds new chapter (10) that focuses on recent public policy events; however, the body of his work remains fundamentally the same as the original.

As Kingdon notes, certain circumstances creates a window of opportunity, “a problem is recognized, a solution is available, the political climate makes the time right for change, and the constraints do not prohibit action” (p. 96). The long-standing and current climate for change in school districts similar to that of the Jersey City School District, as illustrated in this research, has created windows of opportunities. With its application to education, the process must begin with educators, administrators, local and state policy makers identifying indicators that point to current problems and framing the problems to be solved. Since ineffectiveness in school districts’ abilities to achieve district and school improvement has been a continuing and ongoing problem, particularly in poor and urban school districts, the problem has already been framed. An inquiry into district and school ineffectiveness might indicate the cause, reason, and the nature of school and district ineffectiveness. The problem stream, therefore, calls for establishing that a problem exists or can be identified as a continuing occurrence, bringing the issue to the attention of policy makers, the community, and others.

The long history of state control and the operation of school districts in the State of New Jersey has been a long-lasting occurrence. The policy stream requires input from specialists and experts in the area of the problems that are identified. The research has illustrated that past policies and initiatives were created and implemented in a top-down fashion. All stakeholders in the educational process are seen as contributors in the policy stream. Political, intellectuals and individuals with a personal interest, commitment, or investment in bringing about a solution to a problem or issue must be included in the process. Such individuals are referred to as the hidden cluster of policy actors, which might include public administrators’ interest groups and others.

As Fischer notes, “All members of a policy community share a common interest and concern for a particular policy domain and are politically engaged in one way or another, in bringing about policy reform. Policy communities thus refer to a broader more inclusive category of actors and potential actors interested in policy formulation” (Fischer, 2003, p. 33).

According to researcher Judith J. Slater (1996), such support communities come into existence through an evolving process. In a study of fifty-seven school districts, Hess (1999) found that it was typical for urban school districts to pursue more than eleven initiatives towards district and school improvement. This approach was unsuccessful and only provided a Band-Aid affect. The failure of such fragmented efforts illustrates educators’ inability to produce educational improvement, and further illustrates that such a task cannot be achieved alone. Building bridges between public education, stakeholders, and community organizations and institutions that are important to the educational process can have great benefits. Further, developing and establishing policy communities and policy entrepreneurs within school districts similar to the Jersey City School District can create the following possibilities: 1. Increasing the possibility of reducing the achievement gap in poor school districts, 2. Students within these districts will be more prepared to compete in a changing global society, and 3. Federal and state accountability mandates and initiatives will be achieved improved results.

Recognizing the importance of taking a systemic approach along with the value of stakeholders important to the educational process, respondents acknowledged that a difference in organizational thinking must occur. Scholars suggest that, “a change agent is someone who knows and understands the dynamics that facilitate or hinder change. Change

agents define research, plan, build support and partner with others to create change. They have the courage and willingness to do what is best for the community (Center for Creative Leadership, 2013). To bring about organizational change, change agents must overcome the constraints put in place by other members within the organization and their practices. The implementation for change within an organization “can thus be conceptualized as an exercise in social influence, the alteration of an attitude or behavior by one actor in response to another actor’s actions” (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012, p. 381). As such, leaders may converge with or diverge from the institution’s status quo. Such action might require individuals to distance themselves from their existing institutions and persuade others to adopt practices that not only are new, but also break with the norms of institutional environments (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009; Geaanwwod & Hinings).

Coalition building is an important aspect of persuading others within an organization, which calls for the influence of organizational thinking. Building successful partnerships within an organization is the difference between successful organizations and ambitious ones (Das, 2012). Studies on network theory illustrate that the extent to which change agents or institutional leaders and organizational contacts are closely connected has important implications for developing, exchanging, or generating new ideas and exercising social influence (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012).

Therefore, policy makers and educational leaders must have a collective and shared responsibility in developing effective education policies and practices, in the effort to improve district and school effectiveness. An analysis of participants’ responses suggests that there must be a shared common goal. Network theory suggests that leaders will be

more effective at promoting their agenda if, along with the interest of the other units within their network, there is a priority and high level of agreement (O'Toole & Meir, 2000; Salomon, 2002). O'Toole & Meir (2000) define network theory as consisting of "patterns of two or more units, in which all major components are not encompassed in a single hierarchical array" (O'Toole & Meir, 2000, p. 266).

One of the biggest challenges to network theory is ensuring that all members within the network share a common goal and that all units are working towards that common goal (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004). Some networks form or develop stakeholder relationships in pursuit of achieving an intended objective or goal. Clarence Stone (1998) refers to such relationships as performance regimes. Although members within the regime may have competing objectives, members are aligned to achieve specific objectives or goals. Performance regimes allow local governments the opportunity to build coalitions that "connect with community actors in order to solve their collective action problems; they involve governance arrangements, thereby differentiating them from generic partnerships and other collaborative networks" (Bowen and Parsons, 2012, p. 64).

Performance regimes are geared towards action and goal accomplishing (Jochim & Sapotichne, 2011). Agranoff (2007) describes performance regimes as action networks. Performance regimes are "driven by a performance imperative" (Stone, 1998, p. 9). Successful performance regimes can mobilize stakeholders and sustain their involvement (Bowen & Parsons, 2012; Clarke & Chenoweth, 2006; Stone, 1998). Similar to any organization or institution adapting to change, performance regimes must adapt and evolve in order to survive. Stakeholders in the performance regime might consist of various actors and organizations, with each having an individual purpose and different perspectives. In

order to develop a functional cohesive network, “one that can withstand disputes and defections, is a difficult task” (Bowen & Parsons, 2012, p. 64). To survive and encourage participation by network participants, network leaders must provide various opportunities that will allow stakeholders to share and exchange information that will lead to meaningful dialogue. In their examination of Stone’s (1998) study of performance regimes in the Department of Homeland Security and its relationship to local emergency management, Clarke and Chenoweth (2006) concluded that sustaining regime members’ involvement calls for a different kind of interaction. This involvement requires for managers to keep members engaged, “embracing shared goals and adapting to new circumstances” (Bowen & Parsons, 2012, p. 64). Disagreement among network members has the potential to threaten the regime’s durability (Clarke & Chenoweth, 2006), but “skillful resolution of disputes that arise will enhance the regime’s viability and increase the amount of cohesion within it” (Bowen & Parsons, 2012, p. 64). However, regimes mature “they remain dynamic, continuing to learn and evolve” (Bowen & Parsons, 2012, p. 64). The performance regime framework recognizes that there is a difference in mobilizing network stakeholders and sustaining their involvement and interest (Clarke & Chenoweth, 2006). According to Agramoff (2007), leadership within these regimes and performance networks requires steering and soft guidance.

Conclusion

The quagmire of educational accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency in New Jersey's poor and urban school districts has proven to be a difficult task to achieve. The findings in this study help us to understand the impact of accountability for performance initiatives and policies on school districts and schools. It further provides us with a lens with which to understand how individuals responsible for its implementation, perceive it and how those distant from its process react.

Further, an analysis of the literature reveals the importance of stakeholder involvement in the policymaking and implementation process. While the research found a consensus among respondents who believed that the QSAC process is an effective method by which to hold districts responsible and encourage them to self-examine, the study also illustrated that the perceptions, opinions, and beliefs at the school level differed. This finding was consistent with such theories as of Goal Conflict, indicating that distance from the policy process can result in a difference in stakeholders' perception, opinions, and beliefs.

Further, the study found numerous responses that regarded QSAC as largely connected to Instruction and Program. The research demonstrated that this finding places blame and associates a state controlled testing system and social and economic disparities, with the district's inability to achieve and to meet the QSAC requirements. Contrary to this finding, the research found a school in the district, demonstrating high academic performance, exceptional student achievement and school effectiveness. This finding challenges such a perception and requires further research providing an answer to the following question: is the failure to achieve effectiveness, efficiency, and the requirements

of education policies in state controlled school districts a complete matter of state controlled testing, social, and economic disparities, or does it lie in the inability of school districtst to establish meaningful stakeholder relationships engaged in the process of creating educational effectiveness? The researcher in this study suggests that the application of Kingdon's (1995;1984) theory on Public Policy and Policy Streams, establishing education Policy Communities, and developing Policy Networks in urban and poor school districts similar to the Jersey City School District, is worth an examination to providing solutions to acahieving accountability for performance initiatives, district and school effectiveness.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

November 6, 2012

P.I. Name: Friday
Protocol #: E13-208

Robert L. Friday
13 Falkirk Court
Edison NJ 08817

Dear Robert Friday:

Notice of Exemption from IRB Review

Protocol Title: "Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) in the Jersey City School District"

The project identified above has been approved for exemption under one of the six categories noted in 45 CFR 46, and as noted below:

Exemption Date: 10/9/2012 **Exempt Category:** 1

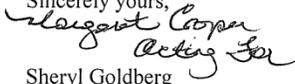
This exemption is based on the following assumptions:

- **This Approval** - The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted.
- **Reporting** – ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications** – Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form (s)** – Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;

Additional Notes: **None**

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

The Federalwide Assurance (FWA) number for Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Sincerely yours,

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
gibel@grants.rutgers.edu

cc: Dr. Alan R. Sadovnik

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Research Title; - "Stakeholder Perceptions' of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), in the Jersey City School District"

The purpose of my research is to analyze stakeholder perceptions of the effectiveness of **The Quality Single Accountability Continuum**, in the Jersey City School District. You will be asked a series of questions within an hour and a half period. All questions and answers will be recorded.

Your answers to the questions will help me to assess the benefit of implementing performance – based measurement and management initiatives, in an effort to improve district and school effectiveness. Your participation in this process is voluntary. If you experience any discomfort in providing answers to any question/s, you may withdraw from the process.

You will not be identified by your school or name as a participant. You will be assigned and identified by a number, (example – 1, 2, 3.....). Each participating school will be identified by a letter, (School A, B, C....). All data provided by the district, written answers and taped interviews will be kept locked and stored in a secured location, at my office on the campus of New Jersey City University and will be destroyed (shredded), upon the completion of the research. A final copy of the research and findings will be shared with all participants.

If you have any questions about this process or procedures, you may contact;

Robert Friday, Graduate Student
Office of Precollege Programs
(201) 200-2346
(201) 200-2348
New Jersey City University
2039 Kennedy Blvd.
Jersey City, NJ 07305

Alan Sadovnik, PhD – Faculty Advisor
School of Public Affairs and Administration
111 Washington Street
Center for Urban and Public Service
Newark, NJ 07102

Participant (Number /Letter)

IRB Administrator
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
ASB 111, 3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: (848) 932-0150

Graduate Student

APPROVED

Date: 10/9/12

Appendix C: District Approval



Paula A. Christen
Director
Program Evaluation

THE JERSEY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
346 CLAREMONT AVENUE
JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY 07305



Telephone - (201) 915-6227
Fax - (201) 435-4809
e-mail - pchristen@jcboe.org

May 13, 2013

Sheryl N. Goldberg, Director
Rutgers University
Office of Research & Sponsored Programs
ASB III - 2nd Floor, 3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Dear Ms. Goldberg:

Re: Authorization to Conduct Research
Principal Investigator: Robert Friday
Topic: "Stakeholder Perceptions of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) in the Jersey City School District"

Robert Friday has presented the research overview, a description of the procedures conducted with each research subject, and the provision of anonymity for all research participants. This graduate student is authorized to conduct research at four district high schools and five elementary schools. This includes interviewing central office district administrators.

Sincerely,

Paula A. Christen, Director
Program Evaluation

PAC:jat

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been employed with the district of Jersey City?
2. What is your present position with the district?
3. What do you know about the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum?
4. What was your role, if any, in the QSAC process?
5. How would you describe the QSAC process ability to capture the progress and performance of central level administrators?
6. How would you describe the QSAC process ability to capture the progress and performance of school level administrators?
7. How would you describe the QSAC process ability to capture student performance and progress?
8. Did the NJQSAC process place more emphasis on compliance and monitoring than performance?
9. How would you describe the QSAC process ability to provide autonomy at the district and school levels?
10. How would you describe the QSAC process ability to merge with the district's commitment to existing federal and state policies and goals?
11. How would you describe commitment to the implementation of the QSAC process at the central administrative level?
12. How would you describe commitment to the implementation of the QSAC process at the school administrative level?
13. Have the QSAC guidelines been clear in terms of what is expected? If no, can you give an example?
14. Have there been times when you disagreed with the implementation of QSAC? If yes, can you give an example?
15. Have there been times when you perceived the QSAC process differently? If yes, can you give an example?
16. What would you have done differently to successfully affect the QSAC process?
17. Do you think that there are other types of methods, which are not a part of the current accountability system that should be implemented?