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# Meeting the Challenge of No Child Left Behind: Implementation of a Statewide Collaborative Intervention Plan in Two Urban Schools

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MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND:  
IMPLEMENTATION OF A STATEWIDE COLLABORATIVE INTERVENTION  
PLAN  
IN TWO URBAN SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
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Title: Meeting the Challenge of No Child Left Behind: Implementation of a  
Statewide Collaborative Intervention Plan in Two Urban Schools

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Research indicates that academic achievement is still a major concern for the United States and that most past educational reform efforts to improve student achievement have not produced the intended results (Elmore, 2005; McNeil, 2000; Ravitch, 1983; Sarason, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The NCLB Act of 2001, with increased federal government involvement in education and accountability measures for states, is the latest reauthorization of a long standing federal reform effort designed to eliminate the achievement gap (CEP, 2007; Meier & Wood, 2004; Murnane, 2007; NASBE, 2002). As a result, states are faced with improving student achievement for all student groups and, to do so, have implemented various intervention strategies to improve teaching and learning in low-performing schools (Gambino, 2007; Malen & Rice, 2004; Vernez, Koram, Mariano, & DeMartini, 2006).

The purpose of this case study was to explore the effectiveness, in two initially low-performing urban schools, of a state collaborative intervention strategy to increase student achievement. The Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) initiative, was developed by the New Jersey Department of Education to provide technical assistance to Title I schools which have not achieved state accountability benchmarks as mandated by NCLB. This study examined the process for selecting the intervention strategies to address

the collaborative team's recommendations for improvement in academic performance, the preparedness of teachers and administrators to implement the recommended intervention strategies and student achievement gains in two initially low-performing schools.

To gain a comprehensive picture of this complex phenomenon, a mixed-method approach was used incorporating principal interviews and student achievement data. The use of a multiple case study design added depth to the findings.

Data gleaned from this mixed-method case study demonstrated that in these two initially low-performing schools, a state collaborative intervention strategy stimulated the synergistic advancement of instructional leadership, teacher expertise, teacher knowledge and collaboration to a level which enabled their schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

## Acknowledgments

*The purpose of school is to see to it that all of our students learn at high levels, and the future of our students depends on our success. We must work collaboratively to achieve that purpose, because it is impossible to accomplish if we work in isolation (DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker, 2005, pp. 232-233).*

I owe the accomplishment of this goal to my dissertation committee for their superb guidance and scholarship, to my special friends for their consistent encouragement, and to my family for their unconditional love and spiritual support.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

### Introduction

For several decades, the United States has been consumed with disappointing levels of student performance as determined by national reports, international comparisons, and national test results. Resnick and Glennan (2002) note that, even when controlling for poverty by providing additional resources, achievement scores for students living in urban districts have been low and that improving student achievement in urban districts presents a tremendous challenge for our nation. To explore the issue of the “rising tide of mediocrity” in American education, *A Nation at Risk* (NAR), a national report commissioned by Dr. T. H. Bell, Secretary of Education during the Reagan administration, outlined 13 educational dimensions of risk that our country faced at the time of its publication in 1983. Among other findings, the report revealed that 23 million American adults were unable to pass basic tests of everyday reading, writing and comprehension; that the average standard achievement test score for high school students was lower than when Sputnik was launched in 1957; and that functional illiteracy among minority youth was climbing toward 40% in some regions (A Nation at Risk, 1983). The NAR report was successful in raising public consciousness regarding the state of education at that time. However, other researchers have claimed that the report’s foundational principle of the causal relationship between high test scores and international competitiveness in the economy, technology and the military has not been substantiated (Bracey,

2003). Furthermore, the NAR report has been criticized for the “paucity of evidence” included by its development committee of well-respected members in the educational and scientific communities to support its claims of the country’s downward spiral in education (Guthrie & Springer, 2004).

According to the results of the 1999 Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), students in the United States performed inadequately in mathematics and science, particularly at the middle and high school levels. In that particular study the United States, participating with 37 other countries, was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> from the top in eighth grade science. Eighth graders scored below the international average in mathematics as well. Twelfth graders finished near the bottom of the list when competing in science with 24 other countries (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administers reading and mathematics assessments to representative groups of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students selected from schools across the country. Data from these tests have been reviewed since 1992 and therefore afford the opportunity to analyze trends. Data culled from the 2005 NAEP reading assessment indicate that the proportion of students scoring at or above the lowest proficiency level of Basic decreased from 80% in 1992 to 73% in 2005. In terms of high school seniors, the range of students scoring at or above the proficient level decreased from 40% to 35% for high school seniors (Nation’s Report Card, 2006). The proficiency range for seventeen-year-olds indicated no significant change in student achievement during the past 25 years (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2004), and overall declines were evident throughout the various performance levels when 1992 and 2005 reading scores were compared (Nation's Report Card, 2006). On the NAEP, only 13% of children living in poverty (eighth graders) achieved a score of proficient in mathematics compared with 40% of those who were not living in poverty and took the test.

During the 1990s, reflecting the national impetus to increase student achievement, states including California, Maryland, Kentucky, Illinois and North Carolina implemented results-based accountability initiatives to hold schools and districts directly accountable for low student achievement. The results of these studies vary. According to Bitter, Perez, Parrish, Gonzalez, Socias, and Salzfass. (2005), the Immediate Intervention for Underperforming Schools (II/USP), a results- based accountability system, was implemented as one essential component of California's Public School Accountability Act of 1999. A state-mandated study on II/USP concluded the following:

Overall, the impact of II/USP participation on student achievement has been negligible. Any small advantage experienced by II/USP schools relative to comparison schools during the program participation dissipated before or soon after program completion.  
(Bitter et al. 2005, p.16)

Similarly, an evaluation report conducted by Mintrop (2002) on II/USP reported that the state was ineffective in its support and intervention to provide assistance in key areas to low-performing schools and districts in California. O'Day (2002) concludes in her study of accountability systems that although California,



Kentucky, Texas, Tennessee, Chicago and other jurisdictions have indicated that their accountability policies have resulted in increased student achievement, other observers of accountability systems question the validity of such a linkage. Specifically, they question whether increases in test scores are reliable indicators of student learning or if increases are merely a reflection of a narrowed curriculum with an emphasis on “teaching to the test.” O’Day (2002) further elaborates that the complexities of accountability systems and school improvement make it difficult to establish a causal relationship.

Finally, after conducting an extensive research study regarding the implementation of accountability systems prior to NCLB which included qualitative and quantitative data from Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, California, Florida, New York, Texas, and cities such as Chicago and Philadelphia (first-generation accountability systems) Mintrop and Trujillo (2005) concluded the following:

- Sanctions do not conclusively motivate teachers and administrators to change their practice. In fact, teachers reject accountability systems as an intrinsic motivator for their work.
- No single strategy for increasing student achievement was successful across all sites.
- Intensive capacity building is essential. Teachers must be continuously involved in acquiring the specialized knowledge and skills necessary to improve student achievement in their specific contexts.

A report commissioned by the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2001) further elaborated:

Reform is not a one-size-fits-all proposition: it is rather, highly context-specific. Not all low-performing schools are low-performing for the same reasons or in the same ways; therefore, reform strategies must also be varied to fit the needs of the particular school. In addition, researchers agree that reform only works if those most involved in it (teachers, school staff, school leaders, parents, and students) buy into it. (p. 29)

Consequently, based on prior studies and research reports, the need for a continued focus on how to support low-performing urban schools during an era of high stakes accountability is urgent and critical.

Children living in poverty, who are disproportionately children of color, tend to be concentrated in schools with inadequate resources and poorly skilled teachers (Murnane, 2007). Murnane (2007) asserts that the dropout rate for black and Hispanic youth is approximately 25% more than that of white youth. As such, the federally mandated sanctions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have had the greatest effect on students in urban districts. Traditionally, low performing students live in impoverished environments. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) like A Nation at Risk (1983) is an educational reform effort developed to improve the academic performance of all children but specifically children who have not been traditionally served well by the educational system. However, according to Elmore (2003), due to a lack of expert advice on testing,

assessment, school improvement and accountability NCLB was developed with a number of inherent design flaws which include the following:

- Overinvestment in testing and an underinvestment in capacity building. There remains a focus on test results without the commitment to the investment required to deliver high quality instruction to students.
- Ungrounded theories of school improvement. Adequate Yearly Progress is an arbitrary mathematical function and is not based on theory or research of how schools improve.
- Perverse incentives for quality and performance. It encourages states that had set high standards with rigorous assessments to lower their proficiency levels in order to avoid an increase in the number of schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress.
- Policymaking by remote control. This implies the lack of support from the federal government to address issues such as the supply and demand for highly trained teachers as well as the instability created by the transfer of students from low-performing schools to higher performing schools.
- Weak knowledge about how to turn around low-performing schools. There is more research needed on the programs and policies necessary to not only turn around low-performing schools but to continuously improve them so that they do not return to a failing status. (pp.1-2)

As a result, in its report, *Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act*, the Center on Educational Policy posits:

The majority (54%) of Title I schools identified for improvement nationwide are located in urban districts; this is disproportionate because only 27% of Title I schools are located in urban districts. Greater proportions of urban districts than suburban or rural districts have been identified for district improvement. About 90% of the schools in restructuring, the last stage of NCLB's sanctions are in urban districts. (p. viii)

In the wake of an increasing number of schools across the country becoming labeled "in need of improvement" the urgency for providing support to urban schools, in closing the achievement gap has never been greater (NASBE, 2002). Such labeling is a direct result of increased federal intervention in education at the local level through the passage of the NCLB Act in 2001. In an effort to comply with the federal NCLB mandate and to avoid its sanctions, states and school districts must find ways to address the complexities of implementing interventions at the school level which improve student achievement in urban schools. Accountability demands are indeed forcing more states to broaden the depth and intensity of support provided to low-performing schools (Laguarda, 2003). This chapter provides an introduction to a mixed method case study of two urban schools implementing an intervention plan co-constructed with the state. As such, the two urban schools are in Abbott school districts. Abbott school districts receive additional funding from the state due to having a high poverty

concentration as well as the need for extra support to achieve academic goals. Despite these factors, the schools were able to make Adequate Yearly Progress while involved in a collaborative initiative with the New Jersey Department of Education. Additionally, a statement of the problem; the purpose of the study; research questions; definition of terms; limitations of the study; significance of the study and a summary are included as an introduction to the study.

### Statement of the Problem

In an effort to comply with the federal NCLB mandate and to avoid sanctions, states and school districts must find ways to address the complexities of improving student achievement (Hess & Petrilli, 2006; O'Day, 2002). As a result, states and school districts are implementing various intervention strategies to improve teaching and learning in low-performing schools (Vernez, Koram, Mariano & DeMartini, 2006). According to West and Peterson (2003), implementation at the school level of NCLB in terms of increasing student achievement is highly dependent upon the strategies the state supports, indicating the important role the state must play in the successful implementation of intervention strategies. Even with state support, the research indicates that the barriers ranging from a lack of funding to a narrowing of the curriculum (Guilfoyle, 2006; Haycock, 2001; Popham, 2006) exist and may prevent states from meeting the federal mandate of all students proficient in literacy and mathematics by the year 2014 (Elmore, 2002; Meier & Woods, 2004). Gray (2000) admits, "We don't really know how much more difficult it is for schools

serving disadvantaged communities to improve because much of the improvement research has ignored this dimension ... (the fact) that it is more difficult, however, is unquestionable” (p. 33). Accordingly, the First Annual School Improvement Report (2001) argues:

There are significant gaps in research and data that must be filled. We know more about the characteristics of high performing schools than about the process of transforming low-performing schools or about how states and local school districts can most effectively build the capacity to assist the growing number of schools that need additional help. (p. 7)

During this period of high stakes accountability, substantially increasing the number of students in low-performing schools who are proficient in reading and mathematics will require implementation of effective intervention strategies. Low-performing schools often lack the internal instructional capacity to improve and may substantially improve with external support focused on increasing instructional capacity (Elmore, 2004). Little is known about how urban schools improve by the implementation of intervention strategies through state and school collaboration, especially in districts where mistrust of the state is commonplace due to its traditional role as an evaluator and monitor. Previous studies have concentrated on school reform through the lens of top-down mandates or bottom-up initiatives rather than the implementation of intervention strategies that may lead to increased student achievement (O’Day, 2002). Specifically, there is a need to investigate low-performing urban schools that

have increased student achievement within the context of NCLB to describe the intricacies and subtleties of implementing a state collaborative intervention strategy to improve student achievement.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-method case study is to explore effectiveness of a state collaborative intervention strategy to increase student achievement. The Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA), a state collaborative intervention strategy, will be reviewed as a major component of this study. CAPA, as a tool and a process, was developed by the New Jersey Department of Education to assist Abbott schools that have not achieved state accountability benchmarks as mandated by NCLB. Thirty-one New Jersey school districts have been designated as Abbott school districts based on specific criteria including a large percentage of students of color, poverty and low academic achievement (Walker, 2004). To conduct this study, the following data will be analyzed from two schools in Abbott districts which made Adequate Yearly Progress while involved in the CAPA initiative:

- Structured interviews with administrators based on the implementation of the recommendations of CAPA
- Responses by teachers and administrators to a written questionnaire
- District documents and artifacts related to the implementation of the CAPA process

- Student achievement data gathered from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) for students in grades 3, 4, and 5 during the school years 2004-2007

As we move closer to the targeted year of 2014 and the legislative goal of having 100% of the nation's students proficient in mathematics and literacy (Guilfoyle, 2006), there will be an increase in the need for knowledge of effective intervention strategies and the lessons learned from the implementation of a collaborative intervention initiative.

### Research Questions

The following specific questions were formulated to anchor this qualitative and quantitative study:

1. In what reported ways did the school's participation in the CAPA process affect student achievement?
2. What reported specific strategies were used to implement the prioritized intervention recommendations from the CAPA Summary Report during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years?
3. What reported procedures were used to prioritize the intervention recommendations included in the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) Summary Report?
4. What common factors that exist across the two initially low-performing elementary schools seem to contribute to achieving AYP?



## Definition of Terms

Abbott School District: Refers to 28 urban school districts in New Jersey who were litigants in the *Abbott v. Burke* case which decided on June 5, 1990, that students in poorer New Jersey school districts were not receiving a thorough and efficient education. As such, they were awarded various sums of money from the state to implement specific programs and strategies for school improvement. Three additional schools were added pursuant to the statute making the final number of Abbott districts in New Jersey thirty-one. ("Glossary of Acronyms," 2005)

Accountability System: Measuring state standards annually on a standards-based assessment; aligning sanctions and rewards according to the number of students who achieve the standards; and, reporting the results to the public. ("Glossary of Terms," n.d.)

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): AYP is the lowest level of progress that schools, districts and states must achieve each year to avoid sanctions by the federal government. Year-to-year comparisons of schools' scores on state assessments in grades 3-8 are the basis for determining AYP. State assessments are required by the No Child Left Behind Act and are given in the spring of every year. Additionally, schools must meet a 95% participation rate in language arts and mathematics for each of the following subgroups: total grade population, students with disabilities, limited English proficient (LEP) students, economically disadvantaged students, and white, Hispanic, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander

and American Indian/Native American students. (No Child Left Behind Handbook, 2007-2008)

Benchmarking: A process used by the CAPA team to compare progress made toward the prioritized recommendations. (CAPA Handbook, 2006)

Collaboration: Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain. (Wood & Gray, 1991)

Collaboration Theory: A theory which posits that collaboration occurs in stages and can be used as a primary method for achieving goals unobtainable if each organization acted independently. (Gajda, 2004)

Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA): A partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education, districts and schools developed to assist low-performing schools in improving student achievement. As such, it includes a school review process developed by the state department and modeled after the Kentucky Scholastic Audit. CAPA Teams are trained to provide collaborative technical assistance to schools through the use of *The CAPA Standards and Indicators for School Improvement* and its companion document, *Performance Descriptors*. (“Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement,” n.d.)

External Scholastic Audit: A process used with low-performing schools which usually involves an identification of the barriers to school improvement through an intense onsite visit from 3-5 days to observe classes, review

documents and analyze data. An improvement plan is constructed based on the findings with targeted benchmarking intervals. (“Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement,” n.d.)

Instructional Capacity: The knowledge, skills and resources of teachers and administrators for problem solving instructional issues. (Elmore, 2006)

School Factors: Leadership, coherence, professional development, support mechanisms, collaboration, and co-accountability factors which contribute to successful implementation of school improvement strategies. (Elmore, 2006)

Universal Proficiency: According to Hess & Petrilli (2006) universal proficiency is “The final goal of NCLB for all students to achieve proficiency in math, English and the other core academic subjects.” (p. 29)

### Limitations of the Study

Generalizations of the findings in this study are limited by the following factors:

1. The schools were purposefully selected for the study.
2. In the tradition of qualitative research, the principal investigator deliberately selected two urban schools which were considered low-performing prior to achieving Adequate Yearly Progress. It is not intended to be a representative sample drawn from a larger population.

3. The study focuses on description and historical reflections from participants involved in the CAPA process at the two low performing urban schools. Personal perceptions and memories may change over time and be affected by specific characteristics of personal experiences in the change process.

### Significance of the Study

This study is of enduring significance due to the ever increasing diversity of the student population in American schools and the ever present need for an informed and knowledgeable citizenry to participate and successfully perpetuate a democratic society. The immediate urgency of the problem is compounded as districts search for new intervention strategies to assist schools that have been designated as “schools in need of improvement” in response to NCLB. Findings from a study completed for the United States Department of Education indicate that more information is needed regarding the quality of local improvement efforts and the impact of state intervention efforts (LeFloch, Martinez, O’Day, Stecher, Taylor, & Cook, 2007). A review of the literature on school reform reveals that external mandates are not supportive of lasting change and may indeed effect changes in content but not pedagogy (Firestone & Mayrowetz, 2000; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This study will expand the knowledge base on using a co-constructed plan in urban settings to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate intervention strategies which assist schools in making AYP. It will increase knowledge relative to the usefulness of exploring intervention strategies through

the lens of *collaboration theory*, a theory which posits that collaboration occurs in stages and can be used as a primary method for achieving goals unobtainable if each organization acted independently (Gajda, 2004). In other words, the school and the state are both concerned with improving student achievement. However, working collaboratively can increase the intellectual resources and expertise available to the school in pursuit of the joint goal of increased student achievement.

Administrators, teachers, state leaders and policymakers will find the results of this study valuable. Administrators can use the results to review the researched-based strategies for increasing student achievement with support from a state collaborative intervention process. Teachers, by reviewing the findings of this study, will acknowledge how the use of an external audit of the curriculum, assessments and instruction in their school done by a collaborative team can move a school forward. State leaders can expand their repertoire of knowledge regarding the changing role of a state department of education from a top down monitor to a support agent for districts and schools. Policymakers can learn more about how to design and implement mandates and related interventions thus enabling states to function as collaborative agents for improving student achievement.

## Chapter Summary

The Council of the Great City Schools reported “The movement to reform education in the U.S. is fundamentally about improving America’s urban public

schools” (Casserly, 2005, p.1). Achieving equity and excellence throughout the country has been an ongoing problem requiring intervention from the federal government in the form of ESEA. Although the achievement gap has persisted, some low-performing elementary schools have been able to make substantial gains and have avoided sanctions mandated by NCLB, the most recent reauthorization of ESEA. This chapter provided an introduction to a mixed-method case study on two low-performing urban elementary schools in New Jersey which avoided NCLB sanctions by making AYP. Their achievement occurred during the time the school was involved with the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) initiative. As a New Jersey Department of Education initiative, CAPA grew out of the NCLB requirement that states provide support for schools designated as “in need of improvement.” States had the flexibility to determine the type of support provided. New Jersey selected a collaborative approach.

In Chapter One, a general overview of this case study was provided by describing the research problem of improving academic achievement during an era of accountability in urban low-performing schools. The research purpose, the research questions, definitions for key terms, and the significance of the study were also addressed. Although the NCLB goal of 100% proficiency is unattainable, some urban schools have risen to the challenge of improving their present educational attainment and thereby narrowing the achievement gap. Chapter One laid a foundation for exploring the effectiveness of a state

collaborative intervention strategy designed and implemented to increase student achievement.

The purpose of the literature review in Chapter Two is to set a context for the analysis of two low-performing schools which made AYP while involved in the CAPA process. Setting the context includes a review of the school reform literature at the federal, state and school level. The theory of collaboration and its application will be explored for reviewing the implementation of school reform strategies in Chapter Two as well. Chapter Three will describe the methodology used for analyzing data from structured interviews, administrator and teacher questionnaires, district documents, and achievement test data for two urban schools. The findings of the research will be presented in Chapter Four and last of all, in Chapter Five, the summary findings and conclusions, implications for instruction and recommendations for further research will be shared.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The ongoing critical need for educational reform in American schools has gained momentum through governmental reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), legislative decisions including *Brown v. Board of Education* and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. NCLB, the most recent federal legislative effort to improve educational equity, is the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA stemmed from the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case which resulted in the desegregation of public schools and the Supreme Court's declaration that "in the field of education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place." Created in 1965, on the heels of the Civil Rights Act and as a part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty campaign, ESEA provided federal support to schools in low-income areas. It was designed to close the educational gap between minorities, the poor and other students. Since its inception, ESEA has been reauthorized eight times to address equity issues in closing the achievement gap by supporting the various needs of bilingual, migrant, delinquent, neglected or other special children. The largest portion of ESEA funding has been allocated to Title I to finance compensatory education programs for students who are disadvantaged. With additional funding through Title 1, districts were also allowed to purchase a wide variety of initiatives, including professional development, parent training, medical services and speech



therapy. Hess and Petrilli (2006) report, “In the two years following the adoption of ESEA, the U.S. Office of Education’s annual budget nearly tripled, from \$1.5 billion to \$4 billion a year “(p. 8).

In the 1988 reauthorization of ESEA, a significant shift occurred from fiscal accountability to academic accountability. For the first time, the federal government required districts and states to take corrective action if after one year of receiving Title 1 funds, students did not make academic gains. The significance of the 1994 reauthorization required all states to establish academic standards in each grade and to assess whether Title 1 students had mastered the standards. However, by the year 2002 due to a lack of enforcement from the federal government, only 16 states had fully complied with the law. Over the past 40 years, ESEA, with a focus on equity issues, supportive funding and accountability measures has not narrowed the achievement gap between students who are disadvantaged and others.

As the most recent reauthorization of ESEA, NCLB was designed to further address the equity and accountability issues involved in narrowing the achievement gap. According to Hess and Petrilli (2006), the disappointing results of the accountability provisions of the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA and the minimal results of four decades of school reform led to the decision of policymakers to include meaningful sanctions in NCLB. In an effort to comply with the mandates of NCLB and to avoid its sanctions, states and school districts must find ways to address the complexities of improving student achievement. As the nation moves closer to the targeted year of 2014 and the legislative, but

unattainable goal of having 100% of the nation's students proficient in mathematics and literacy (Guilfoyle, 2006), there will be an increase in the educator's need for knowledge of effective intervention strategies and the lessons learned from the implementation of a collaborative intervention initiative (Laguarda, 2003). Although the universal proficiency goal is unattainable for all schools and all students, the number of low-performing schools reaching that goal can be substantially increased (Elmore, 2002). A review of the literature reveals that districts with large numbers of high-poverty and low-performing students will be affected most by the sanctions of NCLB (Center on Educational Policy, 2007; Elmore, 2005; Kober, 2005) and are therefore likely to benefit from this study.

The purpose of this mixed-method case study is to develop a deeper understanding of a state collaborative intervention strategy developed to increase student achievement. The intervention strategy selected for review is the implementation of the recommendations of CAPA, a New Jersey statewide initiative. CAPA, as a tool and a process, was developed by the New Jersey Department of Education to assist Title I Abbott schools that have not achieved state accountability benchmarks as mandated by the NCLB Act of 2001. To conduct this study, formal and informal data from two low-performing Abbott urban elementary schools which made AYP while involved with the CAPA initiative were analyzed.

Research indicates that academic achievement is still a major concern for the United States and that most past educational reform efforts to improve

student achievement have not produced the intended results (Elmore, 2005; McNeil, 2000; Ravitch, 1983; Sarason, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The NCLB Act of 2001, with increased federal government involvement in education and accountability measures for states, is the latest reauthorization of a long standing federal reform effort designed to eliminate the achievement gap and reach the goal of equal learning opportunities for all students (CEP, 2007; Meier & Wood, 2004; Murnane, 2007; NASBE, 2002). As a result, states, districts, and schools are faced with improving student achievement for all student groups and, to do so, have implemented various educational reform efforts (Gambino, 2007; Malen & Rice, 2004; Vernez, Koram, Mariano, & DeMartini, 2006).

A review of the literature shows that the difficulties of implementing national school reforms are similar to the difficulties of implementing state reform initiatives (Walker, 2004). Notably, New Jersey, as one of the forerunners in addressing equity of funding for excellence in education (Walker & Gutmore, 2004), has for more than three decades grappled with the issue of how to provide a “thorough and efficient” education for every child through Abbott legislation. However, student achievement in low-performing urban schools in New Jersey has not significantly improved. Gray (2000, p. 33) admits, “We don’t really know how much more difficult it is for schools serving disadvantaged communities to improve because much of the improvement research has ignored this dimension ... that it is more difficult, however, is unquestionable.”

A growing body of research literature indicates that educational reform requires negotiation, mediation, sense-making, bargaining, agreement on

common goals, and co-construction of the implementation process (Coburn, 2003; Datnow et al., 2005; Elmore, 2002; Engestrom, 1999; Hamann & Lane, 2004) at the various levels of the educational system. The collaborative nature of CAPA provided opportunities for these requirements to occur and, therefore, supported the implementation of the CAPA recommendations, which may lead to improved student achievement. Gajda and Koliba (2007) acknowledge that collaboration is universally agreed upon as a critical component of school reform.

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for the analysis of the educational reform of two low-performing urban schools that made AYP while involved in CAPA. To that end, setting the context will begin with an overview of the principles of NCLB and its requirements as a national educational reform mandate for equity and excellence. This will be followed by an overview of Abbott as an example of a state educational equity and reform effort occurring prior to and concurrently with NCLB. Context setting will conclude with an overview of CAPA as a school-level reform effort developed for Abbott schools. The research of Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan (1998) acknowledges the importance of considering context when describing the implementation of school reform.

As a member of an expert panel convened to address what policymakers might do to improve the capacity of states and districts to successfully implement NCLB, Tucker (2003) captured the intent of NCLB by writing:

Until now, the federal government has addressed the problem of poor and minority students largely by providing more funds to

schools to help such students. Now, the government is saying that it expects to see results and is going to hold schools, districts and states responsible for producing them, with draconian consequences for those that do not. This is an enormous victory for poor and minority children and, therefore, for the country. (p. 13)

The second component of the literature review will establish the context for educational reform at the state level by examining Abbott, a court-ordered mandate designed to provide equity and excellence for New Jersey's lowest-achieving districts. The history of Abbott will be examined to provide a state context for CAPA. CAPA, an intervention strategy for educational reform, was developed to support Abbott districts and, more specifically, Abbott schools that have been designated by NCLB as in need of improvement. At the core of the CAPA process is a scholastic audit which contains standards and indicators that encompass the research on the characteristics of effective schools. Specifically, as noted by Cotton, 1991; Edmonds, 1979; and Kannapel and Clements, 2005; and others, the importance of frequently monitoring students' academic progress and maintaining an academically focused environment to increase student achievement are essential.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (2003) acknowledges that although the research indicates a common set of characteristics for effective high-performing high-poverty schools, context plays an important role in determining how reform efforts are selected and implemented to increase student

achievement. Due to context uniqueness and other factors, few low-performing schools have the capacity to implement ambitious reform efforts for increasing student achievement without external support (USDE, 2001).

Finally, CAPA will be explored through the lens of *collaboration theory* to illuminate the findings of the study. Collaboration between and among external support or technical assistance teams and school staff for improving student achievement is recognized as a powerful strategy for achieving long- and short-term goals (Gajda, 2004). These goals would be unattainable if either entity worked independently. A growing body of research demonstrates that a collaborative and supportive role of the state is a key intervention factor in assisting low-performing schools to make AYP, regardless of the disadvantages these schools traditionally face, such as significant concentrations of poverty, lack of resources, and less-experienced and well-qualified teachers and administrators (Council of Chief School Officers, 2003; David, Coe, & Kannapel, 2003). Wood and Gray (1991) ascertain through an intensive review of research on collaboration theory that any comprehensive theory must begin with a definition. To that end, Wood and Gray (1991) acknowledge that “collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (p. 146).

Gajda (2004) argues that collaboration is a complex concept that can enable disconnected systems to address agreed-upon goals such as improved student achievement. Due to collaboration’s catalytic power in bringing

seemingly separate entities together to achieve a common goal, *collaboration theory* is used in this study as a vehicle to examine the progress made by two low-performing urban elementary schools in achieving AYP.

### School Reform- A National Context

NCLB has often been acknowledged as the beginning of the third wave of school reform (Talley & Keyed, 2006), characterized by high-stakes testing with accountability. Prior to NCLB and the third wave of school reform, some theorists trace early discontent with American education to the successful 1957 launching of the satellite Sputnik by the Russians. Shortly thereafter the United States launched its own satellite, the Explorer I; however, this celebrated event did not squelch the growing concern regarding the level of education American students were receiving and thus the need for school reform. Dissatisfaction might also be traced to the perceived significant decline in SAT scores during this period (Peterson & West, 2003) or to the public reaction to the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision regarding the need for minority students to have access to a quality education. However, Herr (2003) contends:

Each time there is a change in national presidential administrations, there is likely to be a proposed shift in the emphases that educational practice and policy should address, creating a constant process of “starting over,” looking for new solutions to enduring problems. (p. 1)

At this critical juncture, the federal government “started over” by targeting millions of dollars for science and mathematics reforms to bridge the gap between the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia), thus ushering in the first wave of school reforms.

President Johnson signed the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide funding for instructional technology, mathematics, and science instruction as part of his War on Poverty initiative. Under Title I, funding was also designated for literacy initiatives to support the education of disadvantaged children. According to Rudalevige (2003), Title I became the signature program of ESEA. ESEA was a pre-NCLB attempt to ensure high-quality learning experiences for all.

Kiviat (2000) reports that the 1966 Coleman Report is widely considered one of the most important education studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Coleman Report was commissioned by the U. S. Office of Education in alignment with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As a national study, it included data from more than 600,000 students and teachers across the country. Researchers from the study reported that academic achievement was more strongly related to the social composition of the school than to the quality of instruction the school offered. Academic achievement was also related to the verbal skills of teachers, the student’s family background, and the student’s sense of control over the environment and their future. According to Kiviat (2000), the mass media and policymakers focused on only one finding of the report, the prediction that black students would score higher on achievement tests when they attended integrated



schools. Such findings added more unrest to the public perception of public education and the need for school reform. Coleman's report fueled a movement for racial balancing as a strategy for improving the academic achievement of African American students (Ravitch, 2000), a strategy that Coleman himself later recanted. With the release of the Coleman Report's controversial findings came the interpretation that the country should focus on outputs rather than inputs when determining the progress of public education.

Further proof that America was not enabling its youth to support its future as a major influence and leader in the world economy appeared with the publication of another much-criticized report, *A Nation at Risk*. The following passage appears in the introduction of this report from the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983):

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (p. 1)

Created by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) under the direction of the Secretary of Education, Dr. Terrell H. Bell, this report declared that though a towering leader a generation ago, the United States was now being challenged by other countries in the areas of commerce, industry, science, and

technological innovations (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). According to various researchers, the findings of the report were flawed in several ways. Bracey (2003) describes the report as “a veritable treasury of slanted, spun, and distorted statistics” (p.4). He further elaborates on the erroneous conclusion of the report that issues of global competitiveness can be solved by educational reform rather than the policies and decisions made by the governmental departments associated with trade and industry. Guthrie and Springer (2004) write:

*A Nation at Risk* ... proclaimed in 1983 that U.S. K-12 educational achievement was on a downward trajectory and that American technological and economic preeminence was consequently imperiled. Both assertions were incorrect. American education achievement was not then declining and the nation's economy continues today as the most powerful in the world. Despite being wrong on these measures, *NAR* motivated much that is right for American Education. (p. 7)

Although the report has been criticized as more rhetoric than substance, it garnered national attention regarding the plight of America's public schools (Hess & Petrilli, 2006) and put forth several recommendations for implementation at all educational levels. The following statement made by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) is, according to Hess and Petrilli (2006), strikingly similar to the intent of NCLB and precludes the report's recommendations:

Our recommendations are based on the beliefs that everyone can learn, that everyone is born with an urge to learn which can be nurtured, that a solid high school education is within the reach of virtually all, and that life-long learning will equip people with skills required for new careers and for citizenship. (Recommendations, para. 4)

The recommendations put forth by NCEE centered on the New Basic Five major aspects of education: 1) content, 2) standards and expectations, 3) teacher quality, 4) leadership, and 5) fiscal support. Content required a focus on the new graduation requirements, which consisted of four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science. The standards and expectations component of the Commission's recommendations required more rigorous standards for all educational settings in student performance and conduct, as well as rigorous admissions policies for colleges and universities. This New Basic Five required more time; therefore, schools would need to examine how the existing school day was being spent as well as explore the extension of the school day and year. The teacher quality recommendations were comprehensive, comprising seven integral parts, including the role of school boards and teacher preparation institutions in making teaching a rewarding and respected profession. Leadership and fiscal responsibility encompassed the educational community's accountability to provide competent leaders for this work and their responsibility

in providing the financial support necessary to implement the Commission's recommendations (National Commission on Education and Excellence, 1983).

According to Datnow, Lasky, Stringfield, and Teddlie (2005), *A Nation at Risk* initiated the placement of school reform on local, state, and national agendas. However, the vision and mission that the Commission put forth to increase student achievement have not been fully realized, nor have the achievement gains sought been attained (Sarason, 1990). Although the second wave of reforms highlighted the discriminatory practices in education that disenfranchised African American and Latino American students, and although the recommendations of the Commission on Excellence in Education had addressed the technical core of teaching and learning, Elmore (2000) notes that few changes occurred in classroom practices.

In 1995, the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), which indicated that the United States scored significantly lower in science and mathematics than the international average (IEA Third International Mathematics and Science Study, 1995-96), elevated public concerns. International data indicated that in mathematics, student performance in the United States declined from 12th place in fourth grade to third-from-the-bottom in 12th grade. To some, the low performances of secondary students in mathematics and science indicated that something was amiss in America's educational landscape. Yet educators familiar with the Sandia Report, released in 1993 after several years of suppression by the Department of Energy, questioned the validity of international comparisons. According to this report, international comparisons do not account

for the differences in educational systems nor for the educational services provided to the various groups within an educational system (Huelskamp, 1993). The report's findings also disputed the declining graduation rate by noting that although graduation rates had been steady for the past 20 years, hovering between 75% to 80%, opportunities for students to attend night school or to complete a G.E.D. program increased the graduation rate to 85%, one of the best in the world (Huelskamp, 1993). Regardless of the contradictory findings of national and international studies, a number of states such as California, Texas, Kentucky, and North Carolina convened task forces and committees to design and implement standards-based accountability systems (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005).

The 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act expanded this work by laying the groundwork for standards-based reform. It mandated that all states develop content and performance standards for K-12 schools (Rudalevige, 2003), which was one of the recommendations of the earlier Nation at Risk report. Through the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA, state standards, assessments, and the notion of adequate yearly progress were in place but without consequences. Therefore, in January 2002, President George W. Bush described the bipartisan passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation as the start of a "new era" in American public education. "As of this hour," said the President, "America's schools will be on a new path of reform, and a new path of results" (Rudalevige, 2003, p. 1).

Passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 under President Bush ushered in a third wave of school reform. It incorporates increased involvement by the federal government in education by holding states and schools more accountable for student progress (Talley & Keyed, 2006). It imposes sanctions for those schools and districts that are not improving according to state-determined benchmarks also referenced as AYP. NCLB, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, adheres to the philosophy that all children can achieve and thus a school system should have “no child left behind.” This echoes the philosophy underlying the Nation at Risk report. Moreover, NCLB instituted requirements for standards that were generally praised for their potential to impact the nation’s educational system. Again, this was an extension of the work started as a result of the Nation at Risk report.

Under NCLB, each state was required to create not only standards but also assessments to measure how well students achieved the standards. In addition, all students in grades 3 through 8 and 10 through 12 were required to be tested annually to determine if they had met proficiency levels on standards-based tests in literacy and mathematics as established by the state (Guilfoyle, 2006). Although states determined proficiency levels for students, the federal government established the controversial goal that all students be proficient in literacy and mathematics by the school year 2013-2014 (Guilfoyle, 2006). Meier and Wood (2004) emphasize the impossibility of attaining 100% proficiency on standards-based, norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests, which are

intentionally designed to have a certain percentage of students score below any determined cut point.

In order to demonstrate progress toward the proficiency goal established by the federal government, states must set annual achievement targets or benchmarks. An annual achievement target is the percentage of students required to score in the proficient or above range in order for the school to be on target to have all students proficient in literacy and mathematics by the year 2013-2014; attaining these targets is more commonly referred to as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). To determine AYP, the law also stipulates that schools must test 95% of their student body and must disaggregate achievement data for specific subgroups, including subgroups for poverty level, ethnicity, race, limited English proficiency, and disabled status (NCLB, 2001). Elmore (2004) contends that a major problem with NCLB is that it requires the largest gains from the lowest-performing schools while not addressing issues of funding and instructional capacity.

To support this ambitious education agenda, \$23.78 billion was allocated for NCLB for the 2003-04 school year, an increase of 59.8% from 1999-2000. This came on the heels of NCLB being generally praised for its implementation of a standards-based reform system and its potential impact on the educational system (Meier & Wood, 2004). Darling-Hammond and Wood (2008) estimate that in order to support schools designated as in need of improvement according to NCLB sanctions, the federal government must honor its commitment to fund at least 40% of the extra costs associated with educating students with additional

learning needs, not the 17% as allocated in the past. As state benchmarks increase to reach the nation's controversial 100% proficiency goal by the year 2013-2014, an increasing number of schools across the country are being labeled in need of improvement (Elmore, 2004; Laguarda, 2003). Such labeling is a direct result of increased federal intervention in education through the passage of NCLB in 2001. Consequently, the urgency of providing support to schools in closing the achievement gap has never been greater (NASBE, 2002).

The main goals of NCLB are to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students so that, by the end of the 2013-2014 school year, all students completing third grade will read proficiently; by the end of that same school year, all students will score proficient in reading and mathematics; and, in every core academic subject, there will be a highly qualified teacher ("Overview," 2005). Essential elements of NCLB are formulated around four major reform principles, which include: 1) accountability for results, 2) flexibility and local control, 3) expanded options for parents, and 4) an emphasis on teaching methods proven to work in order to close the achievement gap (Meier & Wood, 2004).

### *Accountability for Results*

NCLB's precedent, the 1965 ESEA, provided funding to school districts to help low-income students but did not have a strong accountability component for results. Guilfoyle (2006) writes the following about NCLB:



*NCLB* holds Title I schools that receive this federal money accountable by requiring them to meet proficiency targets on annual assessments. These tests carry consequences for the schools and districts that administer them. Schools that fail to bring enough of their students to proficiency (levels) face escalating consequences, such as having to offer public school choice or provide supplemental education services. If the school is considered “in need of improvement” for five consecutive years, it risks being restructured or taken over by the state. (p. 10)

As a principle of *NCLB*, accountability for results requires that states establish high academic standards in literacy and mathematics. State assessments, which are closely aligned to the state standards, must also be administered annually to students in grades 3 through 8 and 10 through 12. Data from the annual assessments must be reported to the districts and the public in a disaggregated fashion so that the progress of all groups toward meeting the standards is known. Identified groupings for disaggregating the data are race, poverty level, special disabilities, and English Language Learners (*NCLB*, 2001). Schools must meet the state’s definition of “adequate yearly progress” (AYP), and schools not meeting AYP will be designated as “in need of improvement.” Schools in need of improvement will be targeted for assistance in order to gain AYP status. Failure for two consecutive years to achieve AYP will lead to mandatory corrective action ranging from offering parents the opportunity to send their children to other schools to, ultimately, district or school restructuring

(NCLB, 2001). As indicated earlier, making AYP becomes increasingly difficult as the nation approaches the 2013-2014 school year and the benchmarks increase. This will especially impact students who attend low-performing urban schools. According to Murnane (2007) and Haycock (2001), students attending low-performing schools often experience schools with weak leadership, teachers who have limited content and pedagogical knowledge, curriculum that isn't challenging, learning problems that go unattended, and fewer resources such as well-equipped libraries and science labs to address the neediest population of students. Critics of NCLB and the public have been outraged that, given these conditions, students are expected to make unprecedented and unrealistic gains in academic achievement. For example, below is a table of the benchmarks that must be met in literacy and mathematics in order for all New Jersey students in the tested grades 3, 4, and 5 to be proficient by the school year 2013:

Table 1

*NCLB Benchmarks - Grades 3, 4, and 5*

	Language Arts	Mathematics
Starting Point 2003	68	53
2004-2005	75	62
2007-2008	82	73
2010-2011	91	85
2013-2014	100	100

It is important to note that students must make gains between 7 and 15 percentage points within a three-year time span. This problem is exacerbated when a school or district fails to make the benchmark for any given time span. In order to reach the next benchmark, the percentage points to be gained become even greater, making the task almost insurmountable. Such rates of improvement are at least 2.3 to 6.5 times faster than the growth in scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) and much more rapid than the gains earned by the best performing schools, notes Linn (2004). For this reason, Elmore (2002) contends that NCLB's accountability for results does not align with the research on how schools improve, noting that schools do not improve in a linear trajectory. Rather Elmore's research indicates that schools that are improving will have spurts of growth and leveling off points, followed by spurts of further growth. Neill (2006) concurs that imposing such unrealistic demands will assure that schools serving low-income children will not be able to make AYP. Darling-Hammond (2007) posits that nearly all schools will be labeled "in need of improvement" based on the way AYP is calculated. Paley (2007) quotes Robert Linn, past president of the American Educational Research Association and nationally respected psychometrician, as saying:

There is a zero percent chance that we will ever reach a 100 percent target but because the title of the law is so rhetorically brilliant, politicians are afraid to change this completely unrealistic standard. They don't want to be accused of leaving some children behind. (p.12)

### *Flexibility at State and Local Levels*

Unlike previous reauthorizations, NCLB allows all fifty states flexibility in how to spend federal education funds (Hess & Petrilli, 2006). This eliminates redundant paperwork and wasted time in bureaucratic approval processes, thus allowing federal funds to be used in a more timely and efficient manner. Also, several small programs and grants were consolidated under broader headings to reduce the number of applications states and districts must submit and to target resources for students most in need (Peterson & West, 2003). Up to 50% of the funds from formula grants like the Improving Teacher Quality Grant, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Grant, and Innovative Programs can be transferred between and among programs for expenditures in professional development, increases in teachers' salaries, and programmatic changes. Such unprecedented flexibility affords schools and districts funding options for improving learning based on the academic needs of their particular students. However, it is important to note that in exchange for flexibility in transferring funds between and among specified programs, schools and districts must provide accountability evidence to support the effectiveness of the funds transferred, such as reporting school safety statistics to the public on a school-by-school basis (Meier & Wood, 2004).

Meier and Wood (2004) and other critics of NCLB note that its limited funding makes the consolidation of programs and the flexibility to transfer funds between and among programs inconsequential. Mathis (2003) declares, "When the much touted 'flexibility' procedures that NCLB gives to local districts are

examined, they allow, at best, a local district to shift around about 4.3% of its already-committed money” (p.37). Based on a cost study of 10 states, Mathis (2003) concludes that most of the states in the study required between 30% and 46% more funding in order for students to meet state standards. Connecticut, which uses open-ended and multiple-choice assessments to measure AYP (Darling-Hammond, 2006), and states like New York, Michigan, and Vermont that have high standards will undoubtedly have higher remedial costs. A minimal request of a \$127 million increase for FY 2009 made by the President for NCLB programs would bring the total funding for NCLB to \$24.5 billion dollars. Yet a review of the funding data reveals that although authorized funding for NCLB in FY 2005 was \$23.65 billion, the amount appropriated was only \$14.51 billion, resulting in an under-funding of \$9.95 billion (Hess & Petrilli, 2006). The complexity of arriving at a total cost for the implementation of NCLB derives from the size and diversity of student enrollment in the various districts, as well as the level of rigor of a particular state’s standards and assessments (Neill, 2008). Neill (2008) further elaborates that providing adequate funding is not the answer. He contends that in the reauthorization of NCLB, “the law would recognize that the heart of improvement is school-based collaboration among educators to build their capacity to serve all children well” (p.1). Hence, he concurs with the Forum on Educational Accountability, which recommends that the allowable expenditure of Title I funds be increased from 5% to 20%, with states accountable for contributing matching funds of 20% to build instructional capacity

### *Expanded Options for Parents of Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds*

Under NCLB, parents have several options if their children are attending a school that has not made AYP for two consecutive years. The parent may choose to send the children to a high-performing school; transportation will be provided, at the expense of the district, if necessary. Based on income, students may also be eligible to receive tutoring services at no cost to the parents (“Giving Parents Options,” 2007). Tutoring by an approved provider can be conducted before school, after school or even during the summer and is referenced as “supplemental educational services.” If parents feel that the school is unsafe, or if their child is subject to school violence or threats, they also have the option to transfer their child to another school at no cost for transportation. Additionally, under NLCB, parents, educators, and other interested parties are supported in establishing charter schools (Hess & Petrilli, 2006).

Although expanding options for parents of children who attend consistently low-performing or dangerous schools is one of NCLB’s key principles, the data reveal that this strategy has not been utilized by a significant number of parents. Below are several key points related to after-school tutoring and the option to transfer to a higher-performing school referenced in the State and Local Implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act*: Volume IV-Title I School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services: Interim Report, a publication of the U.S. Department of Education (2007):

- In 2004-05, as many as 1.8 million students were eligible for Title 1 supplemental educational services, and yet only 17% participated.

- In the same year, nearly 6.2 million students were eligible for school choice, and the participation rate was not quite 1%.
- The number of state-approved Title 1 supplemental educational service providers tripled between 2002-2003 and 2004-2005.
- As a part of the report, a subsample of nine large urban districts revealed that in terms of student achievement, students who received Title 1 supplemental educational services had lower scores than nonparticipating eligible students.

The report acknowledges that poor and late communications with parents regarding their expanded options were huge factors in the low participation rate in supplemental educational services programs and school choice. To address this issue, a number of districts are employing a variety of strategies such as notifying parents before the beginning of the school year of their options, posting information on the district's website, and distributing information throughout the school year ("*Giving Parents Options*," 2007). However, critics of NCLB such as Elmore (2005) and Meier and Wood (2004) contend that such funds would serve more students if allocated for developing and sustaining strong learning communities at each school, and especially at low-performing schools, to increase instructional capacity.

*An Emphasis on Teaching Methods Proven to Work in Order to Close the  
Achievement Gap*

The final foundational principle of NCLB is a focus on implementing programs and strategies to “close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” (NCLB, 2002, p. 1440.2). According to a White House press release (2002), this principle was included in NCLB to address two long-standing problems associated with former ESEA programs. Huge financial investments had been made in mathematics and reading programs that did not contain research-based studies aligned with significant student gains. Secondly, during the period from 1965-2001, the number of programs under ESEA had increased from 6 to 55, indicating a focus on quantity rather than quality. The decrease in programs under NCLB was addressed earlier in this paper through the description of the principle of flexibility at state and local levels for decision-making in exchange for increased accountability for teacher performance (NCLB, 2002).

To address the issue of huge financial investments in programs without effectiveness studies, NCLB emphasizes the importance of using research-based programs such as Reading First or Comprehensive School Reform models, which have a proven track record of success based on scientific or evidentiary research. The Reading First Initiative allows states to apply to the federal government for six-year grants to implement programs in grades K-3 that



are grounded in scientifically based reading research. Funds from the grant are targeted for diagnostic assessments and professional development based on research in early reading instruction. Selected programs must be supported by the “gold standard” of research. As a result, applicable literacy programs have supportive data from a randomized controlled study as evidence of program effectiveness. Selected comprehensive reading programs must also include the five elements of scientifically based early reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). States that receive the grant make subgrants to local districts, particularly those that serve low-income students.

The federal funding for Reading First increased from \$300 million in 2001 to \$1 billion in 2007 for programs and teacher professional development.

Although the Reading First Initiative was cut by “more than 60% in response to allegations of mismanagement and conflicting interests” (Glod, 2008, p. A19) in the latter part of 2008, President Bush has requested that it be restored to its original funding level of \$1 billion for the 2009 fiscal year (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), based on achievement data reported by states that show that students in almost every grade have made gains in reading proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Future funding may be impacted by the results of the Interim Reading Impact Study released to the public by the U.S.

Department of Education on May 14, 2008. The Reading Impact Study was mandated in Section 1205 of NCLB, which specified a comprehensive evaluation process and analysis. Key findings indicate that there is no significant difference

in comprehension scores between Reading First schools and schools that did not receive a Reading First grant. Final results of the study will be released in June 2008. An early analysis of the study by Lyon (2008), a former member of the National Reading Panel, indicates that the research design of the study did not follow the comprehensive evaluation guidelines specified in NCLB. In addition, problems associated with the small sample of Reading First schools included in the study may have impacted the results; therefore the results must be interpreted with caution, according to Lyon (2008).

Confronted with the unrealistic universal goal of 100% proficiency, and despite unprecedented flexibility at the state and local levels in allocating funds, options for parents, and an emphasis on educational programs supported by scientifically based research, districts and schools are attempting to avoid the sanctions of NCLB. This becomes even more difficult knowing the complexities of improving student achievement, particularly for urban areas. As a result, states and school districts are implementing various intervention strategies to improve teaching and learning in low-performing schools (Vernez, Koram, Mariano, & DeMartini, 2006). According to West & Peterson (2003), implementation of NCLB in terms of increasing student achievement at the school level is highly dependent upon the strategies the state supports, which indicates the important role the state must play in the successful implementation of intervention strategies. The research indicates that, even with state support, barriers ranging from inadequate funding to a narrowing of the curriculum (Guilfoyle, 2006; Haycock, 2001; Popham, 2006) exist and may prevent states from significantly

progressing toward the federal mandate of all students proficient in literacy and mathematics by the year 2014 (Elmore, 2002; Meier & Wood, 2004).

In the *Handbook of Restructuring and School Improvement*, Wong (2007) notes that, “in many ways, *NCLB* represents an unprecedented level of system-wide direction in the core elements of public education and it promises federally mandated restructuring if schools fail to reach performance goals” (p. 23). From the landmark Coleman Report (Viadero, 2007) through the implementation of *NCLB*, raising student achievement for all students continues to be a struggle. Going beyond educational equity to educational opportunities for all students in meeting challenging standards has provided a new thrust from the mediocre level of education decried in the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s Report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), to the federally mandated goal of all students being proficient in mathematics and literacy by the 2013-2014 school year. However, the distance that must be gained for urban districts to meet the nation’s most ambitious educational goal of all time has not been acknowledged with additional resources of human and financial capital to dramatically increase the number of learning opportunities for the students most in need, nor supported by the research efforts of earlier reforms. According to Meier and Wood (2004), “the biggest problem with the *NCLB* Act is that it mistakes measuring schools for fixing them” (p. 9).

## School Reform- A State Context

Prior to the signing of NCLB in 2002, some states and notably New Jersey had been grappling for more than three decades with the issue of a “thorough and efficient” education for every child. New Jersey provides an important location for the study of NCLB-related reforms because it is unique in a number of ways. Walker (2004) notes the following:

A constellation of factors has served to make New Jersey reforms unique. First, although New Jersey’s Supreme Court was one of the first to invalidate a state’s financial structure on the basis of an adequacy claim, which made it a precedent for other adequacy and equity cases, school finance reform in this state has been the most litigious and difficult to achieve. Second, the tenor of the New Jersey’s adequacy claims has pitted poverty-poor districts against wealthier communities with political consensus around reform difficult to attain. (p. 339)

This earlier reform effort, known as Abbott, began in 1970 with the landmark decision of *Robinson v. Cahill* filed on behalf of five urban New Jersey school districts concerning the constitutionality of property taxes as a major source for funding public schools (*Robinson v. Cahill*, 1973). Walker, Achilles, and Frances (n.d.) indicate that during this timeframe, 67% of school funding in New Jersey was achieved through local taxes. In their national study, Biddle and Berliner (2003) note that New Jersey’s percentage was considerably higher than most state allocations. They further elaborate that large differences in funding

have long persisted between wealthy and impoverished American communities. Even though New Jersey's percentage of school funding through taxes was higher than most states', there was a huge gap between the funding and learning opportunities of the wealthy and poor communities. New Jersey Superior Court Judge Botter, in the *Robinson v. Cahill* case, made a landmark decision by ruling that the educational funding system in New Jersey was unconstitutional on both state and federal grounds. This initiated a string of other lawsuits, culminating in the 1997-1998 school year with the identification of 28 Special Needs Districts and specific "remedies" for providing a "thorough and efficient education" for every child in those districts (Walker, 2004).

Through the ultimate litigation of *Abbott v. Burke IV and V* (1997, 2003), millions of dollars were released to support the Special Needs Districts. However, the state required that the money be spent on specific remedies or strategies associated with school reform to assist low-performing districts. Remedies included standards-based reform, early childhood education, social and health services, and facilities improvement (Walker, 2004). Sciarra (2008) notes:

Abbott remedies are tailored to tackle the daunting challenge of improving the quality of education and academic performance in public schools that are among the poorest and most segregated in the nation. That's why the NJ Supreme Court's Abbott decisions are considered the most important since *Brown v. Board of Education* over 50 years ago. (p. 1)

Although the New Jersey State Department of Education created a unit to provide technical assistance to the Abbott districts in the implementation of the court-ordered remedies, research on statewide reforms in New Jersey and specifically in Abbott Districts indicates that a number of implementation challenges for schools (Walker & Gutmore, 2000), including a lack of support and collaboration from the state level, acted as barriers to school improvement. A study of the impact of the New Jersey Department of Education's implementation efforts on behalf of court-ordered mandates for Abbott districts reveals that the department's organizational responses ran counter to the goals of the reforms supported by the Abbott legislation and that the state lacked the capacity to support Abbott districts effectively (Walker, 2004), fueling a lack of trust between Abbott districts and the state or the technical assistance team.

#### School Reform- A School Context

To increase student achievement in Abbott districts, avoiding the pitfalls in the implementation of top-down mandates associated with NCLB at the federal level and Abbott at the state level, New Jersey developed CAPA. CAPA built upon the successes of Kentucky's reform efforts and adapted the Kentucky Scholastic Audit and review process as a strategy for providing technical assistance to low-performing schools. Building upon lessons learned from the implementation of Abbott remedies, this study explores the processes two elementary schools in Abbott districts used to prioritize and implement

recommendations for school improvement as determined by the results of a scholastic audit conducted by a trained external “CAPA” team.

Research on the use of scholastic audits as an intervention for low-performing schools is growing. According to the American Federation of Teachers (School Audit Process, n.d.), scholastic audits have been used in Kentucky and California and in the cities of Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Toledo. Scholastic audits are designed to answer two questions: Why isn’t the school working? What can be done to help it improve? In-depth interviews conducted by WestEd (Filby, 2003) with the California Department of Education staff, audit leaders, and administrators consistently revealed that the scholastic audit contributed to significant improvements in all 13 schools placed in NCLB corrective action status. Fullan (1991) acknowledges that a mixture of external pressure and external support is a catalyst for school improvement.

The scholastic audit is a tool used in the CAPA process which involves a five-day visit to low-performing Abbott and Title I schools identified as in need of improvement or corrective action as defined by NCLB. During the CAPA five-day visit, a team composed of state department staff, 7 to 10 experienced educators, district personnel, and parents use the CAPA Core Indicators to review teaching and learning, school environment, and efficiency.

A review of the literature on school reform reveals that external mandates are not supportive of lasting change and may indeed effect changes in content but not in pedagogy (Firestone & Mayrowetz, 2000; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). From the very beginning, to lessen the tension involved with an external mandate,

technical assistance through CAPA has been defined as collaborative. To that end, it consists of a school audit to identify barriers to student achievement, the collaborative creation of a customized improvement plan that provides solutions and benchmarks, as well as onsite visits by an external team of experts (Gambino, 2007). The process includes a review and analysis of the data collected from the audit process and the development of a report with recommendations for the district and school to address areas in need of improvement. The school leadership team and district level personnel are given an opportunity to discuss the report's findings and collaborate with the team of experts regarding the sequence in which recommendations will be implemented. The New Jersey Department of Education describes the CAPA initiative as follows:

The purpose of CAPA is to empower schools and districts to go beyond current efforts to improve student achievement. CAPA establishes teams to work in concert with schools and districts, using a thoughtful, systematic, evidence-based process to reach agreement about the changes needed in order to make a positive difference in teaching and learning. The process is collaborative, demonstrating a commitment to shared responsibility for student learning among the state and local educators and a commitment to continuous school improvement for the benefit of all children. (W. L. Librera, personal communication, June 1, 2004)



What differentiates the CAPA process from the technical assistance provided by the Abbott legislation is its emphasis on collaboration between and among the state, district, and schools to identify the needs of the schools and to develop an improvement plan with periodic benchmarking sessions.

The CAPA audit is built upon nine widely research based standards of effective schools and the best practices of high-performing schools (Gambino, 2005). The CAPA standards are categorized under academic performance standards, school learning environment standards, and school efficiency standards. CAPA standards focus on the instructional core of teaching and learning. The instructional core is critical for school improvement and is highlighted in Elmore (2006), Schmoker (1999), Little (1999), DuFour (2004), and Delpit (1996) as a key strategy for improving student achievement. Focusing on the instructional core means consistently addressing what teachers teach, what students are learning, how students are grouped for learning, and how learning is being assessed (Elmore, 2006). It is worthwhile to note that three of the nine standards of the CAPA audit focus on curriculum, assessment, and instruction indicators and are subsumed under the category of academic performance standards. The other six standards encompass the learning environment and efficiency (Gambino, 2005).

Diamond (2006) writes that middle and high schools are facing a literacy crisis of unprecedented proportions and that according to Sally Shaywitz of Yale University, 75% of the students with reading problems in third grade will still have reading problems at the secondary level. This compelling statistic supports the

need to explore implementation efforts of the CAPA instrument's academic performance standards.

### *Academic Performance Standards*

The Academic Performance Standards of CAPA are based on research from effective high-performing schools (Gambino, 2005). A body of research on effective schools indicates that socio-economic status does not have to be a deterrent to increasing student achievement (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2004). According to a synthesis of the research conducted on effective and high-performing high-poverty schools for the past two decades, such schools consistently include the following common indicators that correlate with CAPA's Academic Performance Standards:

- Frequent monitoring of academic progress (Cotton, 1991; Edmonds, 1979; Kannapel and Clements, 2005) aligns with CAPA Academic Performance Standard 2, which requires the use of multiple evaluations and assessment strategies for monitoring instruction and modifying instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- An academically focused climate of high expectations for all students (Cotton, 1991; Edmonds, 1979; Resnick & Zurawsky, 2005; Zigarelli, 1996) and implementation of a rigorous curriculum are aligned with standards that require teachers and administrators

to focus on instruction and to have high expectations. This is referenced in CAPA Academic Performance Standard 1.

- Strong instructional and distributive leadership (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2004; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004) and CAPA Academic Performance Standard 2, which encompasses the need for leadership to monitor instructional strategies and instructional activities, are similar.
- Teaching by well-prepared teachers who work collaboratively to improve instruction (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Talley & Keedy, 2006) reflects the importance of collaboration, which is highlighted in CAPA's Academic Performance Standard 1, wherein the school initiates and facilitates ongoing discussions related to curriculum and standards for the purpose of clearly articulating an instructional core across all grade levels.

Evidence of the linkage between effective schools research and the CAPA Academic Performance Standards provides a conceptual framework for exploring the success of the two low-performing schools involved in the study.

#### Collaboration as a Theoretical Base for Improving Student Achievement

In the current climate of standards-based reform Boddily, Glennan, Kerr and Galegher (2004) argue that the dual pressure of quality schools for all students and the reduction of gaps in academic performance and resources

require better approaches for teaching and learning. These approaches are necessary in order to build instructional capacity. Increasing instructional capacity in low-performing schools has been noted as a key strategy for improving student achievement (Delpit, 2007; Elmore, 2001). An increasing body of educational literature suggests that various forms of collaboration support teacher development and ownership which can lead to increased student achievement (Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2001). In addition the literature review on collaboration between and among teachers and administrators as well as between and among schools, school districts and state departments of education identifies the critical role collaboration serves in increasing efficiency in problem-solving and in resources (financial and human) to address the complex needs of low-performing schools (Gadja, 2004; Gray & Wood, 1991; Hord, 1989; Williams, 2003; Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

In a literature review of collaboration, Mattesich and Monsey (2001) include the following quote from a report developed by the McKnight Foundation:

Collaboration results in easier, faster and more coherent access to services and benefits and in greater effects on systems. Working together is not a substitute for adequate funding, although the synergistic efforts of the collaborating partners often result in creative ways to overcome obstacles.

(p. 10)

It has been acknowledged in the business, non-profit, health and educational sectors that collaboration is a powerful strategy to accomplish results (Gajda, 2004). Some experts in education (Wright, 2006) contend, “the future success of our schools is contingent upon educators working and consulting with one another about work-related issues” p. 39. However, Gajda (2004) cautions against a full steam ahead approach without first gaining clarity on the definition of collaboration and a knowledge base of the barriers and benefits of collaboration. A strong knowledge base will enable schools and districts to determine the appropriate use of collaboration as an intervention strategy for achieving performance outcomes. To that end, the remainder of this section will elaborate on a definition of collaboration, factors of successful collaborations, principles of collaboration, assessment of collaboration and barriers to collaboration as documented in literature reviews and other resources.

### *Description and Definition of Collaboration*

The scope of collaboration, although broad, has its roots in Bandura’s social cognitive theory which acknowledges that learning occurs in a social context and results from modeling, imitation and observation (Ormond, 1999). Thus, one of the common dimensions of the various definitions of collaboration is the interaction of individuals or groups. As described by Badrach (1998), collaboration is a complex, long term, and developmental process. Using 19 cases of interagency collaboration from various policy areas, his definition encompasses “collaboration as joint activity by agencies ... intended to increase

public value by their working together” p. 8. He further claims that insufficient engagement in interagency collaboration creates a substantial loss in public resources. His description of collaboration involves what he terms “smart practices” or methods which take advantage of the collaborative opportunities available for the attainment of results “on the cheap.” Badrach argues that smart practices include articulating a vision, defining a mission and specifying concrete goals in order to support collaboration in joint activities.

In terms of collaboration, Friend and Cook (2000) emphasize the importance of the following: direct interaction, choice in participation, and the role of shared-decision making for all participants as they work toward achieving a common goal. They describe collaboration in terms of shared goal-setting, exchanging information, brainstorming, and problem-solving, with shared responsibility and accountability for making and implementing plans.

A definition of collaboration can be compounded by the interchangeable use of similar terms in educational practice. According to Czajkowski (2006) in order to study interorganizational relationships in higher education it was important to differentiate the related terms cooperation, coordination and collaboration. Czajkowski elaborates upon the differences in meaning and use based on structure and formality (Hord, 1986; Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2001).

Cooperation is described as the most informal of the three. In terms of structure and formality each collaborating party retains its authority and independence with no risk taking involved. Cooperation often rests on a verbal

agreement made between organizations to work together to make their programs more successful (Hord, 1986). Such agreements lack a common mission, structure or joint planning (Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2001).

Coordination is more formal than cooperation in that some level of planning takes place between the coordinating parties. Each organization still maintains its authority and identity, however, roles have been defined and the risks involved arise based on the need for both groups to be successful.

According to Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) collaboration is the most formal interorganizational relationship. For Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) collaboration is a mutual and well-defined relationship which provides benefits to all parties involved. Each member is committed to the development of common goals and to a structure for achieving the goals. Their work on collaboration evolved from a meta-analysis of 18 selected studies on interagency collaboration for the purpose of determining success factors. While Mattessich, Murray-Close and Monsey (2001) emphasize the relational aspect of collaboration; Melaville, Blank and Asayesh (1993) define collaborative initiatives as activity oriented:

A collaborative is a group of community leaders who have agreed to be partners in addressing shared problems. The collaborative undertakes an initiative—a series of interrelated activities designed to solve these shared problems and create a new system of services for children and families.... Partners using a collaborative strategy establish common goals and agree to use their personal

and institutional power to achieve them. Partners must have the authority to speak for their institutions or the segments of the community they represent. They agree to commit resources and alter existing policies and procedures to attain measurable goals and objectives. They accept individual and collective responsibility for outcomes. “ It is collaboration, far more than cooperation, that offers the possibility of real service integration.” (p. 15)

Melaville, Blank, and Ayesh (1993) and Badrach (2001) emphasize the process of collaboration as well. They contend that collaboration is a five-stage developmental process which begins with getting together and culminates with an implementation of the plan.

In their review of the research on collaboration, Wood and Gray (1991) found six distinct explanations for collaborative relationships. However, the definitions were limited in scope consequently, the authors determined the necessity for developing a comprehensive definition which “is able to explain fully the preconditions, processes, and outcomes of collaboration” (p. 146). Due to the nature of its comprehensiveness, their definition “Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 146) is the proposed reference for this study.



In summary, various definitions and descriptions of collaboration have yielded the following key features which are emphasized throughout the literature:

- Equal membership status
- Interaction in identifying and solving problems
- Shared goal setting and decision-making
- Shared roles in making and implementing plans
- Shared responsibility and accountability for outcomes
- Shared resources (time and expertise)

#### *Collaboration Success Factors in the Literature*

As noted by Wood and Gray (1991) interagency collaboration increases the quality of results, is necessary to maintain quality programs, maximizes resources and limits the fragmentation of efforts in business organizations as well as education sectors. However, Hamilton, Kruger, and Smiley (2005) argue that collaboration is not a panacea nor useful in all circumstances. It can detract from a school's focus and waste valuable limited resources if the goals are not clear. In addition, Crandall (1977) and others caution that collaboration may be more useful during the planning stages of a project but less suitable for project implementation. Therefore, it is important to examine the conditions or success factors that impact the collaborative process and its outcomes.

From a broad perspective, the seminal meta-analysis study of Mattesich, Murray-Close and Monsey (2001) yielded a list of 21 success factors relative to

interagency collaboration. Czajkowski (2006) conducting a synthesis of the research on collaboration was able to organize these factors into categories based on common themes and findings. The six key success factors of collaboration as determined by Czajkowski (2006) are:

1. Trust and partner compatibility
2. Common and unique purpose
3. Shared governance and joint decision-making
4. Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities
5. Open and frequent communication
6. Adequate financial and human resources (p. 4)

Malik (2003) conducted a three-year case study involving two urban elementary schools that were simultaneously involved in a federally funded effort to improve collaboration. Under lessons learned he included the following points gleaned from field notes, observations and interviews which are context specific for successful collaboration:

- Collaboration requires a supportive environment. In this case, the principal had strong facilitative and communicative skills and empowered teachers to work together to solve academic problems. A vision and mission were jointly developed with teachers and they were provided resources and encouraged to collaborate to accomplish the mission of improving student achievement.
- Collaboration is more effective in schools where inclusion is practiced. Inclusion requires that special education and general

education teachers continuously collaborate to address the needs of their students. Such past and ongoing collaborative efforts and tasks provide a structure and a historical foundation for future collaborative efforts.

- System-wide and school-wide initiatives can provide the venue and the impetus for collaboration. These tasks provide a structure and purpose for collaboration. (p. 1)

Connolly and James (2006) further contend that in education as in the business sector collaborative ways of working are a necessity due to the complexity of problems which must be addressed in order to continuously improve student achievement. In their work on collaboration for school Improvement they highlight the following as key factors for successful collaboration:

- A favorable social and political environment
- Clarity for all members regarding the purpose and goal of the collaboration
- Norms and structures in place to support mutual respect, trust and open two way communication
- Required participation of all members in the decision-making process
- Clarity for all members about their role as well as a willingness by all members to be flexible

The authors acknowledge that collaboration for improving student achievement should take place at all levels of the educational system. However, in focusing on the school level and the local level of an educational system, their research explored various elements of collaboration ranging from perspectives to stages of collaboration. Of specific note for this study is their explanation of the institutional perspective of collaboration which legitimizes the importance of social relationships as central to ongoing improvement in professional practice and student achievement. Additionally, the authors' work builds on the work of Wood and Gray (1991) by including processes and outcomes and as components of their framework through the lens of institutional and resource dependency perspectives. This work also parallels the work of Gajda (2004) in terms of acknowledging the developmental stages of collaboration.

### *Principles of Collaboration*

The concept of collaboration can be elusive and difficult to understand (Gajda, 2004; Gray, 1989; Longoria, 2005). Gajda (2004) writes "In its overuse, the term 'collaboration' has become a catchall to signify just about any type of inter-organization or inter-personal relationship, making it difficult for those seeking to collaborate to put into practice or evaluate with certainty." The need for program evaluators or individuals to assess collaboration in order to provide guidance to organizations must embody a set of principles based on research (Czajkowski, 2006; Gajda, 2004; Gray, 1989; Mattessich, Murray-Close, Monsey: 2001). To that end, Gajda (2004) developed a set of principles to determine the

strength of structural, procedural, and interpersonal relationships in collaborative arrangements. Foundation for the development of these principles of collaboration rests upon the existing literature and the theory of collaboration. A summary of the principles is as follows (Gadja, 2004, p. 76):

1. *Collaboration is an imperative.* The complexities of societal issues facing the world today create a continuously increasing need for business, education, and community sectors to work together.
2. *Collaboration is known by many names.* “Working together,” “working in partnership,” and “acting as a team” are used to describe collaboration. Evaluators are encouraged to present collaboration as a theory of how multiple individuals or entities work together to develop a relationship.
3. *Collaboration is a journey not a destination.* Most collaboration theorists describe the level of integration in collaboration as a continuum differentiated by the purpose, process and structure of the relationship. To that end, the level of intensity for a round table whose goal is to share information is at a lower level of integration than for a task force convened to problem-solve a particular issue. Therefore, collaboration becomes a means for achieving a goal in which the goal is the end product.
4. *With collaboration the personal is as important as the procedural.* The needs of the group and the individual must be addressed to ensure success.

5. *Collaboration develops in stages.* The stages of collaboration have evolved over time from assemble, order, perform, and transform (Bailey & Koney, 2000) to form, storm, norm, and adjourn. This shift acknowledges that there are predictable stages of collaboration which precede an effective performance.

### *Evaluation of Collaboration*

A review of the literature yielded several models developed to assess collaboration. In the development, researchers have used the theory of collaboration and the research on collaboration to create tools to assist in determining the effectiveness of the collaborative process (Czajkowski, 2006; Gajda, 2004). In the Collaboration Success Measurement Model Czajkowski (2006) organizes the success factors of collaboration gleaned from a synthesis of the research, the theory of collaboration, and her study into three collaborative stages. The stages consist of a precondition stage, followed by the process stage and conclude with the outcomes stage. Communication as a success theme in collaboration is an integral part of each stage and Czajkowski (2006) recommends that any summative program evaluation conducted during the outcomes stage includes "... how and whether the collaboration should continue, be restructured or ended" (p. 7).

The Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) developed by Gajda (2004) embodies the principles and the theory of collaboration to define the degree to which the entities are working collaboratively. Gajda (2004) states

“the development and assessment of intentional, inter-organizational collaboratives (strategic alliances) can be greatly enhanced by utilizing *collaboration theory*” (p. 66). For purposes of this study, the CAPA process and tools, as a strategic alliance or an inter-organizational collaborative between the New Jersey Department of Education and two low-performing schools, was analyzed. Major components of the collaboration rubric include the purpose of the collaboration; specific strategies and tasks aligned to accomplish the intentional short- and long-term goals of the collaboration; leadership and decision-making roles in the collaboration; and, finally, interpersonal commitment and communication relative to the collaboration and its goals. Each component of the rubric contains indicators that emphasize the continuum of integration from networking at its lowest end to collaborating as a unified entity at its highest end. The SAFAR is supported by a synthesis of research encompassing the work of Bailey and Koney, 2000; Gajda, 2001; Gajda, 2004; and Peterson, 1991 regarding the role of collaboration in goal attainment.

The interactive nature of CAPA provided opportunities for school staff and the state to enact the principles of collaboration as embodied in the *theory of collaboration*.

### *Impediments to Collaboration*

Gray (1989) argues, “... there are many reasons why collaborative attempts fall short of the ideal or are never initiated” (p. 247). It is important for public and private organizations to be aware of such impediments for informed

decision-making in a performance-based political climate with limited resources. Themes throughout the literature regarding collaboration barriers tend to focus on the environment, participants' skills and motives, resources, structures and purposes.

Lack of a legitimate facilitator or mediator for collaboration can create an environment where frustration festers when problem issues are not resolved and therefore the achievement of action steps and outcomes flounder (Gray, 1989; Longoria, 2005; Dimple, 2003; Mattesich, Murray-Close and Monsey, 2001). In their case study work on the challenges of collaboration Pietroburgo and Bush (2008) and Dimple (2003) add to this argument by noting that the failure of leaders to recognize the value of collaboration or to support the collaborative efforts of their organization stifled collaborative outcomes.

Friend and Cook (2000) acknowledge that collaboration is not an intuitive skill and in professional practice, teachers may need additional training in order to meet the ongoing demands of collaboration. They further elaborate that collaboration requires conflict resolution skills, and other effective communication skills necessary for effective participation in a group. Without training in these skills teachers accustomed to working in isolation may attempt to avoid working collaboratively. Similarities exist in terms of an educational environment and interagency collaboration where characteristics such as personal resistance to change, competing personal or organizational goals, a lack of orientation and negative staff attitudes serve as impediments to collaboration (McLaughlin & Covert, 1984). These factors provide barriers especially in the initial stages of



collaboration when building trust and open communication are vital for moving the agenda forward. Finally, and not surprisingly, Pietroburgo and Bush (2008) conclude that one of the two most detrimental barriers to achieving the final collaborative outcome as described in their case study was a non-supportive environment.

As indicated earlier, in order work effectively in collaborative ways, participants may need training. Training and participating in collaborative groups requires adequate time. Friend and Cook (2001) write “If all the school districts in the country that are emphasizing collaboration were to ask teachers what the primary barrier is to teacher collaboration, the answer would be ‘time.’ Time has been highlighted in numerous reports about collaboration” (p. 6). In addition to time, a lack of financial resources, may serve as a serious impediment to collaboration according to Badrach (1998). Collaborative capacity may prod along. This translates into groups coming together infrequently for brief periods of time and therefore devaluing the collaboration process as a tool and not achieving the specified outcomes.

Not having a clear understanding of the purpose of the collaborative effort and not perceiving the benefits of the effort as legitimate can impede the collaboration process (Gray, 1989; Gajda, 2004; Malik, 2003). In addition to a lack of purpose and benefits to support collaborative ways of working, Malik (2003) asserts in his case study that in an urban setting the challenges of constantly addressing continuous crises and the urgency of improving student achievement hinders efforts to build collaboration.

Reeves' (2003) report on state support to low-performing schools confirms "... the important role that states can play in providing information on effective collaborative strategies (p. 10)" noting that high-performing schools "...work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders to focus efforts on improving the academic achievement of their students (p. 10)." However, Reeves (2003) and Walker (2004) further indicate that states have limited internal capacity to support the professional development of school staff and therefore this serves as a challenge to developing collaborative efforts with and within schools and districts.

In discussing the state as an intermediary in supporting low-performing schools, researchers (Childress, Elmore & Grossman, 2006; Walker, 2004) concede that collaborative efforts between the federal, state, school district and school are complex and diverse. In addition to a lack of internal capacity at the state level, collaborative efforts may also be thwarted due to the local history of the state as a compliance monitor; frequent changes of state monitors, policies and priorities; ineffective communication; and ineffective state technical assistance (Elmore & Fuhrmann, 1995; Louik & Crowin, 1984; Walker, 2004; Walker & Gutmore, 2002) leading to an environment of local distrust.

### Summary

This review of the literature has encompassed several major reform initiatives from a historical perspective -- No Child Left Behind and Abbott -- as a foundation for understanding the context of the CAPA initiative. The two low-performing schools involved in this study have been impacted by participating in

several reforms simultaneously and yet have been able to accomplish the difficult goal of making AYP with support through the CAPA process based on effective schools research (Gambino, 2005) which identifies a set of characteristics for effective and high-performing high-poverty schools. However, context plays an important role (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003) in determining how reform efforts are selected and implemented to increase student achievement. Due to the uniqueness of context and other factors, few low-performing schools have the capacity to implement ambitious reform efforts for increasing student achievement without external support (USDE, 2001).

Collaboration between external support and among school staff for improving student achievement is recognized as a powerful strategy (Gajda, 2004) for achieving long- and short-term goals. These goals would be unattainable if the entities worked independently. A growing body of research literature demonstrates that a collaborative and supportive role of the state is a key intervention factor in assisting low-performing schools to make AYP (Council of Chief School Officers, 2003; David, Coe, & Kannapel; USDE, 2001). Viewing these two successful urban elementary schools through the lens of *collaboration theory* and the CAPA process can provide insight and deepen understanding relative to the school factors associated with the implementation of a state, district, and school collaborative intervention strategy to increase student achievement.

Chapter Three will describe the methodology used in this study to elicit information and data to address the following research questions:

1. What reported procedures were used to prioritize the intervention recommendations included in the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) Summary Report?
2. What reported specific strategies were used to implement the prioritized intervention recommendations from the CAPA Summary Report during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years?
3. In what reported ways did the school's participation in the CAPA intervention process affect student achievement?
4. What common factors exist across the two initially low-performing which seem to contribute to achieving AYP?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this mixed-method case study is to explore effectiveness of a state collaborative intervention strategy to increase student achievement. The Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA), a state collaborative intervention strategy, will be reviewed as a major component of this study. CAPA, as a tool and a process, was developed by the New Jersey Department of Education to assist Abbott schools that have not achieved state accountability benchmarks as mandated by NCLB. CAPA provides tools, processes and a structure for collaboration between identified low-performing schools and a team of experts trained by the state to assess strengths and to make recommendations for improvements.

As a key component of the CAPA process, the strengths and the recommendations for improvement in the areas of academic performance, the learning environment and efficiency as related to leadership, organization and planning are shared with the school leadership team (Gambino, 2005). Based on the recommendations, a comprehensive plan for school improvement is collaboratively developed with the school leadership team.

This study explored the process for selecting the intervention strategies to address the collaborative team's recommendations for improvement in academic performance, the preparedness of teachers and administrators to implement the recommended intervention strategies, and the reported relationship between the implementation of the intervention strategies and increased student achievement

in two initially low-performing schools. In addition, it was noted that *theories of collaboration* supported the academic improvement of the two initially low-performing schools involved in this mixed-method research study.

In Chapter Two, a review of the literature was presented to situate this study within the context of national, state and school educational reform efforts acknowledging that past educational reform efforts have yielded disappointing results (Elmore, 2005; McNeil, 2000; Ravitch, 1983; Sarason, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Walker, 2004). The important role of context was also noted (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003) as a key variable in determining how reform efforts are selected and implemented to achieve increased academic performance. In low-performing urban schools, how the daily problems that teachers and administrators must confront (Malik, 2003) as well as other factors such as the high transient rates among teachers and students create a unique context allowing few low-performing urban schools to develop the capacity to implement ambitious educational reform efforts without external support (USDE, 2001). A growing body of research literature (Council of Chief School Officers, 2003; David, Coe, & Kannaper; USDE, 2001) indicates that the state can play a key collaborative and supportive role in assisting these schools to make achievement gains.

In this study, consistent with a mixed-methods research approach with more emphasis on qualitative methods, the role and tasks of the researcher are multifaceted and based on the research questions which address “how” and “why” two initially low-performing schools were able to make AYP. At first, the

researcher assumed the role of an investigator reviewing state documents to determine which elementary schools involved in the CAPA process during the 2004-2007 school years made AYP based on assessment data from school year 2006-2007.

Next, the researcher assumed the role of a designer with flexibility in developing the structured oral interview questions as well as the participants' written response questionnaire to acquire an in-depth understanding of the lived-in experience of teachers and administrators in the case-study schools during the 2004-2007 school year. These instruments were developed based on information contained in the CAPA process documents and the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric. The researcher reformulated and refined the instruments to include recommendations from a panel of six experts in the field of evaluation and urban studies as well as input from a pilot study.

The fieldwork by the researcher started with visits to the two case study school district to discuss the study proposal with their superintendents for approval and to gain clearance to visit the schools. Following approval of the proposal by the superintendent and the university, the researcher participated in additional fieldwork for the purposes of sharing the proposed study with the principals of the two case study schools as well as to disseminate and collect participant consent forms. As an interviewer of participants in the study, the researcher wanted to give voice and capture the interviewees' perception of the meaning of the CAPA process as it related to the academic achievement gains in their school. Participants were also encouraged to discuss other factors as well,

which may have assisted their school in making AYP. In addition, the participants were asked how well prepared they felt to implement the school improvement plan developed collaboratively by the CAPA team of experts and the school leadership teams (See Appendixes D through F for teacher and administrator questionnaires). Realizing the complexity of increasing student achievement in low-performing schools, especially during a period of performance-based school reform, the researcher conducted structured in-depth interviews to build meaning from the experience of those involved with the CAPA process and the responsibility for raising student achievement firsthand. For the researcher, an educator who has worked in urban school settings for more than 30 years, the structured face-to-face interviews provided an opportunity to find meaning through the words of the participants regarding how they interpreted the influence of CAPA on the student academic achievement gains.

Finally, in order to identify patterns and themes, the researcher as an instrument of inquiry (Patton, 2002), simultaneously collected and analyzed the returned written questionnaires and other secondary data such as the NCLB mandated school reports and CAPA Summary Reports for each case study school. The ongoing analysis of the data from varied sources afforded the researcher the ability, to respond knowledgeably and to probe for additional information or clarification during the interview process. As a result of this intense process, patterns, and themes emerged which were then coded and categorized for analysis.



## Mixed-Methods Research Design

A number of researchers (Greene, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Rao & Woolcock, 2003) have explicated the strengths of a mixed-methods inquiry in conducting research. Greene (2007) posits that the primary purpose of such an inquiry is for developing “better understanding ... more comprehensively... more defensibly... more insightfully ... with greater value consciousness and with greater diversity of values, perspectives, and positions” (p. 2). Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) further substantiate this view by stating, “in many cases the goal of mixing is not for corroboration but rather to expand one’s understanding” (p. 19). Additionally, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) posit that in a mixed method approach, strengths are culled from each approach to minimize the weakness of any single approach. Rao and Woolcock (2003) add that “They [quantitative methods] are less effective, however, in *understanding* process—that is, the mechanisms by which a particular intervention instigates a series of events that ultimately result in the observed impact” (p. 167). They further contend “*process issues*... can be crucial to *understanding* impact, as opposed to simply measuring it.” Finally, Caracelli and Greene (1997) argue that using a mixed-methods approach enhances the scope and quality of a case study and that such an approach has the capabilities of reaching larger audiences.

The purpose of this mixed-method case study was to develop a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of a state collaboration intervention strategy to increase student achievement in two initially low-performing elementary schools

located in an urban district. To conduct this study, the following data were analyzed from the two case study schools which made AYP while involved in the CAPA process:

- Structured interviews with principals based on implementation of the recommendations of CAPA
- Written questionnaires which were completed by selected 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and principals
- District documents related to the implementation of the CAPA process
- Student achievement data gathered from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) for students in grades 3, 4, and 5 during the schools years 2004-2007.

Since the purpose of the study was to develop a deeper understanding of a process and its impact within a specific context (Rao & Woolcock, 2003), a mixed-methods approach was an appropriate research design. To gain insight and meaning from the CAPA process and its relationship to academic achievement, it was important to analyze student academic achievement data over a three-year period. It was also necessary to analyze participants' responses to the multiple-choice questions on the written questionnaire.

Quantitative analyses of both the student achievement data and the responses to multiple-choice questions involved computing and comparing numbers as well as noting numerical increases and decreases. However, the purpose of the comparison was not to generalize to a larger public as in quantitative methods

(Patton, 2002) but to provide a more comprehensive picture (Greene, 2007) of the two case study schools.

In order to understand the challenges and successes behind the achievement data, it was important to capture a broad understanding of the social phenomenon through in-depth interviews. Conducting on site in-depth interviews, a major strategy for collecting qualitative data (Creswell, 1998) provided rich descriptions of the participants' feelings, insights and perspectives on the CAPA process from a purposeful sample. Such a rich description in the participants' voices enhanced the snapshot view provided by the achievement data. In addition, the interviews enabled a complex intervention process to be discussed from an "insider's" perspective giving rise to new discoveries.

According to Creswell et al. (2003) mixed-methods designs can be classified as either having sequential or concurrent action. He further elaborates that triangulation is a mixed-methods design with qualitative and quantitative strategies being integrated during the analysis or the interpretation stage of data collection. Patton (2002) asserts that triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. For the purpose of triangulation, the following data for this study was interpreted and analyzed

- Structured interviews with teachers and administrators
- Written questionnaires from teachers
- District documents and artifacts
- Student achievement data from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge

Due to the research problem and questions, quantitative data was examined early in the study; however, qualitative methods received the greater emphasis throughout the study. Finally, the rationale for using a mixed-methods research design for this study is most succinctly written by Denzin (1978) and cited in Patton (2002):

No single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed. This is termed triangulation. I now offer as a final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in every investigation. (p. 247)

Using a mixed-methods design incorporates the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and consequently, provides a more detailed and comprehensive view of improving achievement in initially low-performing Abbott schools.

### Statement of the Problem

Reform efforts at the school, state and national level have not yielded the intended results (Elmore, 2002; Walker, 2004) despite an increase in funding at the federal level from 1999 through 2005 (Hess & Petrill, 2006) and the reformulation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act into NCLB. The number of low-performing schools in urban districts continues to increase despite sanctions and supports issued at the state level (Delpit, 2007). As a result of the

current national school reform effort of NCLB with its focus on universal but unattainable proficiency in literacy and mathematics by 2014, states and school districts are searching for ways to address the complexities of improving student achievement (Hess & Petrilli, 2006; O'Day, 2002) in order to avoid the sanctions of NCLB.

Even with state support, the research indicates that barriers ranging from a lack of funding at all levels to a narrowing of the curriculum (Guilfoyle, 2006; Haycock, 2001; Popham, 2006) exist and may prevent states from meeting the federal mandate of universal proficiency. Gray (2000) admits, "we don't really know how much more difficult it is for schools serving disadvantaged communities to improve because much of the improvement research has ignored this dimension...[the fact] that it is more difficult, however, is unquestionable" (p. 33). Accordingly, the First Annual School Improvement Report (2001) argues:

There are significant gaps in research and data that must be filled.

We know more about the characteristics of high-performing schools than about the process of transforming low-performing schools or about how states and local school districts can most effectively build capacity to assist the growing number of schools that need additional help. (p. 7)

Specifically, there is a need to investigate low-performing schools that have increased student achievement within the context of a national school reform effort based on high stakes accountability.

## Research Questions Designed for the Study

As a framework for gathering qualitative and quantitative information regarding the relationship of the CAPA process and student achievement, specific questions were designed. The following questions were also designed to produce a rich description of the teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the CAPA initiative as well as provide insights, implementation subtleties, and lessons learned regarding the improvement of student achievement in low-performing urban schools:

1. In what reported ways did the school's participation in the CAPA process affect school achievement?
2. What reported specific strategies were used to implement the prioritized intervention recommendations?
3. What reported procedures were used to prioritize the intervention recommendations included in the Collaborative Assessment (CAPA) and Planning for Achievement Summary Report?
4. What common factors that exist across the two initially low-performing elementary schools seem to contribute to achieving AYP?

## Multiple Case Studies Approach

Soy (1997) asserts that case study research in general “excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add to what is already known through previous research” (p. 1). One of the most, if not the most, complex issues facing American education today is how to educate students who live in urban areas and are often low-achieving to a performance level of proficiency. Using a case study research method, the researcher was able to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context: when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1982, p. 23) and add to the knowledge of increasing academic performance in low-performing schools through a collaborative intervention strategy.

According to Yin (1994), the uses of multiple case studies as a design “have increased in frequency in recent years” (p. 44). As a common example of use, he describes a study of a specific technology occurring at different sites. He concludes that although the use of the technology at one site could be the subject of an individual case study, the study of the technology as a whole would require the use of a multiple-case design. As one of the advantages of multiple case designs Yin (1994) cites Herriott and Firestone (1983) by noting “the evidence from multiple case studies is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (p. 45). To make the results of this study more compelling, the researcher used a multiple case study design based on replication logic to determine findings related to the rarity

with which AYP is achieved by low-performing schools in Abbott districts that are receiving state technical assistance. The replication process afforded the researcher opportunities to collect and analyze data from two different schools composed of various cultures, role groups and genders, and therefore, enabling the researcher to produce a rich description of the range of findings by comparing and contrasting the participants' responses relative to academic achievement and the CAPA process.

The decision to use the multiple case study design, was also predicated upon the researcher's belief and validated in the research (Patton, 2004; Yin, 1994) that studying two rare cases added rigor, robustness and validation to a study. In addition, using two rare cases gave voice to the successes and challenges of two schools trying to meet mandated goals in an environment where students traditionally have been unsuccessful. The importance of this lies in the current focus on the mandated public display of data for academic achievement without the richness or insightfulness that would be offered by narratives describing how the data were achieved. Multiple case study design is a best fit for this study because of the complexity of the contemporary research problem this study addresses, the traditionally low performance of students in urban areas. Using multiple case study design afforded the researcher a clearer understanding of the depth of the multifaceted factors involved in writing a more coherent, comprehensive and detailed report of the phenomenon. In addition, it enabled the researcher to gather and analyze data to address research question



number four in terms of the common achievement improvement factors of two initially low-performing urban elementary schools.

### Selection of Research Participants

One of the major differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches is the logic that supports their sampling approaches (Patton, 2002). In terms of the quantitative approach, random selection of study participants allows confident generalization from a sample to a larger population. However, the purpose of this study was not to generalize to a larger population. Rather the purpose was to select “information rich cases to study in depth ... to illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 230), thus the researcher used purposeful sampling. In particular, this study used “extreme or deviant case sampling” which Patton (2002) describes as “selecting cases that are information rich because they are unusual in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures” (p. 231). The two schools selected for this study were extreme in that they belonged to a small set of 11 initially low-performing schools (within the 31 Abbott school districts) which made AYP during the 2006-2007 school year. Abbott districts are described by the New Jersey Department of Education as “poorer urban districts” or “special needs districts” and are determined by specific factors including the following:

- Districts with the lowest socio-economic status, thus assigned to the lowest categories on the New Jersey Department of Education’s District Factor Groups scale;

- Districts with “evidence of substantive failure of thorough and efficient education,” including failure to achieve what the Department of Education considers passing levels of performance on the High School Proficiency Assessment (Gambino, 2005, p.12).

In addition, the criteria for selection required that schools had participated in the CAPA process during the school years of 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and of course, 2006-2007 due to their designation as schools in need of improvement. A co-director of CAPA at the state level supplied the list of schools that met the criteria. It was surprising that within 31 Abbott districts only seven districts had schools meeting the criteria with the total number of elementary schools within those seven districts reaching a total of 11.

Within each of the schools that met the criteria, only the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4th, and 5 grade teachers who had taught literacy in those grades during the school years of 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 were invited to participate. This timeframe correlated with the introduction of the CAPA initiative and the grade levels for which academic achievement testing results were available.

In early October, the researcher contacted the superintendent of each of the seven eligible districts for approval to conduct the study. Three superintendents responded to the initial request. Two stated that they had contacted the principals of the schools that met the criteria. However, both principals declined to participate in the study citing reasons of their district being involved in “too many initiatives” and “a new principal at the site.” The third

superintendent gave the researcher permission to contact the school directly for approval. Unfortunately, this school declined to participate as well, citing as a reason, the number of new teachers at the intermediate level who had not participated in the CAPA process.

After three weeks, the researcher followed up the initial written requests for site approval to the remaining 4 superintendents with phone calls. One superintendent returned the phone call and requested a meeting to discuss the proposal with the central administration team. It is important to note that the researcher had no relationship with this district or district personnel prior to the first meeting with the central leadership team. After a review of the proposal with the central leadership team, approval to conduct the study in two schools in the district was granted contingent upon the following:

- A meeting with the superintendent prior to the final approval of the study
- An explanation of how the study would assist student achievement in the district
- A copy of the dissertation for the district's file

Upon receiving university approval to conduct the study and begin the fieldwork in April, the researcher informed the district superintendent who arranged for a meeting with the researcher and the director of special programs. It became the director of special program's responsibility to introduce the researcher to the principals of the two case study schools. During this introductory meeting, the researcher shared a principals' folder which contained a letter briefly explaining

the study, two voluntary consent forms (Appendix B), the administrator's written response questionnaire (Appendix D) and the interview questions (Appendix F). An appointment for the administrator's interview was scheduled at this time and permission requested to leave materials in the mailboxes of the grade 3, 4 and 5 teachers who met the criteria of the study. A similar folder was left in each designated teacher's mailbox, however, in addition teachers received a teacher's written response questionnaire (Appendix E), a letter inviting them to be a part of a focus group discussion and with a list several available dates and times. A self-addressed stamped envelope with a requested return date was included in the folders enabling teachers to return their completed questionnaires anonymously within a specified timeframe.

### Data Collection

Creswell (1998) defines a case study as "an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). He further states "Multiple sources of information include observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports" (p. 61). Data for this study were collected from two building principals and from a total of seventeen 3rd, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5th grade teachers from the two case study schools. The strategies used for data collection were structured interviews, written questionnaires, and a review of relevant public documents including student achievement data for the school years 2004-2007. Yin's (1994) principles of collecting multiple sources of

evidence, creating a case study file and maintaining a chain of evidence were utilized to organize and manage the voluminous case study documents accumulated.

## Interviews

Interviewing as a method of data collection in case studies has been extolled by a number of experts in the field of qualitative research. Marshall and Rossman (1999) indicate that in-depth interviewing is a strategy relied upon by many qualitative researchers. Trellis (1997) posits that “interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information... [and] could serve to corroborate previously gathered data” (p. 8). Yin (1994) adds:

Most commonly, case study interviews are of an *open-ended nature*, in which you can ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents’ opinions about events. In some situations, you may even ask the respondent to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry. (p. 84)

The interview questions for the study were designed to elicit the types of information and opportunities described above by Yin (1994).

In addition, the interview questions in the study (Appendix F) and the written questionnaires (Appendixes D and E) were shared with an expert panel for feedback on structure, content and clarity, prior to the fieldwork. The panel was composed of six college professors with expertise in educational research,

multicultural studies or urban education and two principals in urban elementary schools with a total of 23 years in education. The original interview questions were revised and refined based on their feedback.

A pilot study involving the revised interview questions took place in two elementary schools similar to the case study schools in demographics and academic achievement. Utilizing their feedback and responses to the written interview questions, no additional revisions nor refinements were made.

Based on the purposes of questions constructed and the use of flexibility in asking questions, Patton (2002) identifies three types of interviews for qualitative research. In informal conversations, the interview questions emerge as the conversation unfolds. Or, as in the case of a standardized open-ended interview, “the interviewer adheres to a strict script, and there is little flexibility in the wording or order of the questions” (p. 345). However, in this study, the researcher chose the widely used interview guide approach. This approach enabled the researcher to develop a predetermined list of questions in order to collect data in a more comprehensive and systematic way. It also allowed flexibility in asking additional probing and follow-up questions. Using this process for this study was important since it enabled the researcher to establish a rapport with the principals as a colleague interested in their real world experiences related to the CAPA initiative and student achievement. It ensured that the same line of questioning was followed with each principal for possible cross case analysis.

The types of questions asked may affect the richness and comprehensiveness of the data collected. To that end, Patton (2002) lists six different question types emphasizing the researcher's role in being able to distinguish between them in order to assist the interviewee in responding appropriately. The questions are not hierarchical in nature and are categorized as experience and behavior, opinion and value, feeling, knowledge, sensory, and background/demographic questions. The researcher intentionally developed questions for the interview guide that focused on opinion and value, and knowledge to draw out detailed and elaborate responses in an "attempt [s] to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations." (Kvale, 1996, p. 253).

MacQueen (2002) argues, in order "to understand something "in truth" we need to know not only the facts but the human experience of them ... how people interpret their experience and how they use those interpretations to guide the way they live" (p. 1). In addition, the researcher selected interviewing as a tool for collecting data to generate insights and concepts not readily accessible nor discernible in a complex social phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

To maximize the contribution of the interviews to the experiential and knowledge base of how two low-performing urban schools improved to make AYP while involved in a state collaborative initiative, guidelines for interviews based on the writings of leaders in the field (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1991; Patton, 2002; and Yin, 1994) were followed:

- During the introductory meeting, the researcher discussed the purpose of the study and the consent to participate form (Appendix B) with each principal. This was done to ensure that principals understood that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time during the study. In addition, each principal was informed that the researcher would protect their right to privacy by keeping their interview responses confidential and by using pseudonyms when appropriate in any written documents. At this time, the principal was also given the interview questions to lower any anxiety associated with feeling unprepared and to encourage reflective and knowledgeable responses.
- To assist in developing a rapport and trusting relationship with each principal, a follow-up phone call was made two weeks after the introductory visit. During the follow-up phone call with the researcher inquired if there were any questions regarding the study or the interview. At this time, permission was granted for audio taping, the length of the time for the interview was discussed and an appreciation for their willingness to commit the time for the interview was shared.
- The interview appointment time and site were determined by the principal to ensure comfort and confidentiality with as few distractions as possible. One principal chose her office and the



other chose an unoccupied computer lab as the site for the interview.

- Due to the dynamic nature of the principal's job, the researcher called several days in advance of the scheduled interview to reconfirm the logistics.
- The researcher arrived 25 minutes before the start of the first scheduled interview and 20 before the second in order to be able to ask the interview questions in a calm conversational but organized manner.
- Since the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, specific steps were taken to remain neutral, and to be aware of personal biases so as to not influence the principal's responses. These steps included asking clarifying questions to probe or to elicit elaboration, not making statements that infer agreement or disagreement and listening to learn and understand rather than to give advice. Using "Is there anything else you'd like to add?" as a final question opened the door for the respondent to make points or share stories they felt were relevant but not discussed in the interview.
- Immediately following the interviews, the interviewer listened to each tape to make certain it made sense and to uncover any comments that needed further probing for additional clarity. Then the researcher wrote field notes reflecting on the experience, noting

nonverbal messages, describing the setting, and capturing other nuances that may not have been discernible on the audiotape.

Shortly after the interviews, as a member check, each principal was mailed a transcribed copy of his or her interview to review for accuracy and completeness. They were encouraged to call the researcher with any corrections.

The researcher analyzed and coded the transcripts to determine, patterns, themes, illuminations and descriptions of the state's collaborative effort through the CAPA initiative and student achievement. To protect confidentiality, electronic and paper files of the transcripts were created according to university policy.

### Written Questionnaires

Patton (2002) acknowledges that the triangulation of data strengthens a case study by adding rigor and credibility. Yin (1994) affirms this practice and adds "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of data" (p. 91). For these reasons, in addition to interviewing two principals, the researcher used two written questionnaires as a part of the triangulated data collection source for this study. Using written questionnaires permitted the researcher to have data crafted by teachers and administrators in their language and thereby lessening the influence of the researcher's personal biases and perspectives.

The administrator's written questionnaire (Appendix D) and the teacher's written questionnaire (Appendix E) although similar in content and format were

specifically designed to capture each role group's experience with the CAPA process, the CAPA recommendations and the level of collaboration involved. Both written questionnaires had four questions requiring a response based on a Likert scale with respondents rating how well prepared they felt to implement the recommendations made by the CAPA team and the leadership team at their school. One related question addressed the relationship between the professional development conducted for the teachers at the school and the recommendations made by CAPA and school leadership teams. A second related question combined rank ordering involvement with the CAPA and school leadership team and a semi- structured open-ended question to explain the respondent's rationale for the item selected as having the most impact on student achievement. In another semi-structured open-ended question, the respondents were asked their opinion regarding CAPA's influence on their school's academic growth. For the final open-ended question, respondents were asked to share anything else they'd like regarding their school's CAPA experience and student achievement.

As was the case with the interview questions, the written questionnaires were submitted to the same panel of experts to gain feedback on the strength of the connections between the research questions and the written questionnaires in order to elicit important experiences, beliefs, values, and opinions from the respondents. To further substantiate the relevancy and adequacy of the written questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted in a different Abbott district in two schools demographically similar to the schools selected for the case study.

Refinements to the original written questionnaires were made and an alignment matrix (Appendix G) showing the source of information for each research question was created as a tool for organizing and collecting responses. As an ethical consideration, respondents were provided with a stamped- address envelope to return the written questionnaires anonymously. Once received, (most were returned handwritten) the researcher retyped and reread the responses to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of what was said and to ascertain patterns, themes and illuminations. An electronic and paper file of the responses to the written questionnaires were created and stored in accordance with university policy.

#### Districts Documents

Although qualitative methods for this mixed-methods case study were emphasized, student achievement data for grades three, four and five from school years 2004-2007 were also analyzed. Quantitative data from the two case study schools showed the range of growth in student achievement over the investigated span providing the researcher with statistical background knowledge of the schools' academic progress. Using student achievement data was appropriate since it provided statistical evidence to support the selection of schools for the study and their growth over three years. It strengthened the study and added credibility because the data were achieved independently of the researcher. Finally, it provided a concrete data set for comparing and contrasting the two schools relative to the effect of CAPA on the achievement of AYP.

A series of other district documents were mined for data. The CAPA Summary Report, Prioritized Recommendations Document and the Benchmarking Visitation Report were tools used by the CAPA Team to provide guidance in improving student achievement. The CAPA Summary Report was completed after the CAPA Team's in-depth weeklong visitation to each school to observe classrooms, interview personnel, students and parents. The results were shared in a collaborative manner with each school's leadership team who then had an opportunity to question and when appropriate, revise the findings.

Once the findings of the Summary Report were confirmed, the CAPA Team developed recommendations for school improvement and collaboratively used the Prioritized Recommendations Document to determine which recommendations would have year one or year two priority. As an implementation check, the CAPA Team revisited the school, and recorded their findings in a Benchmarking Visitation Report which was shared with the school's leadership team to measure progress and to determine next steps. Reviewing these documents gave the researcher a broader and more vivid picture of both case study schools as well as a common set of experiences for comparing and contrasting the two schools. Finally, the inclusion of the district documents in the data source prepared the researcher to act in a knowledgeable way while probing and responding during the interview process. Miller (1997) as cited in Patton (2002) makes a strong argument for studying district documents or "contextualized organizational texts":

Qualitative researchers are uniquely positioned to study these texts by analyzing the practical social contexts of everyday life within which they are constructed and used. Texts are one aspect of sense-making activities through which we reconstruct, sustain, contest and change our senses of social reality. They are socially constructed realities that warrant study in their own right. (p. 498)

### Data Analysis

Stakes (1995) contends that analysis must give meaning to “first impressions” as well as the final compilation of data and notes. Merriam (1998) adds “ Data collection and analysis is a *simultaneous* activity in qualitative research. Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first documents read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of the data collection ... and so on.” The simultaneous beginning of collecting and analyzing data began with the researcher mining the CAPA documents and student achievement data from each case study school for relevant details about the CAPA process and tools. The CAPA documents reviewed described the recommendations for improvement for each school related to the academic performance standards of curriculum, assessment and evaluation, and instruction. From the collection and analysis of the districts’ data and CAPA documents, questions emerged which were later refined and reformulated into the research questions for this study.

The content comparative method of data analysis developed by Glaser and Straus (1967) as cited in Merriam (1998, p.159) was the framework used to constantly compare new findings, themes and insights with the old. The framework required the researcher to be immersed in the data in an ongoing manner searching for ways to link information in meaningful ways. In moving through the process of data collection and analysis, the researcher continually asked:

“What do the data mean?”

“Are they relevant according to the purpose and the research questions?”

“How do they connect with other data?”

“How are the data affected by my biases and personal perspectives?”

As an early organizational tool, the researcher developed a large grid for each case study school which contained the research questions on the y axis and the numbers 1 through 19 across the x axis to identify teachers' and each principal's as well as a column for district documents, achievement data and field notes (Merriam, 1998). To review the data by role group, teachers' responses were coded with the letter T and principals were coded with the letter P. Once transcribed and retyped, four copies of written questionnaires and the interviews were made and the data cut apart since each piece of information had the potential to address all four research questions. Using the alignment matrix (Appendix J), the open-ended data collected were assigned specific cells. The multiple choice items were tabulated in terms of frequency and included in the appropriate cells as well. For example, the first research question focused on the

role of the CAPA process and student achievement which corresponded to questions 1 and 3-7 on the written teachers' and principals' questionnaires and questions 1-6 from the principals' interviews. The responses were placed under the corresponding number assigned to respondent for School A and compared to other responses from School A for commonalities. The same process was constructed and used for the ongoing collection and analysis of data for the second case study school (School B).

To further reduce the data, the researcher developed a second set of grids to capture the continuous emergence of categories through the simultaneous collection and analysis of new data. This set of grids had the same y axis (research questions) however; the x axis was labeled emergent concepts (themes and patterns), hunches, and illuminations. During the data collection and analysis process, data were continuously compared and moved from the first set of charts to the second set of charts based on similarity or frequency of comments. If a concept or comment was mentioned more than twice, it was moved to the second set of grids under emergent concepts. The emergent concepts were refined as specifically as possible into meaningful units of understanding for reporting the findings. As an example, the principal of School A labeled P1 when asked about the success of her school in making AYP spoke at length about the importance of providing "time for teachers to meet together to review assessment data and plan accordingly." T8 wrote about the importance of "quarterly assessments in determining which weak areas to focus on" and T6



noted, “differentiated instruction” with importance. These were combined and emerged on the second chart as the concept of “data driven instruction.”

As the categories of concepts, hunches and illuminations emerged, the data were put on color coded note cards and bundled corresponding to the research questions. The bundles of note cards increased and decreased over the course of the study as some categories were combined or eliminated. This was not a linear process but one of continuously sorting, analyzing, comparing and re-analyzing for each school. A within-case analysis involved studying and documenting each school closely to become intimately familiar with it as an individual case while the cross-case analysis explored similarities and differences across the cases to address research question four and to strengthen the credibility of the study.

Stakes (1995) makes the following distinction in analyzing data:

The qualitative researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully—analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation. The quantitative researcher seeks a collection of instances, expecting from that, from the aggregate, issue relevant meanings will emerge. (p. 75)

The researcher used both processes in reviewing and analyzing data. The multiple choice questions on the topic of preparation for implementing the recommendations of the CAPA and leadership teams were aggregated to determine findings. However, the open-ended questions, the written questionnaires and the interview guide probed the concept of collaboration and

the influence of the CAPA process. They were compared and combined to gain a deeper meaning of the case. As put succinctly by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) “by utilizing quantitative and qualitative techniques within the same framework, mixed methods research can incorporate the strengths of both methodologies.” (p. 23)

### Validity and Reliability

Yin (1994) describes four relevant tests for measuring the quality of any research design including case studies. These tests include construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. Yin (1994) further defines construct validity as “establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (p.33). In other words, does a particular measure within the study relate as it should to other measures. In this study, construct validity was achieved through the triangulation of data sources and methods. As a data source, the written questionnaire which included multiple choice and open-ended questions on the CAPA process, the influence of CAPA on student achievement and the role of collaboration during the CAPA initiative in assisting schools to achieve AYP status was used to gather quantitative and qualitative evidence. In addition, document analyses occurred by reviewing and analyzing comprehensive district documents such as the CAPA Summary Report. Among other components, the CAPA Summary Report based on more than 100 classroom observations and interviews with teachers, parents, students and district administrators was also a source of data reviewed and analyzed for

meaning during the study. To that end, it served as another data collection source and method for strengthening the construct validity and the credibility of this study. The interviews conducted with principals as reliable witnesses (to the school phenomenon in terms of increased achievement) served as the last component in comparing results obtained from different data collection methods. Prior to the interviews, the researcher held at least four phone conversations with each principal and made four school site visits to each school to disseminate information and pick up information.

Internal validity is the second test that Yin (1994) describes in judging the quality of any research design. The internal validity question the researcher posed throughout the data collection process to produce a trustworthy and rigorous report was “How does the reality of the findings and my interpretation match?” Member-checking was a strategy used to manage the influence of the researcher’s personal biases and therefore, enhance the internal validity of this study. Both interviewed principals received written copies of their transcripts with a written request for verification. Similar to the process Stakes (1995) describes, comments made on the transcriptions upon review by the interviewees was limited.

External validity asks the question “Can the results be used by other researchers in other settings?” Yin (1994) acknowledges that “external validity poses a major barrier in doing case studies” noting that critics claim single cases offer poor evidence for making generalizations. It was not the intent of this study to offer generalizations, as the two cases examined were “extreme cases.” The

researcher's purpose was to develop a deeper understanding of how the CAPA initiative assisted these two specific cases to achieve their academic goals within their particular natural and social contexts. In addition, the human interaction and the contextual boundaries of this study naturally limited reaching any universal generalizations. However, using a multiple-case strategy embedded in rich descriptions and rigor in terms of research design, data collection and analysis provides a solid foundation and framework for the reader to determine external validity, if necessary. Finally, Kvale (1995) although not overlooking the importance of validation argues:

A critical attitude towards knowledge claims, one's own as well as that of other's, is a necessary part of scientific endeavour. When elevated to a dominating attitude, ruling the discourse of research, the quest for validation may, however, be self defeating. A pervasive attention to validation becomes counterproductive and leads to a general invalidation.

The final test of research quality according to Yin (1994) is reliability. Yin (1994) elaborates, "if a later investigator followed exactly the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions" (p. 36). To address reliability, the researcher maintained comprehensive documentation in the form of field notebooks from the beginning to the end of the study to record data, inquiries, unforeseen issues and moments of illumination. In addition, the researcher followed protocols constructed by

experts in the field to develop and conduct the interviews ((Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1991; Patton, 2002; and Yin, 1994); and, to collect and analyze the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Using protocols designed by the experts enable others to follow the same process in developing the same findings as the researcher for these two specific cases, thus enhancing the reliability of the study. Finally Patton (2002, p. 53) cites Filstead (1970) and argues “it is critical for the researcher to picture the empirical social world as it actually exists to those who are under investigation, rather than as the researcher imagines it to be.” In addition to picturing the world, in terms of the validity and reliability of a study, using triangulation, member checks, rich and rigorous documentation and protocols developed by experts enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of this report.

### Summary

As an introduction to the methodology that was used, this chapter reiterated the purpose of this study, the statement of the problem, and the research questions designed to elicit the data for this study. The second part of the chapter provided a detailed description of the research design and rationale. As a mixed-methods study, the triangulation of data from various sources was discussed. To that end, the section included the “what,” “how,” and “why” of the use written questionnaires, interviews and mining district data to elicit and record comprehensive data for responding to each research question. The chapter closed with a discussion on validity and reliability as key constructs in the

evaluation of quality research and what those terms mean for this study in exploring a state collaborative intervention strategy in two low-performing schools designed to assist schools in making AYP.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The purpose of this mixed-method case study is to explore the effectiveness of a state collaboration intervention strategy to increase student achievement. In Chapter Three qualitative and quantitative research methods and instruments devised to answer each research question were described in detail. This chapter is devoted to the examination of the research findings which are organized and reported for each case study. Since both case studies occurred in the same district, demographic information for the district will be presented first. Next a detailed description of each case is presented using the research questions as a framework for highlighting the major concepts. In order to integrate the findings, each research question will culminate with a short summary. After each within-case analysis (Creswell, 1998) has been performed, a cross-case analysis to address research question four follows. An overall summary of the findings concludes the chapter.

#### District Demographic Data

Pseudonyms have been used to represent respondents, schools and the district in order to protect the confidentiality of those who participated in the study. The case study schools, Athens and Babylon Elementary are Title I urban schools located in Carlow, a New Jersey school district. Due to factors such as belonging to the “lowest socioeconomic status in the state” and having a large percentage of disadvantaged students who need “education beyond the norm”

Carlow is also an Abbott District. New Jersey has approximately 616 school districts and 31 are designated as Abbott Districts. Abbott Districts receive additional state funding, support and monitoring based on a 1997 ruling by the New Jersey Supreme Court regarding parity in funding. As an Abbott District, Carlow serves approximately 27,000 students, has 32 elementary schools with more than six thousand employees. In the Carlow School District there are at least 25 different languages spoken throughout the student population.

#### Athens Elementary Demographic Data

The total enrollment of students for Athens Elementary School for the 2006-2007 school year was 650 students with 98% of the students eligible for free or reduced breakfast and lunch. For 56% of the students, English was the first language spoken in the home and for 44% Spanish was the first language spoken. Less than 1% of the students identified a language other than Spanish or English as the most frequent language spoken in the home. At the elementary level, state class size averages ranged from 18-21 students. Average class size for Athens was between one and seven students below the state average at every grade level with the exception of the ungraded Special Needs Class where the state average was eight and the school's class size was thirteen. The student mobility rate for 2006-2007 was 24%, more than twice as much as the state average (11.8%). The principal described Athens as being in an "oppressed neighborhood."



Athens' principal had four years of experience as an elementary principal in another New Jersey Abbott School District prior to coming to Athens five years ago. In addition, she taught elementary English Language Arts for nearly five years before entering administration. Nine out of 12 total third, fourth and fifth grade teachers returned the written questionnaire, however, only eight met the criteria of teaching third, fourth or fifth grade literacy during the school years of 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. The experience of the eligible responding teachers ranged between 4 years to 17 years. The range for years taught specifically at Athens for eligible responding teachers spanned from 3 years to 17 years.

Table 2

*Years of Teaching Experience- Participants from Athens Elementary School*

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	Mean
Years of Teaching Experience	5	7	6	4	7	6	6	17	7.25
Years at Athens	5	3	6	4	6	3	6	17	6.25

Athens Elementary School Case Study: Research Questions

The Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) initiative is described as a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education, districts and schools. As a state technical support system, CAPA was developed to assist low-performing Abbott schools designated as “in need of

improvement” based on NCLB criteria. Athens’ third, fourth, and fifth grade student achievement data in literacy from the school years 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007 showed steady improvement. The steady improvement culminated in Athens making AYP during the 2006-2007 school year and occurred while Athens participated in the CAPA initiative.

Table 3

*Literacy Student Achievement Data-Athens*

	Partially Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	Total
2006-2007	27.6%	69.9%	2.4%	99.9%
2005-2006	37.1%	62.9%	0%	100%
2004-2005	41.1%	58.9%	0	100%

The overarching research question for this study explored the effect of the school’s participation in the CAPA process and student achievement. In order to respond to this and the other related research questions, the following data were interpreted and analyzed to identify emergent themes and concepts:

- Structured interview with the principal
- Written questionnaires from the principal and 8 third, fourth and fifth grade teachers who taught literacy during the 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years

- District documents and artifacts including the public School Report Card required by NCLB and the CAPA Summary Report
- Student achievement data from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge for grades 3, 4 and 5 for the school years 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007

*Research Question One: In What Reported Ways Did the School's Participation in the CAPA Process Affect Student Achievement?*

The interview with Athens' administrator, Mrs. A., took place in her office on April 24, 2008 and lasted for an hour and forty-five minutes. When asked, "What increased as a result of your school's involvement with the CAPA process?" Mrs. A. reported:

Teacher expectations for students increased and accountability was enforced. CAPA was more like a catalyst for us. It increased student achievement in an indirect way. We knew we had to change the ways things were going. We knew we were not meeting the needs of all the students. CAPA solidified the urgency of the situation. When the leadership team reviewed the CAPA Summary Report, we were not surprised with the findings. We made copies and distributed them at our faculty meeting and grade level meetings were held to determine which areas we would tackle first and how. There are great teachers here at this building and we

decided the focus of the work should be differentiated instruction.

The teachers made the difference. The climate here changed. We went from hopelessness to great expectations.

The following correlated question on CAPA's influence was included as part of the Teacher's Collaborative Assessment and Planning Questionnaire (Appendix H) and the Administrator's Questionnaire (Appendix G):

In your experience, of the following CAPA recommendations, which has had the greatest impact on student achievement? Rank the following recommendations 1 through 5 with 5 representing the greatest impact.

- A. Aligning the district curriculum with state standards and assessments
- B. Ensuring that the district curriculum is effectively taught to all students
- C. Using teacher-designed assessments to enhance instruction
- D. Implementing a process for teachers to regularly discuss standards, curriculum and student work
- E. Using effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences

Seven of the eight written responses designated CAPA Recommendation E, using effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences, as having the greatest impact on student achievement. Teacher 6 elaborated on this idea by writing, "Many of the children learn differently and so the materials need to be in different ways. "

Likewise Teacher 5 wrote, “All students learn different. Using different strategies can help achievement.” Mrs. A., likewise, selected recommendation E as having the greatest impact on student achievement.

Table 4

*CAPA Recommendations-Impact on Student Achievement School A*

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	Mean
Aligning the district curriculum with state standards and assessments	3	1	1	1	1	3	2	3	1.9
Ensuring that the district curriculum is effectively taught to all students	1	4	4	3	4	2	3	5	3.3
Using teacher-designed assessments to enhance instruction	2	2	2	4	2	1	4	1	2.3
Implementing a process for teachers to regularly discuss standards, curriculum and student work	4	3	3	2	3	4	1	4	3.0

Table 4 (Continued)

*CAPA Recommendations-Impact on Student Achievement School A*

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	Mean
Using effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	4.6

*Scale. 1= No impact; 2=Little impact; 3=Some impact; 4= Quite a bit impact; 5=Greatest impact*

The final related question from the written questionnaire asked respondents to rank the importance of the CAPA initiative on Athen's academic achievement. Six out of eight teachers responded to this question which requested a ranking from 1 to 5. All six teachers responded that the CAPA initiative was important, however, ranking its importance at varying degrees. Most important was represented by a ranking of 5 and 1 designated not important at all. Four respondents rated the CAPA initiative as very important and one rated it as most important. The remaining respondent rated the initiative as important. This question also provided a space for teachers to explain their response. Teacher 3 wrote, "All the CAPA recommendations are enforced throughout the building and CAPA provided guidelines for student achievement." Teacher 4 agreed with the importance of guidelines for student achievement. Teacher 8 referred to the role CAPA's monitoring played in enhancing the skills

and methods used by teachers within a specific timeframe. Teacher 7 allowed that the CAPA initiative was important but not the most important thing. Teacher 8 expanded upon this idea by acknowledging that there are great teachers in all areas of learning at Athens.

The CAPA Summary Report for Athens was completed in 2005 by the CAPA review team and included the following activities:

- A review of the documents collected for the school portfolio and data profile
- 50 classroom observations
- General observations such as morning and afternoon arrival and dismissal, lunch in the cafeteria, and student restrooms
- 61 interviews with teachers
- Five interviews with building leadership and administration
- 120 interviews with students
- Five interviews with school and support staff
- Five interviews with parents

One of the findings related to academic performance indicated that although the class sizes at Athens were reasonable (15-20 students per classroom) most instruction was whole group. The students in grades K-3 were arranged in pods of 4 and learning centers were available, however, students were not working in groups. Based on this information, the CAPA team with collaboration from the school's leadership team recommended that a

professional development plan be developed to seek training on differentiated instruction and grouping practices.

The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) is administered every spring to students in third, fourth and fifth grades in literacy and mathematics. The NJASK results along with a 95 % participation rate for eight specific subgroups are used to determine AYP. During the years involved with CAPA, Athens' achievement scores increased to achieve AYP in

### *Research Question One*

#### *Summary*

Research question one explored the reported ways the CAPA process affected student achievement. Both the principal and the teachers described the affect of the CAPA process with words and phrases such as “catalyst”, “sense of urgency,” and “provided guidelines.” Mrs. A. stated that increased teacher expectations and enforced accountability were key results of the CAPA initiative. The theme of increased teacher expectations and enforced accountability reverberated in written responses by T5, T6, T7, and T8.

When asked which recommendations made by the CAPA team in collaboration with the school's CAPA leadership team had the greatest impact, the principal and most of the teachers highlighted differentiated instruction. The principal and T7 noted that although the need for differentiated instructed emanated from the findings and the recommendations made by the CAPA Team, the real difference in student achievement was a result of “great teachers.”



*Research Question Two: What Reported Specific Strategies Were Used to Implement the Prioritized Intervention Recommendations from the CAPA Summary Report During the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 School Years?*

The CAPA Summary Report provided evidence from teacher interviews and observations that the primary assessments used in the classrooms at Athens were those included with the core reading program. They concluded that most of the student work samples and work displays did not evidence that the students were provided with multiple types of assessments and that teachers did not collaborate to develop authentic assessments. To address these findings, these CAPA team recommendations received priority status:

- Seek staff development opportunities in the areas of multiple types of assessments such as portfolios, projects and journals
- Continue to utilize common planning time to analyze assessment results to inform instructional practices
- Content area supervisors should be contacted to collaborate and participate in grade level meetings, and school based in-services to provide assistance in monitoring the curriculum, and to provide building based staff development to address teacher needs
- A professional development plan should be developed to seek training on differentiated instruction and grouping practices

In response to the prioritized recommendations Mrs. A. stated:

I rearranged the building schedule so that grade level groups had a minimum of 45 minutes common planning time. You know,

without accountability these meetings can end up being a waste of time. So, lead teachers conducted these meetings and submitted the agendas and minutes to me. Periodically, I or a member of the administrative team would review them. When time permitted, I would attend some of the meetings.

One of the earlier expectations was that the teachers meet in grade level groups to develop a plan for differentiating instruction and in follow up meetings to discuss how it was going. For a good part of last year the teams worked on multiple assessments and pacing guides. We had professional developers come in on the three scheduled half days the first year to help us with data analysis. I have had training with New American Schools and I did a lot of professional development with the staff around literacy and using rubrics. Small group for differentiated instruction became a part of the literacy block.

We really made a big deal of celebrating student success, especially academic success. We started posting the honor roll with pictures right outside the office. But that wasn't enough because there were kids who were improving but not getting recognized and we created a "Most Improved" section on the bulletin board for that. We put up the kids pictures. We focused on making learning visible. You will see quality work posted outside every classroom.

We have phenomenal music, art and dance teachers and every year they create outstanding performances that they present to the school and to the Senior Citizens Center. We posted those pictures as well. I believe in the importance of teaching the whole child. Students and teachers need to see that they are being successful. Our halls are corridors of knowledge. When you walk through our building it says, “Look at who we are. Look at what we are learning!”

The teacher written responses indicated that as a strategy for implementing the prioritized intervention recommendations of the CAPA Summary Report, they participated in various professional development sessions. However, the degree to which the teachers felt the professional development enabled them to implement the interventions varied from being (A) not adequately prepared to (D) very well prepared as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 5

*Teachers’ Preparedness to Implement CAPA Recommendations Based on Professional Development Received*

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	Mean
Curriculum linked to State Standards	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3.25
Multiple evaluation and	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3.38

assessment strategies

Research-based	3	2	4	2	3	3	3	4	3.00
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practices

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*Scale. 1=Not adequately prepared; 2=Somewhat prepared; 3=Fairly well prepared; 4=Very well prepared*

The data collected on professional development from the written questionnaires demonstrated that the teachers felt fairly well prepared to very well prepared to implement multiple evaluation and assessments strategies. This correlated with Mrs. A's statements regarding the school's emphasis on "working on multiple assessments and pacing guides for a good part of the first year." In addition, the amount of professional development hours spent on evaluation strategies ranged between 4-12 for a combined total of 35 hours. Differentiated instruction with a combined total of 31 professional development hours received was the next highest amount of time. Mrs. A's statement that "teachers meet in grade level groups to develop a plan for differentiating instruction" is another indication of the focus on differentiating instruction. However, teacher 7 reported not receiving training in using differentiated instruction and Teacher 8 reported not receiving training in multiple evaluation strategies. Teacher 10 noted differentiated instruction as the most important factor in the school's ability to achieve AYP.

### *Research Question Two*

#### *Summary*

Based on observations and teacher interviews, findings in the CAPA Summary Report described the pervasiveness of traditional paper and pencil

assessments at Athens. A review of the teachers' written responses showed that professional development in evaluation strategies and differentiated instruction as well as collaborating in grade level groups were highlighted by teachers and Mrs. A. as key strategies for implementing the prioritized recommendations of the CAPA Summary Report. All but one teacher received training in evaluation strategies and the amount of professional training for evaluation strategies was higher than that provided for the other intervention strategies.

*Research Question Three: What Reported Procedures Were Used to Prioritize the Intervention Recommendations Included in the CAPA Summary Report?*

During the interview Mrs. A. made the following comments:

In year one, the school's CAPA Leadership Team and I along with the CAPA Team prioritized the recommendations based on where we were as a school. We had already started to implement different grouping patterns and using various rubrics before the final report so we just continued that. The district was already revising the curriculum. We didn't want to take on more recommendations than we could readily implement. So, we focused on making quality work visible through artifacts of learning as a way of increasing teacher and student expectations.

To me, using various assessments and differentiating instruction are two sides of the same coin so they became a continuing part of our work. In year two, the leadership team and I

decided to keep the same focus for the school. It takes time for teachers to learn and so we did not change our focus for year two. We are still working on making sure that we meet the needs of all children. We are not there yet.

When asked how she would characterize the schools collaborative work with CAPA Mrs. A. described the level of CAPA's integration with the school team as "unifying." According to Gajda's (2004) Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR), unifying indicates that the two groups were working as a seamless entity toward the same goals. Mrs. A. responded that the communication between the two teams was "clear and consistent " because both teams "knew their purpose." In terms of the CAPA Team, she elaborated by stating, "They were honest, they were knowledgeable, they were very supportive of things. Their commendations were fair. They were informed."

The involvement of the teachers in prioritizing the recommendations varied from one teacher indicating "not at all involved" to two teachers designating that they were "extensively involved." This may have occurred because the two teachers who were extensively involved in prioritizing the recommendations may have been members of the school's CAPA Leadership Team. Most teachers indicated that they were "somewhat involved" in the process. It is interesting to note that most teachers, regardless of their level of involvement with prioritizing the recommendations, rated the influence of CAPA on student academic achievement as 4 with 5 being the highest level.

Table 6

*Teachers' Involvement with CAPA and Their Ratings of CAPA's Influence*

	Teachers' Involvement	CAPA's Influence
T1	Somewhat	No response
T2	Somewhat	3
T3	Somewhat	4
T4	Somewhat	4
T5	Not at all	No response
T6	Extensively	5
T7	Somewhat	4
T8	Extensively	4

*Research Question Three**Summary*

Part of the CAPA process involved the school's CAPA Leadership Team and the CAPA Review Team meeting to discuss and prioritize the recommendations for improvement in a collaborative manner. For Athens, this process was adhered to for the first year; however, Mrs. A stated that the decisions made for the second year only involved the school's leadership team. Despite, the top down approach for the second year, most teachers still felt "somewhat" involved in determining which recommendations to implement during

the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. Overall Mrs. A. described the collaborative relationship with CAPA as unifying.

Research question four “What common factors that exist across the two initially low-performing schools seem to contribute to making AYP?” requires an analysis of data from both schools. Therefore, a response for research question four will follow the summary of research for Babylon’s research question three.

#### Babylon Elementary Demographic Data

Babylon Elementary enrolled 537 students for the same school year and almost all students met the requirement for free or reduced breakfast and lunch. Spanish was the first language spoken in the home for 56% of the students, English for 39% and Arabic for nearly 4%. Kindergarten, first grade and second grade class sizes ranged between two and seven students higher than the state class size averages. The mobility rate for 2006-2007 was 22.5%; almost double that of the state average. During the time of the study, Babylon did not have an ungraded Special Needs Class. The principal described the neighborhood as “socially challenging.”

The principal at Babylon taught elementary social studies for four years in a different school in the Carlow District prior to coming to Babylon. He has been at Babylon for a total of eight years serving two of those years as a vice principal and the remaining years as the principal. A total of ten teachers representing third, fourth and fifth grades returned questionnaires but only nine were eligible



based on the established criteria. The teaching experience for eligible respondents and the years taught at Babylon ranged from 6 to 32 years.

Table 7

*Years of Teaching Experience-Participants from Babylon Elementary School*

	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	Mean
Years of Teaching Experience	23	9	32	6	30	8	30	6	6	15
Years at Babylon	23	9	32	6	26	8	10.5	6	6	14.1

## Babylon Elementary School Case Study: Research Questions

In order to respond to the overarching question of the impact of the CAPA initiative and student achievement and the other research questions related to this study, the following data were interpreted and analyzed to identify emergent themes and concepts:

- Structured interview with the principal
- Written questionnaires from 9 third, fourth and fifth grade teachers who taught literacy during the 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years
- District documents and artifacts including the public School Report Card required by NCLB and the CAPA Summary Report
- Student achievement data from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) for grades 3, 4 and 5 for the school years 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007

The results of the NJASK for grades three, four and five show significant increases culminating in Babylon making AYP during the 2006-2007 school year.

Table 8

*Literacy Student Achievement Data-Babylon*

	Partially Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	Total
2006-2007	28.7 %	69.1%	2.1%	99.9%
2005-2006	39.3%	60.7%	0%	100%
2004-2005	41.1%	58.9%	.5%	100.5%

*Research Question One: In What Reported Ways Did the School's Participation in the CAPA Process Affect Student Achievement?*

The interview held on April 22, 2008 in the privacy of the technology lab with the Babylon principal, Mr. B. lasted for an hour and 15 minutes. When asked what increased as a result of the CAPA process to affect student achievement, Mr. B. stated the following:

As a result of the school's involvement with CAPA, accountability increased for me and the staff. CAPA provided a roadmap for us to follow and they returned to examine our progress. We had a lot of respect for the CAPA team. They know what it is like to run a school. We knew that our work was under a microscope. Their looking at our work made us look at our work more carefully. This is a difficult school and we kept trying new things but things weren't changing. The data they shared said that we were not teaching the district curriculum. The process of having a school audit with periodic follow up visits is a good one.

The focus on data helped us to know our students better. It helped us to improve our scores. We knew where to spend our time. Teachers worked on the CAPA recommendations during their grade level meetings. The [literacy] coach monitored these meetings.

The following related question on CAPA's influence was included as part of the Teacher's Collaborative Assessment and Planning Questionnaire (Appendix H) and the Administrator's Questionnaire (Appendix G):

In your experience, of the following CAPA recommendations, which has had the greatest impact on student achievement? Rank the following recommendations 1 through 5 with 5 representing the greatest impact.

- A. Aligning the district curriculum with state standards and assessments
- B. Ensuring that the district curriculum is effectively taught to all students
- C. Using teacher-designed assessments to enhance instruction
- D. Implementing a process for teachers to regularly discuss standards, curriculum and student work
- E. Using effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences

Six of the nine written responses identified CAPA recommendation E, using effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences, as having a great impact on student

achievement. Teacher 9 wrote, "Differentiated learning allows students to grasp concepts at their own pace." Teacher 14 agreed and acknowledged that we all learn differently and teachers need to be aware that the curriculum must be fit around the students' needs, weakness and strength. She added, "We also need variety." Four of the nine teachers indicated that CAPA recommendation D, implementing a process for teachers to regularly discuss standards, curriculum and student work, had the least impact on student achievement.

Recommendation D was also selected by Mr. B, has having had a great impact on student achievement, however, he selected aligning the district curriculum with state standards and assessments, recommendation A, as having had the greatest impact.

Table 9

*CAPA Recommendations-Impact on Student Achievement-Babylon Elementary*

	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	Mean
Aligning the district curriculum with state standards and assessments	2	1	5	3	5	2	1	5	5	3.22
Ensuring that the district curriculum is effectively taught to all students	1	2	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	3.00
Using teacher-designed assessments to enhance	4	5	2	2	2	4	3	1	1	2.67

instruction

Implementing a process for	3	3	1	1	1	1	5	3	2	2.23
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teachers to regularly discuss

standards, curriculum and

student work

Using effective and varied	5	4	3	5	3	5	2	4	4	3.89
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instructional strategies to

accommodate various

learning styles and multiple

intelligences

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Teachers at Babylon were also asked to rank the importance of the CAPA Initiative as it related to student achievement. Six teachers rated the initiative as 4 or 5 indicating most or very important. The remaining three teachers rated the importance of the CAPA initiative for student achievement as a 2 meaning that it was somewhat important. A space was provided on the questionnaire for teachers to elaborate upon their rating and three of the nine respondents chose to do so. In support of the CAPA Initiative being very or most important, Teacher 17 wrote, "The CAPA Initiative brought in new and effective strategies to my classroom that have helped me grow as an educator and my students to improve as learners." Teacher 14 concurred by adding "CAPA made many of us aware of the strength and weaknesses in ourselves and our students. We need a roadmap so that we know where to take our journey." However, Teacher 15 disagreed and wrote "Outsiders who come into our building without fully understanding the

student body, and the faculty do not it seems to me offer very relevant or constructive advice.”

The CAPA Summary Report for Babylon was completed in the fall of 2005 as a part of the required support system for Title 1 schools. This was in accordance with the NCLB mandate requiring the state to create and maintain a statewide system of intensive support for schools designated in need of improvement. For that purpose the CAPA Review Team, as a part of the CAPA process, conducted the following activities to gather data for assisting Babylon in improving student achievement:

- A review of the documents collected for the school portfolio and data file
- 67 classroom observations
- General observations, such as morning and afternoon arrival and dismissal lunch in the cafeteria, and student restrooms
- 67 interviews with teachers
- 6 interviews with building leadership and administrators
- 0 interviews with district administrators
- 42 interviews with students
- 14 interviews with school and student support staff
- 8 interviews with parents

One of the findings from the data collected by the CAPA Review Team demonstrated that differentiated instructional strategies were not evident in most

of the classes visited. However, in several instances, where it was occurring, there was a sense that work was being accomplished. Another finding indicated that the teachers were not prepared to implement the district curriculum in a consistent manner. Based on these findings, the CAPA Team in collaboration with the school's CAPA Leadership Team made the following recommendations for Babylon:

- provide professional development in differentiated instruction, instructional strategies, and techniques for promoting best practices.
- use district supervisors and coaches at grade level meetings and in-service days to develop pacing guides linked to the district curriculum

### *Research Question One*

#### *Summary*

The first research question explored the ways the CAPA process affected student achievement. Mr. B. noted increased accountability for the leadership and the staff as a result of the involvement. He also highlighted the role CAPA played in providing a “roadmap” for the school which encouraged them to “focus on teaching and learning.” In analyzing the written responses on the teachers’ questionnaires, “the focus on teaching and learning” was evident in six of the nine teachers who selected using effective and varied instructional strategies accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences as a key strategy



for improving student achievement. This aligns with the CAPA Summary Report recommendation of providing professional development in differentiated instruction, instructional strategies and techniques for promoting best practices.

*Research Question Two: What Reported Specific Strategies Were Used to Implement the Prioritized Intervention Recommendations from the CAPA Summary Report During the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 School Years?*

The CAPA Summary Report indicated that many curricular initiatives were mandated including literacy pacing/benchmark guides, however, teachers had received limited district support or opportunity for in-school collaboration to develop, integrate, and assess the efficacy of these initiatives to the curriculum. This finding was based on evidence from school documents, lesson plans, school folders, classroom visitations, individual teacher and group interviews conducted by the CAPA Review Team.

There was no evidence that a consistent and coherent curriculum was taught and assessed at every grade level. Literacy pacing/benchmark guides were not evident at every grade level. There was no consensus by the teachers as to when the assessments should be administered, what the information represented and most importantly, how to use the data for instructional intervention. Therefore, the CAPA Review Team in collaboration with the school's CAPA Leadership Team made the following recommendations for school improvement:

- Teachers should collaborate at each grade level to develop pacing guides linked to the Core Curriculum Frameworks and the state assessments
- At grade level meetings, invite teachers to share with each other their strategies for developing robust instruction and active learning to meet needs of all students.
- Seek professional development opportunities in the areas data analysis for instructional improvement

In response to the prioritized recommendations, the principal of Babylon, Mr. B reported:

The [CAPA] reports were passed out at a faculty meeting and at first the staff was devastated. I told them that CAPA was a process for improvement and to relax. We can fix this. I asked the teachers how can we fix this. They met in grade level teams to develop scope and sequence pacing guides for the curriculum. The guides brought the focus back to teaching and learning. They [teachers] were put in charge. We didn't tell them what to do, we asked them.

Last year, we had a real crisis in the school with so many new teachers in grades 6, 7 and 8. So, the administration focused on those grades for professional development. Elementary teachers attended the professional development provided by the

district and the building coaches to build guides and to differentiate instruction.

The teacher written responses indicated that as a strategy for implementing the prioritized intervention recommendations of the CAPA Summary Report, school based and district based professional development was conducted. Although the topics for professional development varied by teachers, all teachers noted attending professional development sessions on using differentiated instruction to support various learning styles and multiple intelligences as indicated by best practices. The second most selected topic by teachers for professional development was aligning curriculum and standards.

The degree to which the teachers felt the professional development prepared them to implement the interventions varied from being (1) not adequately prepared to being (4) very well prepared.

Table 10

*Teachers' Preparedness to Implement CAPA Recommendations Based on the Professional Development Received*

	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	Mean
Curriculum linked to state standards	3	3	4	1	4	2	3	3	2	2.78
Multiple evaluations and assessment	3	3	4	1	4	1	2	3	2	2.56

strategies

Research-based	3	3	3	1	3	2	1	3	2	2.34
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practices

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*Scale: 1=Not adequately prepared; 2=somewhat prepared; 3=Fairly well prepared; 4=Very well prepared*

It is interesting to note that data collected from the written questionnaires indicated that Teacher 12 was the only teacher who felt unprepared to implement the prioritized CAPA recommendations related to the curriculum and the state standards. Teacher 11 and Teacher 13 felt very well prepared culminating in 6 out of the 9 teachers reporting fairly well to very well prepared to implement the curriculum linked to the state standards. This correlated with Mr. B.'s statement regarding the development of scope and sequence pacing guides during grade level meetings as a key strategy for increasing student achievement. The focus on curriculum was also evidenced by the 33 hours gathered from the questionnaires that teachers spent collaboratively working on curriculum and assessments.

### *Research Question Two*

#### *Summary*

The findings from the CAPA Summary Report acknowledged weaknesses in the area of differentiated instruction, data analysis, curriculum and instruction. The school invested a major portion of its professional development hours in the creation of grade level pacing guides to support the implementation of a standards-based curriculum as a strategy for implementing the prioritized recommendations. As a result all teachers, with the exception of one, felt prepared to implement the curriculum. Teacher 17 wrote that "creating scope

and sequence guides “accounted for the school’s increased test scores.

Teachers 18, 19 and 22 agreed emphasizing the collaborative nature of working on the guides. Finally, the importance of the school’s work on teaching the curriculum is supported through the principal’s statement that the CAPA initiative influenced the school’s decision to “focus on teaching and learning.”

*Research Question Three: What Reported Procedures Were Used to Prioritize the Intervention Recommendations Included in the CAPA Summary Report?*

During the interview, the principal, Mr. B., made the following comments:

I believe in leading from within. The staff reviewed the CAPA Recommendations and decided what to do first. There were a lot of recommendations. We decided to focus on 2 or 3. CAPA made the recommendations but my staff decided what to work on first. We shared our decisions with the CAPA Review Team. They [CAPA Review Team] pretty much agreed that we were moving in the right direction. The curriculum guides have been helpful to teachers. They [teachers] can support each other more.

When asked how he would describe the school’s collaborative work with the CAPA Review Team, Mr. B. described the level of the CAPA Review Team’s integration with the school team as “partnering.” Gaudi (2004) describes partnering as “a central group of people work together around a common task and that members share equally in the decision-making process.”

The responses teachers gave in terms of their involvement with the prioritizing process varied. Teachers 12, 15 and 16 reported no involvement with the prioritizing process while most teachers indicated that they were somewhat or extensively involved. The teachers with the most experience and tenure in the building (Teacher 11 and Teacher 13) reported extensive involvement. Although most teachers rated the importance of the CAPA Initiative to the school's academic growth as 4 or 5 with 5 meaning very important, Teacher 15 raised skepticism about the initiative by referring to the CAPA Team as "outsiders who came into our building without fully understanding the student body."

Table 11

*Teachers' Involvement with CAPA and Their Ratings of CAPA's Influence on Academic Achievement*

	Teachers' Involvement	CAPA's Influence
T9	Somewhat	4
T10	Somewhat	4
T11	Extensively	4
T12	Not at All	2
T13	Extensively	4
T14	Somewhat	4
T15	Not at All	2
T16	Somewhat	2
T17	Somewhat	5

### *Research Question Three*

#### *Summary*

The CAPA Review Team made recommendations and commendations to the schools it visited as part of the state support system for schools in need of improvement. During its initial visit the CAPA Review Team commended the principal of Babylon for “establishing a collaborative relationship that connects all staff in a non-threatening, safe and clean environment that is focused on positive student growth.” This is aligned with the principal’s strategy to involve the staff in making academic decisions related to CAPA as well as evidenced by his sharing the CAPA Summary Report at a staff meeting with the expectation that teachers would develop a plan to address the recommendations.

The process of the school CAPA Leadership Team and the CAPA Review Team working together to prioritize the recommendations was not followed for Babylon based on the principal’s ability to establish a collaborative working environment within the total teaching staff of the building. Instead the staff reviewed and prioritized the CAPA recommendations and shared them with the CAPA Review Team for input.

When asked to describe the collaborative level of the school’s integration with CAPA by using the Strategic Alliance Rubric (Gajda, 2004) Mr. B. rated the relationship as “partnering.” The idea of partnering was reflected in Mr. B.’s response “...very clear as a partner this year...as outside eyes to help to give strategies based on expertise. They asked the school team first what they saw.”

## Cross-Case Analysis

### *Research Question Four: What Common Factors that Exist Across the Two Initially Low-Performing Schools Seem to Contribute to Achieving AYP?*

In discussing how the CAPA process affected student achievement, both principals indicated that CAPA provided a “direction” for their school improvement work. They used phrases such as “providing guidelines” and “providing a roadmap” to illustrate CAPA’s role. Both principals used the word “accountability” as well to describe CAPA’s affect on student achievement but in different ways. Mrs. A. discussed enforced accountability for teachers whereas Mr. B. referenced the increase in accountability for him and his staff as a result of being involved with CAPA. While the ideas of direction and accountability were reflected in their responses, both principals alluded to CAPA’s role as secondary in assisting their schools to make AYP. Mrs. A. highlighted the instructional skills of her teachers as a key to increased student achievement while Mr. B. continually spoke about “empowering his teachers” and “leading from within.”

Teachers wrote about the importance of professional development in preparing them to implement the recommendations made by the CAPA Review Team and the school CAPA Leadership Team. For Athens, the focus of the professional development was on evaluation strategies and differentiated instruction. Babylon teachers, too, focused on differentiated instruction but also collaboratively developed pacing guides to support the consistent implementation of the district’s new curriculum frameworks.



Both principals indicated a high level of respect for the expertise of the members of the CAPA Review Team. Mr. B. described the collaborative level of integration with the school and the CAPA Review Team as “partnering.” He further elaborated, “CAPA was very much a partner this year with outside eyes to give strategies based on their expertise.” Mrs. A rated CAPA’s collaborative level of integration with her school as “unifying” a level higher than “partnering.” Mrs. A. stated, “We worked well as a team. [They] were very supportive of things. Their commendations and recommendations were fair. They were honest.” The collaborative relationship with CAPA as expressed by both principals was representative of the type of relationships found in high performing schools as noted by Reeves (2003).

### Chapter Summary

The purpose of this mixed-method case study was to explore the effectiveness of CAPA, a state collaborative intervention strategy for improving student achievement in two low-achieving schools. The two urban schools studied to explore were selected because they achieved AYP status during the 2006-2007 school year. In general, the data collected and presented in this chapter indicated that the relationship with CAPA as a team from the state was collaborative and assisted both schools in creating a specific plan for student achievement. For Athens Elementary, a priority of this plan encompassed a focus on developing multiple assessments. A focus on a consistent curriculum was a priority for the plan Babylon created with assistance from the CAPA team.

Respondents from both schools also indicated the importance of learning about and using differentiated instruction to support student achievement as well as working in grade level groups to produce curriculum guides and various types of assessments.

However, both principals interviewed indicated that improving student achievement in low-performing schools is complex and multifaceted. They described the role of CAPA as a “catalyst, a guide, an important influence, and providing expertise” for the work while highlighting essential components for improvement. Mrs. A. referred to the importance of setting high expectations for her teachers and students. She also passionately described the process she implemented for making learning visible for students, teachers and parents halls of excellence. On the other hand, Mr. B. elaborated on “leading from within and empowering teachers” as well as supporting a structure and purpose for school-based professional development.

The purpose of Chapter Four was to enable the reader to have an experience similar to that of the researcher in the data review and analysis conducted to address the overarching research question of the effectiveness of CAPA in assisting low-performing urban schools to achieve AYP. Chapter Five follows with a discussion of the implications of the study’s findings through the lens of effective schools research, *collaboration theory* and future research recommendations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

Achieving equity and excellence in education throughout the country has been an ongoing problem requiring intervention from the federal government in the form of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the most recent reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as a method of school reform. Resnick and Glennan (2002) note that, even when controlling for poverty by providing additional funding, achievement scores for students living in urban districts have been low and that improving student achievement in urban districts presents a tremendous problem. Elmore (2005), McNeil (2000), Ravitch (1983), Sarason (1990) and Tyack and Cuban (1995) acknowledge that most past educational reform efforts to improve student achievement have not produced the intended results. Although the achievement gap continues to persist, some low-performing urban elementary schools have been able to make substantial academic gains and have avoided the sanctions of NCLB by making AYP. The enduring significance of this study lies in the consistent need to provide a quality education that will enable all students, even those in urban areas presently attending low-performing schools, to participate as knowledgeable citizens and contributors in a democratic society. Finally, Clewall and Campbell (2007) argue:

Because it is generally assumed that urban schools enrolling low-income disadvantaged students will do poorly, studies that focus on schools serving low-income, disadvantaged students well are

particularly valuable and intriguing...finding what makes these highly effective schools effective can contribute substantially to the knowledge base about what works in educating low-income children. (p. 39)

The purpose of this mixed-method case study was to explore the effectiveness of a collaborative state intervention strategy (CAPA) in assisting two low-performing urban elementary schools to achieve AYP. This chapter will build on the major findings shared in Chapter Four from principal interviews and responses to questionnaires, teacher responses to questionnaires, district documents and student achievement data. The findings of the study will be summarized and conclusive statements made through the lens of effective schools' research, and *collaboration theory*. The chapter will conclude with implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

### Summary of Findings and Conclusions

#### *The Role of Instructional Leadership in Educational Reform: A Major Theme Which Emerged as a Result of the Principal Interviews and Questionnaire Responses*

The Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) process was developed by the New Jersey Department of Education to provide technical assistance to low-performing schools in Abbott Districts. At the core of the CAPA process was a scholastic audit. As a part of the CAPA process, data from the scholastic audit was compiled into a summary report for the school. The

findings of the report were based on teacher interviews, parent interviews, classroom observations and a review of the school's portfolio. The CAPA Summary Report provided the foundation for the collaborative development of a school improvement plan for Athens Elementary and Babylon Elementary School. Both principals indicated that the most important part of the CAPA process was the summary report based on the scholastic audit.

The scholastic audit contained standards and indicators that encompassed the research on the characteristics of effective schools. The research on effective schools (Edmonds, 1979) embodies a set of correlates which have been distilled from successful low-performing schools demonstrating that contrary to the Coleman study, schools can and do make a difference in learning outcomes for students regardless of their family background or socioeconomic situation. A correlate which emerged as a theme from the principal interviews and questionnaires was the role of instructional leadership in implementing educational reform at the school level. The principals acknowledged the importance of the CAPA Summary Report by sharing it with their staffs and engaging in a dialogue with them about the results. Mrs. A., principal of Athens Elementary, reported putting a structure in place to support the development of instructional tools and Mr. B. utilized a structure already in place for the same purpose to address the prioritized results. Their interviews indicated that the teachers collaborated on the development of pacing guides and multiple assessments throughout the first year which implies the commitment the principals had for their focus on using data to improve instruction. In addition

to supporting teachers by establishing or maintaining structures for professional learning, the commitment to teaching and learning as an instructional leader was further exhibited through the professional development sessions delivered by Mrs. A. to build content and pedagogical knowledge in literacy and the support for the focus on teaching the district curriculum.

When asked how the CAPA recommendations guided the school's work, both principals indicated that CAPA had an important influence on the strategies they implemented but it was not the sole force for improving academic achievement. They noted other factors which are often attributed to instructional leadership including teacher expectations, accountability and teacher empowerment as improvement factors.

Although both principals described their neighborhoods as challenging, neither spoke about variables that were not in their control such as high student mobility rates. Nor did they speak about discipline or a lack of resources. Rather they were enthused and excited to share the academic progress that their students had made and how the culture of the school was becoming more academically focused. They were appreciative that CAPA, as an external set of eyes, had partnered with them to problem-solve their specific issues concerning student achievement, implying that this initiative did not meet with the same criticisms as Abbott and NCLB. This led the researcher to conclude that CAPA provided the impetus needed for the school's educational changes. The collaborative relationship between the CAPA team and the school's CAPA Leadership Team gave the principals an additional edge as the driving force for

educational reform. CAPA stimulated or strengthened the principals' resolve to provide support structures and collaborative opportunities for teachers to improve their practice and therefore impact change at the classroom level.

*The Role of Teacher Knowledge, Expertise and Collaboration in Educational Reform: A Major Theme Which Emerged as a Result of Responses to the Teacher Questionnaires*

Elmore (2005) argues that the educational gap persists because districts and schools tinker around the edges of school reform rather than address the technical core which is teaching and learning. A major theme which emerged from this study was the value teachers placed on the relationship between their knowledge, expertise, collaboration and student achievement. When asked to list the three most important factors contributing to their school's academic progress over the last three years, out of a total of 17 teachers, 14 listed teacher knowledge, teacher expertise or teacher collaboration as important factors. In addition, when asked how prepared they felt to implement the CAPA recommendations for which professional development had been provided all teachers in both schools indicated being fairly well prepared to very well prepared.

In terms of structures, both schools consistently relied on extensive school-based professional development with grade level meetings being the primary conduit led by lead teachers or coaches. When asked which CAPA recommendation had the greatest impact, 13 out of 17 teachers selected "using

effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences.” It is interesting to note that a major portion of the professional development time highlighted by the teachers focused on the differentiation of instruction which is closely aligned with the CAPA recommendation that teachers selected as having had the greatest impact on student achievement. Again, this reflected the value that teachers placed on their learning and professional development.

In conclusion, NCLB was formulated around four major principles, one of which was an emphasis on teaching methods proven to work. The CAPA team in collaboration with the school's CAPA Leadership Team recommended that teachers learn more about using effective and varied instructional strategies which encompass differentiating instruction. The teachers in this study acknowledged that their knowledge, expertise and collaboration in this area had the greatest impact on student achievement. The importance of professional development for teachers and the focus on differentiation instruction, typically in low-performing schools may be an anomaly even though it has been highlighted in the effective schools research (Kannapel & Clements, 2005) and in the educational literature (Delpit, 1996). According to Murnane (2007) and Haycock (2001), students attending low-performing schools often experience schools with weak leadership, curriculum that isn't challenging and teachers who have limited content and pedagogical knowledge. What may be different for these two schools is CAPA's influence on the teachers' accountability and responsibility for student achievement. This conclusion is based on the fact that 11 out of 17



teachers rated CAPA's influence on academic achievement as high and the teachers' acknowledgement of the impact of teacher knowledge, teacher expertise and teacher collaboration on student achievement.

*The Influence of a State Collaborative Intervention Strategy in Educational Reform: A Major Theme Which Emerged as a Result of Culling Data from Interviews, Questionnaires and District Documents*

The literature review on collaboration between and among the different role groups in education identified the critical role collaboration plays. It increases efficiency in problem-solving and resources (financial and human) to address the complex needs of low-performing schools (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Gajda, 2004; Gray & Wood, 1991; Hord, 1989; Williams, 2003). Extrapolated from their review of the research on collaboration and its various features, Wood and Gray (1991) define collaboration comprehensively as “occurring when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process using shared rules, norms, and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain “ (p.146). Based on principal interviews, teacher and principal responses to questionnaires, student achievement data and the examination of relevant district documents, this study found evidence of collaboration on at least two distinctive levels, between the state (CAPA Team) and each case study school's CAPA Leadership Team, and within groups of teachers at each school. At the state level, the CAPA process involved a team of experts conducting a scholastic audit and using the results of the audit to develop a plan with input from the school's

CAPA Leadership Team. The interactive collaborative process between the two teams included at least three meetings, each of which followed a specific protocol for achieving short and long-term goals (Gambino, 2005). In addition, each meeting had a specific purpose. An early meeting involved the two teams jointly constructing an improvement plan based on their agreement of the findings from the audit; this was followed by a prioritizing meeting to agree on which recommendations to address first; and, concluded with a benchmark meeting to assess progress in meeting the agreed upon goals (Gambino, 2005). The interactive process followed by the CAPA Team and the school's CAPA Leadership Team to achieve joint goals was acknowledged by both school principals. This aligns with a review of the literature which indicates that shared goal-setting, interaction in identifying and solving problems and shared resources in terms of time and expertise are key features of collaboration (Friend & Cook, 2000; Hord, 1986; Mattessich, Murray-Closse & Monsey, 2001).

Collaboration was also exhibited by the following description from Mrs. A. of the school's first year in working with the CAPA Team, "In year one, the school's CAPA Leadership Team and I along with the CAPA team prioritized the recommendations based on where we were as a school." In addition, Mrs. A responded that the communication between the two teams was "clear and consistent" because both teams "knew their purpose." She further elaborated by stating, "they [the CAPA Team] were honest, they were knowledgeable, and they were very supportive of things." After reviewing the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) developed by Gajda and Koliba (2007) for

evaluating collaborative relationships, Mrs. A. described the school's CAPA Leadership Team's relationship with the CAPA team as "unifying," the highest level of collaboration. Diversity and organizational strengths are key features of a unifying relationship as well as clear, frequent and prioritized communication. These features were evidenced by the intentional composition of the CAPA Team, which consisted of a panel of experts representing leadership and various specialists' roles in the content areas. The school's CAPA Leadership Team was composed of administrators, teachers and specialists. Based on a synthesis of the research on collaboration Czajkowski (2006) included "clear understanding of roles and responsibilities" and "common and unique purpose" as success factors for collaborative relationships. Mrs. A.'s comments "clear and consistent" and both teams "knew their purpose" align with Czajkowski's identification of success factors for collaboration as well.

After reviewing the SAFAR, Mr. B. indicated that Babylon was at the "partnering" stage of collaboration, noting that there was communication and that the CAPA team was supportive. However, it is interesting to note that Mr. B's CAPA Leadership Team did not follow the CAPA protocol for its prioritizing meeting. Rather than collaborate with the CAPA team to determine which recommendations from the audit to implement first, the school's CAPA Leadership Team collaborated with their teachers and brought those recommendations back to the CAPA team for approval. The research literature yields various theories of collaboration which describe collaboration as evolving in stages (Badrach, 1998; Czajkowski, 2006; Gajda, 2004; Melaville, Blank, &

Ayesh, 1993). Crandall (1977) and others caution that collaboration may be more useful during the planning stages of a project but less suitable for project implementation. Identifying “partnering” as the stage of collaboration may indicate Babylon’s purposeful use of collaboration as a means for beginning the work by jointly developing a school improvement plan but relying less on the external collaborative effort with CAPA and more on internal collaboration between and among teachers to move forward in the implementation of the school improvement plan.

An increasing body of educational literature suggests that various forms of collaboration support teacher development and ownership which can lead to increased student achievement (Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2001).

Data from both case study schools indicated that the teachers worked collaboratively during their involvement with CAPA. At both case study schools, the teachers worked in grade level meetings to review the CAPA Summary Reports and to develop tools to assist in the implementation of the recommendations agreed upon by the CAPA Team and the school’s CAPA Leadership Team. Mrs. A. rearranged the building schedule so that grade level groups had a minimum of 45 minutes per week of structured planning time. The first year the grade level teams developed multiple assessments and pacing guides. During the second year, the grade teams developed and implemented a plan for differentiated instruction. Mr. B. spoke of empowering teachers when confronted with the CAPA Summary Report and that teachers met in grade level teams to develop scope and sequence pacing guides to address the finding

which determined that the district curriculum was not being taught. He states, “They [the teachers] were put in charge. We didn’t tell them what to do, we asked them.” Dimple (2003) noted in his three-year case study of two urban elementary schools involved in a federally funded effort to improve collaboration that collaboration requires a supportive environment. He further acknowledged that in the school where collaboration made a difference the principal had strong facilitative and communicative skills and empowered teachers to work together to solve academic problems. Such was the case in both case study schools as evidenced through statements made during the principal interviews. In terms of Babylon Elementary, the CAPA team also commended the principal in its summary report for “establishing a collaborative relationship that connects all staff in a non-threatening, safe and clean environment focused on positive student growth.” Connolly and James (2006), in their work on collaboration for school improvement highlighted a favorable and social environment as a success factor for meaningful collaboration.

When asked on an open-ended item to list three essential elements for making AYP during the 2006-2007 school year, more than half of the teachers involved in the study selected some form of teacher collaboration. Teacher collaboration was noted by nine of the seventeen teachers who participated in the study as one of the three factors that accounted for their ability to make AYP. It had the highest number of references followed by teacher expertise which was referenced four times. Teachers noted various descriptions of collaboration such as collaborative planning, co-teaching, and grade level teamwork.

Themes throughout the academic literature regarding collaboration barriers tend to focus on the environment, participants' skills and motives, resources, structures and purposes. Researcher Dimple (2003) found that teachers in low-performing schools were less likely to take part in collaborative activities and were hesitant to identify instruction as a key component of school improvement. Consequently, they spent most of their time talking about organizational structures, schedules, resources and other factors outside of their classrooms. Dimple (2003) asserted in his case study that in an urban setting the challenges of constantly addressing continuous crises and the urgency of improving student achievement hinders efforts to build collaboration.

DuFour (2004) and Hord (1997) argue that for teacher collaboration to improve school achievement, a structure and process must be in place to sustain the focus on instruction. Both principals used the grade level structure and Mrs. A. created common planning time as well for teacher collaboration. The grade levels teams were given specific instructional tasks by the principals which were supported and monitored by building coaches. The structures and processes the principals put in place supported an environment for collaboration on school improvement as evidenced by the joint tasks the teachers completed in terms of multiple assessments and pacing guides as well as nine of the seventeen teachers indicating that their collaboration was a factor in each school making AYP.

Viewing this study through the lens of *collaboration theory* demonstrated that the relationship between the state CAPA team, and the school's CAPA

Leadership team was one of collaboration as reported by the principals of the case study schools. Their relationship embodied major components of the definition of collaboration based on the seminal research of Wood and Gray (1991) which is engaging in an interactive process to problem solve using specific structures to decide on related issues.

The CAPA initiative included at least three major meetings between the state's CAPA team and the school's CAPA Leadership Team. Both teams came together to develop a school improvement plan and to review progress made toward those goals.

During the interview process, the principals spoke of the relationship with CAPA as one of unity or partnering. In doing so, they used words and phrases such as "We worked well as a team. They [CAPA] were supportive of things. They were honest. We shared equally in the decision-making process. It was very clear they were a partner this year. The communication was consistent." These findings indicate that the CAPA initiative was a supportive collaborative process for these two schools despite the failure of past state teams created by Abbott legislation to impact school improvement (Walker, 2004). Research on Abbott as a state level reform effort indicated that the support unit developed by the state to provide technical assistance to Abbott Districts created a number of implementation challenges for schools (Walker & Gutmore, 2000). Challenges such as a lack of support and collaboration at the state level, acted as barriers to school improvement. In fact, Walker's (2004) data revealed that the state department's responses often ran counter to the reform goals of Abbott

legislation and that the state lacked the capacity to support Abbott districts effectively. The research (Walker, 2004) on New Jersey's educational reform efforts attributed the state's lack of instructional capacity and distrust by school staff as major barriers. Data from Athens and Babylon ran contrary to Walker's report and demonstrated that collaboration existed between the state's appointed CAPA team and the school's CAPA Leadership Team. However, neither school solely attributed its ability to achieve AYP to the school's collaborative involvement with the CAPA initiative. Instead they described the role of the CAPA initiative as a "catalyst, a set of external eyes, a guidepost, and a roadmap" and referred to other factors and processes of importance such as teacher expectations, accountability, great teachers and leading from within.

A final note focuses on the significance of internal collaboration at each case study school. The principals indicated that they provided structured opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing pacing guides and multiple types of assessments. This aligns with other researchers (DuFour, 2004; Malik, 2003) regarding their findings on the important role the principal plays in building a school culture which supports collaboration. When asked to list the three factors most responsible for their school making AYP, more than half the teachers listed a form of teacher collaboration. This finding supports Neill's (2008) contention and others that in the reauthorization of NCLB, "the law would recognize that the heart of improvement is school-based collaboration among educators to build their capacity to serve all children well" (p. 1).



Data gleaned from this mixed-method case study on the effectiveness of a state collaborative intervention strategy added to the present body of research. It provided increased evidence that a collaborative and supportive role of the state can be a key intervention factor in assisting low-performing schools to make AYP, regardless of the disadvantages these schools traditionally face, such as significant concentrations of poverty, a lack of resources, and less-experienced and well-qualified teachers and administrators (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003; David, Coe, & Kannapel, 2003). Perhaps most importantly, it demonstrated that in these two initially low-performing schools, a state collaborative intervention strategy stimulated the synergistic advancement of instructional leadership, teacher expertise, teacher knowledge and collaboration to a level which enabled their schools to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress.

#### Implications for Practice

Research indicates that academic achievement is still a major concern of the United States and, that for the most part; past educational reform efforts to improve student achievement have not produced the intended results (Elmore, 2005; McNeil, 2000; Ravitch, 2000; Sarason, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Results from state intervention models of educational reform have varied in assisting schools to significantly increase student achievement, particularly in low-performing school districts (Bitter et al., 2005). A report commissioned by the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2001) concluded:

Reform is not a one-size fits all proposition: it is rather, highly context specific. Not all low-performing schools are low-performing for the same reasons or in the same ways; therefore, reform strategies must also be varied to fit the needs of the particular school. In addition, researchers agree that reform only works if those most involved in it (teachers, school staff, school leaders, parents, and students) buy into it. (p. 29)

Hence, the purpose of this study was not to provide a recipe for school reform in low-performing schools but to explore the relationship between a state collaborative intervention strategy and student achievement in two initially low-performing schools which eventually made AYP within a specific context. The following implications for practice are shared within the limitations of the data collected for these two specific schools:

1. The state in developing policies and practices to support low-performing schools, should examine research-based tools and practices for creating their own tools for gathering data from the school. Using the effective schools research as a basis for the CAPA Summary Report enabled teachers to be immersed in research-based recommendations and practices rather than spend time creating programs without a substantial track record for school improvement. In addition, since the data stemmed from onsite interviews and observations, it was context specific. Sharing the findings within a structure which promotes collaboration between the state team and the school's team invited trust and buy-in. The principals

in this study agreed that the CAPA Summary Report was central to their reform efforts and most teachers were able to implement the recommendations accordingly.

2. The schools in this study respected the state's CAPA team for the expertise they held. West and Peterson (2003), assert that implementing NCLB at the school level is highly dependent upon the strategies the state supports. As representatives of the state, it was important that the CAPA team members be well trained in their specific content area as well as in strategies for working as a collaborative group. Training in collaboration for teachers and administrators would add value to this experience enabling the groups to work effectively together by knowing the various stages of collaboration and their role in the collaborative process. Reeves (2003) and Walker (2004) indicate that states have limited capacity to support the professional development of school staff and therefore this serves as a challenge to developing collaborative efforts with and within schools and districts. Hence, an allowance for time would need to be created. Both principals in this study supported site-based professional development and provided time during the day for teachers to meet. Coaches, lead teacher and in some cases, the principal led professional development sessions. Mrs. A. created time for professional development by arranging each grade level cohort to have the same planning period at least one day a week. In addition, she conducted most managerial leadership tasks through email and used designated staff meeting times to

focus on teaching and learning which included reviewing data or looking at student work. Mr. B. had common planning periods for each grade level as well. He was also able to hire two additional teachers who substituted, when needed, for teachers who were working on the pacing guides.

3. Principals working as instructional leaders valued the feedback from the CAPA team and supported the recommendations of the CAPA Summary Report. A state deciding to use a technical assistance team like CAPA to assist low-performing schools will need to be clear about the role of the principal in leading educational reforms.
4. Teachers in low-performing schools need structures and consistent site-based opportunities to build their content and pedagogical knowledge. Given structures and opportunities teachers recognize the link between their practices and student achievement which leads to increased teacher responsibility and accountability.

### Implications for Future Research

The CAPA Scholastic Audit, as based on the effective schools research, includes three categories of standards. For the purpose of this study, and to keep the data from becoming too unwieldy only data involving the academic performance standards were reviewed. To extend the research on state collaborative intervention strategies other standards, such as those for learning environments and leadership should be explored.

Collaboration is a social process and as such there is much to be gleaned from observations. It is suggested that future research include observations of staff meetings, grade level meetings and meetings between the CAPA Review Team and the school's CAPA Leadership Team. This would provide multiple opportunities for the researcher to use the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric to gather data in a continuous manner to determine how the groups moved through the various stages of collaboration. An analysis of the various stages of collaboration of low-performing schools as they evolve toward intended goals as compared to high-performing schools would add to the existing body of research on effective strategies for low-performing schools. This future research would have the potential to influence the content of professional development for low-performing schools and state supportive teams in order to build instructional capacity.

The researcher would also recommend interviewing members of the state's CAPA Team or using them as a focus group to collect additional information. Their perspective on the CAPA process as a state intervention strategy would be valued because they work with several different school teams and may be able to provide insight on other variables that impact their work with schools.

A final recommendation must address the sustainability of efforts in achieving academic goals in low-performing schools. Often the road to increased academic achievement is not a linear one (Elmore, 2004) and the seemingly pendulum swing of educational practices that have occurred in our country to

close the achievement gap can leave educators in challenging schools discouraged and disenfranchised. Longitudinal studies are needed in the area of state collaboration as an intervention strategy for low-performing schools. These studies would provide a perspective on how the practices and processes for school improvement from a collaborative intervention effort in initially low-performing schools become institutionalized and, therefore, self-sustaining.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
Invitation Letter to Participate

October 23, 2007

Dear Teacher/Administrator:

My name is Lillie Sipp and I am a doctoral candidate at Indiana University in Pennsylvania conducting research on the use of the CAPA process to improve student achievement. Your school has participated in the CAPA process and made AYP this past year. Due to your success in meeting AYP, I would like to invite you to participate in my study. The title of the study is *Meeting the Challenge of No Child Left Behind: Implementation of a Statewide Collaborative Intervention Plan in Two Urban Schools*. The purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of the school factors related to selecting, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the reform recommendations developed as a result of the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement procedure. It is hoped that this research will assist other schools and districts in decision-making regarding interventions for school improvement.

I offer the following information in the hopes that it will help you to decide to participate. As a part of this study, teachers in grades 3, 4 and 5 will be asked to complete a questionnaire and to participate in a focus group. I will ask the group to respond to ten questions about the CAPA process; implementation of the team's recommendations and the relationship between the CAPA process and student achievement. The questions will be distributed to the participants at least a week before the scheduled discussion. We will meet during a mutually agreed upon time at the school. The focus group discussion should take no more than forty-five minutes. All responses will be kept confidential and will be assigned pseudonyms. All transcripts of the discussion and completed questionnaires will be secured in a locked file cabined in my home for at least three years as required by the federal government.

I hope you are willing to participate in this important study. If so, please sign the attached statement on the next page. Take the extra unsigned copy with you. Your return of this letter implies consent. An executive summary of the findings from this study will be made available to you upon request. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at the phone number or e-mail address on the next page. I thank you, and again your cooperation is greatly appreciated. If you choose not to participate, simply return this letter, unsigned, and no questions will be asked. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lillie Sipp, Principal Investigator

APPENDIX B  
Informed Consent Form

Lillie Sipp, Principal Investigator  
Home: (XXX) XXXXXXXX  
Email-XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dr. Mary R. Jalongo, Co-Investigator  
Indiana University of PA  
Department of Professional Studies  
122 Davis Hall  
Indiana, PA 15705  
(724) 357-3928

**This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).**

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT):

Signature:

Date:

Phone number or location where you can be reached:

Best days and times to reach you:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX C  
Request to Conduct Study



October 8, 2007

Dr. XXXXX  
Superintendent of Schools  
XXXXXX  
XXXXXX

Dear Dr. XXXXX,

I am presently a supervisor on special assignment for the Plainfield Public Schools and a doctoral student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am extremely interested in doing a study for my dissertation on the implementation of the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) recommendations for improving student achievement in Abbott Districts. The title of my dissertation is *"Meeting the Challenge of No Child Left Behind: Implementation of a Statewide Collaborative Intervention Plan in two Urban Elementary Schools."* Specifically, I would like to highlight the procedures schools used to prioritize the CAPA recommendations and their perceptions regarding the successful implementation of the recommendations. My goal is to provide additional research in this area for schools to replicate. Following are my research questions:

1. What processes were used to prioritize the CAPA recommendations?
2. Which recommendations had the highest perception by teachers as being fully implemented prior to April 2007?
3. Which recommendations had the lowest perception by teachers as being fully implemented prior to April 2007?
4. Which recommendations did teachers perceive as having the greatest impact on student achievement?
5. How did schools develop common norms, beliefs and expectations relative to the recommendations?
6. How did schools increase instructional capacity relative to the recommendations?

In reviewing the data for specific schools, I noted that school Number 20 made AYP in the 2005-2006 school year; therefore, I am requesting permission to use it as one of the schools in my study. As such, I am requesting permission to briefly interview the principal, teachers in grades 3, 4 and 5 and the literacy supervisor at their convenience. Please note that all interviews will be voluntary and all information will be recorded anonymously. A copy of the final research document will be made available to the district.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this request. I am excited regarding the potential this study has to assist other schools in improving student achievement. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lillie Sipp

## APPENDIX D

### Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement Questionnaire

#### Administrators

# Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement Questionnaire

## Administrators

*This written questionnaire is part of a case study that will provide insight into the relationship between the CAPA initiative and increased student achievement. This is a voluntary study and any identifying sources of information will be kept confidential. Fictitious names and locations will be used in the dissertation. If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to call me at 412 371 6460. Thank you for your willingness to share your expertise.*

### Respondent Background

Years of experience as a principal in this state \_\_\_\_

Years as principal of this school \_\_\_\_

1. To what extent were you involved in determining which CAPA recommendations to implement for year 1 and 2?
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. Quite a bit
  - d. Extensively
  
2. How well were teachers prepared to implement Year 1 CAPA recommendations related to the implementation of a *curriculum linked to local and state standards*?
  - a. Not adequately prepared
  - b. Somewhat prepared
  - c. Fairly well prepared
  - d. Very well prepared

3. How well were teachers prepared to implement Year 1 CAPA recommendation related to *multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to monitor and modify instruction*?
  - a. Not adequately prepared
  - b. Somewhat prepared
  - c. Fairly well prepared
  - d. Very well prepared
4. How well were teachers prepared to implement Year 1 CAPA recommendations related to *research-based practices to improve student achievement*?
  - a. Not adequately prepared
  - b. Somewhat prepared
  - c. Fairly well prepared
  - d. Very well prepared
5. I'm interested in understanding the essential elements in your school's academic growth. I understand that there may have been many likely factors. However, if you had to limit it to three, what would you list as the three most important factors that contributed to your school's progress over the last three years?
  - (1)
  - (2)
  - (3)

Of the three factors listed above, which was the most important to the school's growth and why?

6. Over the past two school years (2005-2006/ 2006-2007), in what areas have the majority of the educators in your school received professional development? In Column A, check all that apply; in Column B, check the 4 areas that received the most emphasis. For those 4 areas, in Column C, estimate the number of professional development hours spent in each area.

	A. Area of Professional Development (Check all that apply)	B. Primary areas of emphasis (Check 4)	C. Estimated number of professional development hours spent in 4 areas checked in Column B
Reading/language arts instruction			
Instructional strategies for low-achieving, limited-English-proficient, special education, and/or migrant students			
Ensuring that curriculum and instruction are consistent with state and/or district <i>standards</i>			
Ensuring that curriculum and instruction are consistent with state and/or district <i>assessments</i>			
Using multiple assessment and evaluation strategies			
Monitoring individual student progress toward learning goals			
Analyzing and interpreting reports of student achievement data to modify instruction			
Studying student work			
Working collaboratively to develop curriculum and assessments			
Other _____			

7. In your experience, of the following CAPA recommendations, which has had the greatest impact on student achievement? Rank the following CAPA recommendations 1 through 5 with 5 representing the greatest impact.
- a. \_\_\_\_aligning the district curriculum with state standards and assessments
  - b. \_\_\_\_ensuring that the district curriculum is effectively taught to all students
  - c. \_\_\_\_using teacher-designed assessments to enhance instruction
  - d. \_\_\_\_implementing a process for teachers to regularly discuss standards, curriculum and student work
  - e. \_\_\_\_using effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences

Please explain why you selected number 5.

8. I'm interested in learning more about CAPA's influence on your school's improved academic status. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 meaning not important, and 5 meaning most important, how important was the CAPA initiative to your school making AYP? \_\_\_\_\_ Please explain.

9. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the CAPA initiative and student achievement?

## APPENDIX E

### Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement Questionnaire

#### Teachers

## Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement Questionnaire

### Teachers

*This written questionnaire is part of a case study that will provide insight into the relationship between the CAPA initiative and increased student achievement. This is a voluntary study and any identifying sources of information will be kept confidential. Fictitious names and locations will be used in the dissertation. The results of this study will be helpful to fellow practitioners concerned about making AYP. If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to call me at 412 371 6460. Thank you for your willingness to share your expertise.*

### Respondent Background

Years of teaching experience\_\_\_\_\_

Years of teaching experience in this school\_\_\_\_\_

1. To what extent were you involved in determining which CAPA recommendations to implement for year 1 and 2?
  - A. Not at all
  - B. Somewhat
  - C. Quite a bit
  - D. Extensively
  
2. How well were you prepared to implement Year 1 CAPA recommendations related to the implementation of a *curriculum* linked to local and state standards?
  - A. Not adequately prepared
  - B. Somewhat prepared
  - C. Fairly well prepared
  - D. Very well prepared
  
3. How well were you prepared to implement Year 1 CAPA recommendation related to *multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to monitor and modify instruction*?
  - A. Not adequately prepared
  - B. Somewhat prepared
  - C. Fairly well prepared
  - D. Very well prepared



4. How well were you prepared to implement *Year 1 CAPA recommendations related to research-based practices to improve student achievement*?
- A. Not adequately prepared
  - B. Somewhat prepared
  - C. Fairly well prepared
  - D. Very well prepared
5. I'm interested in understanding the essential elements in your school making AYP. I understand that there may have been many likely factors. However, if you had to limit it to three, what would you list as the three most important factors that contributed to your school's academic progress over the last three years?
- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

Of the three factors listed above, which was the most important to the school making AYP and why?

6. Over the past two school years (2005-2006/ 2006-2007), what areas have the majority of the educators in your school received professional development? In Column A, check all that apply; in Column B, check the 4 areas that received the most emphasis. For those 4 areas, in Column C, estimate the number of professional development hours spent in each area.

	Area of Professional Development (Check all that apply)	B. Primary areas of emphasis (Check 4)	C. Estimated number of professional development hours spent in areas checked in Column B
Reading/language arts instruction			
Instructional strategies for low-achieving, limited-English-proficient, special education, and/or migrant students			
Ensuring that curriculum and instruction are consistent with state and/or district <i>standards</i>			
Ensuring that curriculum and instruction are consistent with state and/or district <i>assessments</i>			
Using multiple assessment and evaluation strategies			
Monitoring individual student progress toward learning goals			
Analyzing and interpreting reports of student achievement data to modify instruction			
Studying student work			
Working collaboratively to develop curriculum and assessments			
Using differentiated instruction to support various learning styles and multiple intelligences			
Other_____			

7. In your experience, of the following CAPA recommendations, which has had the greatest impact on student achievement? Rank the following recommendations 1 through 5 with 5 representing the greatest impact.
- a. \_\_\_\_aligning the district curriculum with state standards and assessments
  - b. \_\_\_\_ensuring that the district curriculum is effectively taught to all students
  - c. \_\_\_\_using teacher-designed assessments to enhance instruction
  - d. \_\_\_\_implementing a process for teachers to regularly discuss standards, curriculum and student work
  - e. \_\_\_\_using effective and varied instructional strategies to accommodate various learning styles and multiple intelligences

Please explain why you selected number 5.

8. I'm interested in learning more about CAPA's influence on your school's academic achievement. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 meaning not important, and 5 meaning most important, how important was the CAPA initiative to your school's academic growth? \_\_\_\_\_  
Please explain.

9. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the CAPA initiative and student achievement?

APPENDIX F  
Interview Questions

## Interview Questions

*This is a voluntary study. All information will be kept confidential. It will not be shared with administrators. Information will be analyzed and reported using fictitious names. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call me at 412 371 6460. Thank you for your willingness to share your expertise.*

### **GENERAL**

1. What increased as an outcome of the school's collaborative involvement with the state's CAPA team?
  - a. Access to financial/human resources
  - b. Efficient use of resources
  - c. Teacher content and pedagogical knowledge
  - d. Professionalism
  - e. Other

### **CAPA**

#### **Process**

2. Which role group had the most influence in determining which CAPA recommendations would be addressed in year 1? Year 2?
3. In terms of the school, which component of the CAPA process (teacher survey, audit, classroom observations, interviews, review of the summary report, prioritizing, benchmarking) was most beneficial in assisting your school to move forward?
4. What recommendations would you make regarding the CAPA process for new schools?

#### **Academic Performance Standards/Recommendations**

5. In what ways did the CAPA recommendations guide the school's work last year?
6. Describe the professional development held for teachers as a result of the CAPA recommendations.
7. Which CAPA recommendations had the greatest impact on student results for the 05-06 SY and the 06-07 SY?

### **COLLABORATION\***

8. According to Gajda (2004) collaboration is composed of 5 stages with unifying being the highest level of collaboration. Using the SAFAR rubric, in terms of the school's work with the CAPA team how would you characterize the level of integration?
  - a. Networking
  - b. Cooperating
  - c. Partnering
  - d. Merging
  - e. Unifying
9. Collaboration can be described as having four components: 1) purpose 2) strategies and tasks; 3) leadership and decision-making, and 4) interpersonal

and communication. In which area do you think the school has grown the most in terms of collaborating with the CAPA team?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the CAPA initiative and the role of collaboration in increasing student achievement?

Level of Integration	Purpose	Strategies and Tasks	Leadership and Decision-Making	Interpersonal and Communication
Networking	Create a web of communication	Loose or no structure	Non-hierarchical	Very little interpersonal conflict
1	Identify and create a base of support	Flexible, roles not-defined	Flexible	Communication among all members infrequent or absent
	Explore interests	Few if any defined tasks	Minimal or no group decision making	
Cooperating	Work together to ensure tasks are done	Member links are advisory	Non-hierarchical, decisions tend to be low stakes	Some degree of personal commitment and investment
2	Leverage or raise money	Minimal structure	Facilitative leaders, usually voluntary	Minimal interpersonal conflict
	Identify mutual needs, but maintain separate identities	Some strategies and tasks identified	Several people form "go-to" hub	Communication among members clear, but may be informal
Partnering	Share resources to address common issues	Strategies and tasks are developed and maintained	Autonomous leadership	Some interpersonal conflict
3	Organizations remain autonomous but support something new	Central body of people	Alliance members share equally in the decision making	Communication system and formal information channels developed
	To reach mutual goals together	Central body of people have specific tasks	Decision making mechanism are in place	Evidence of problem solving and productivity
Merging	Merge resources to create or support something new	Formal structure to support strategies and tasks is apparent	Strong, visible leadership	High degree of commitment and investment
4	Extract money from existing systems/members	Specific and complex strategies and tasks identified	Sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities	Possibility of interpersonal conflict high
	Commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long-term outcomes	Committees and sub-committees formed	Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	Communication is clear, frequent and prioritized
		High		degree of problem solving and productivity
Unifying	Unification or acquisition to form a single structure	Highly formal, legally complex	Central, typically hierarchical leadership	Possibility of interpersonal conflict very high
5	Relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving organization	Permanent re-organization of strategies and tasks	Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	Communication is clear, frequent, prioritized, formal and informal

Figure 3. Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR).

leadership/decision-making, and inter-personal and communication characteristics that are described extensively in the literature on strategic alliance development. The Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric is an assessment tool that can be utilized by program evaluators to evaluate collaboration and can be used in each stage of alliance development as part of a comprehensive evaluation plan that includes the assessment of collaboration over time. This SAFAR has been used extensively within a four-step evaluation process to gauge the relative health of Safe Schools/Health Students alliances that seek to capitalize on the power of collaboration. These four steps are now described.

APPENDIX G  
Alignment Matrix



### Alignment Matrix

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Appendix C District Letter</b>	<b>Appendices G and H Questionnaire</b>	<b>Appendix I Interview</b>
Question 1. What reported procedures were used to prioritize the intervention recommendations included in the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) Summary Report?	1	1,5	2,3,4,8,9,10
Question 2. What reported specific strategies were used to implement the prioritized intervention recommendations from the CAPA Summary Report during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years?	2,3,4,6	2,3,4,5,6,7	1,3,5,6,7
Question 3. In what reported ways did the school's participation in the CAPA intervention process affect student achievement?	2,3,4,5,6	1,3,4,5,6,7	1,2,3,4,5,6
Question 4. What common factors exist across the two initially low-performing schools which seem to contribute to achieving AYP?	1,2,3,4,5,6	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10

## APPENDIX H

### Permission to Use Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric

## Permission to Use Strategic Alliance Rubric

Subj: **Re: Permission to Use**  
Date: 2/22/2008 8:32:14 AM Eastern Standard Time  
From: [rebecca.gajda@educ.umass.edu](mailto:rebecca.gajda@educ.umass.edu)  
To: [lsipp@aol.com](mailto:lsipp@aol.com)

Yes, you have my permission. - Rebecca Gajda

~~~~~  
Rebecca Gajda, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Educational Policy, Research, and Administration  
University of Massachusetts  
259 Hills South, 111 Infirmary Way  
Amherst, MA 01003  
(413)545-1751  
[Rebecca.Gajda@educ.umass.edu](mailto:Rebecca.Gajda@educ.umass.edu)

Quoting [lsipp@aol.com](mailto:lsipp@aol.com):

>  
> Dr. Gajda,  
>  
> Upon your recommendation, I read your AJE article, "Utilizing Collaboration  
> Theory to Evaluate Strategic Alliances and agree the SAFAR is more connected  
> to the work of the DOE and the intervention process used for low performing  
> schools which I am studying for my dissertation. Therefore, I am requesting  
> your permission to adapt the SAFAR to use in a questionnaire I design for  
> teachers in principals who are participating in my study. Please be assured  
> that I will cite your work appropriately in my dissertation and share a copy  
> of the proposal once it is defended. As always, I appreciate your  
> consideration as I attempt to extend my knowledge around the concept of  
> interorganizational collaboration.  
>  
> Sincerely,  
> Lillie Sipp  
>  
>  
> -----Original Message-----  
> From: Rebecca Gajda <[rebecca.gajda@educ.umass.edu](mailto:rebecca.gajda@educ.umass.edu)>  
> To: [lsipp@aol.com](mailto:lsipp@aol.com)  
> Cc: Chris Koliba <[ckoliba@uvm.edu](mailto:ckoliba@uvm.edu)>  
> Sent: Wed, 20 Feb 2008 3:59 pm  
> Subject: Re: Permission to Use  
>  
>  
>  
>  
>  
> Lillie,  
>  
> Dr. Koliba forwarded your message to me. Yes, you have my permission to use  
> the  
> figures from the article. Please be sure to appropriately cite the original

## APPENDIX I

### Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric

| Level of Integration | Purpose                                                                      | Strategies and Tasks                                         | Leadership and Decision-Making                                     | Interpersonal and Communication                                    |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Networking           | Create a web of communication                                                | Loose or no structure                                        | Non-hierarchical                                                   | Very little interpersonal conflict                                 |
| 1                    | Identify and create a base of support                                        | Flexible, roles not-defined                                  | Flexible                                                           | Communication among all members infrequent or absent               |
|                      | Explore interests                                                            | Few if any defined tasks                                     | Minimal or no group decision making                                |                                                                    |
| Cooperating          | Work together to ensure tasks are done                                       | Member links are advisory                                    | Non-hierarchical, decisions tend to be low stakes                  | Some degree of personal commitment and investment                  |
| 2                    | Leverage or raise money                                                      | Minimal structure                                            | Facilitative leaders, usually voluntary                            | Minimal interpersonal conflict                                     |
|                      | Identify mutual needs, but maintain separate identities                      | Some strategies and tasks identified                         | Several people form "go-to" hub                                    | Communication among members clear, but may be informal             |
| Partnering           | Share resources to address common issues                                     | Strategies and tasks are developed and maintained            | Autonomous leadership                                              | Some interpersonal conflict                                        |
| 3                    | Organizations remain autonomous but support something new                    | Central body of people                                       | Alliance members share equally in the decision making              | Communication system and formal information channels developed     |
|                      | To reach mutual goals together                                               | Central body of people have specific tasks                   | Decision making mechanism are in place                             | Evidence of problem solving and productivity                       |
| Merging              | Merge resources to create or support something new                           | Formal structure to support strategies and tasks is apparent | Strong, visible leadership                                         | High degree of commitment and investment                           |
| 4                    | Extract money from existing systems/members                                  | Specific and complex strategies and tasks identified         | Sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities               | Possibility of interpersonal conflict high                         |
|                      | Commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long-term outcomes | Committees and sub-committees formed                         | Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths | Communication is clear, frequent and prioritized                   |
|                      |                                                                              | High                                                         |                                                                    | degree of problem solving and productivity                         |
| Unifying             | Unification or acquisition to form a single structure                        | Highly formal, legally complex                               | Central, typically hierarchical leadership                         | Possibility of interpersonal conflict very high                    |
| 5                    | Relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving organization                 | Permanent re-organization of strategies and tasks            | Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths | Communication is clear, frequent, prioritized, formal and informal |

Figure 3. Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR).

leadership/decision-making, and inter-personal and communication characteristics that are described extensively in the literature on strategic alliance development. The Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric is an assessment tool that can be utilized by program evaluators to evaluate collaboration and can be used in each stage of alliance development as part of a comprehensive evaluation plan that includes the assessment of collaboration over time. This SAFAR has been used extensively within a four-step evaluation process to gauge the relative health of Safe Schools/Health Students alliances that seek to capitalize on the power of collaboration. These four steps are now described.