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Closing the Achievement Gap: The Use and Effectiveness of Research-Based Practices in Middle Schools

Whitney M. Wesley
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: THE USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF
RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICES IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Whitney M. Wesley

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
The School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Whitney M. Wesley

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

____ June 21, 2011 _____

____ Signature on File _____
Sue A. Rieg, Ed.D.
Professor of Education, Advisor

____ June 21, 2011 _____

____ Signature on File _____
George R. Bieger, Ph.D
Professor of Education

____ June 21, 2011 _____

____ Signature on File _____
Kelli R. Paquette, Ed.D.
Professor of Education

ACCEPTED

____ Signature on File _____
Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
The School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Closing the Achievement Gap: The Use and Effectiveness of Research-Based Practices in Middle Schools

Author: Whitney M. Wesley

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Sue A. Rieg

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. George R. Bieger
Dr. Kelli R. Paquette

The purpose of this study was to determine the use and effectiveness of research-based practices implemented in middle grades throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that are aimed at increasing the academic achievement of students who are economically disadvantaged and closing the achievement gap for this subgroup population.

A total of 13 schools participated in the study. The participating schools received Accountability Block Grant funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Education under the category of Improving the Academic Performance of Student Subgroups. Data collected for this study included the principals' responses to a modified version of the Inventory of School Effectiveness and their school's scores on the 8th grade PSSA mathematics and reading examinations from 2005 through 2010.

Results of the data analysis show that the participating schools significantly outperformed the state average in both mathematics and reading on the 8th grade PSSA examinations and suggest that multiple research-based practices were related to increased academic achievement among students who are economically disadvantaged. Although additional research is needed to make broad generalizations, the results of this study suggest that the Accountability Block Grant funding was instrumental in closing the achievement gap of students who are economically disadvantaged.