

2015

# Expectations of Teachers, Administrators, and Parents for the Academic Achievement of Students

Tracy Shells  
*Walden University*

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2015

Abstract

Expectations of Teachers, Administrators, and Parents for the

Academic Achievement of Students

by

Tracy Shells

MA, Alcorn State University, 2003

BS, Alcorn State University, 1991

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

In recent years, states in the United States have developed assessment testing to help ensure that schools meet academic standards. This study investigated an educational problem of low student academic achievement and low scores on a state test in a middle school in the southeastern United States. It specifically queried whether expectations for student achievement had a positive influence on students' academic success. The research questions were designed to investigate parents, teachers, and administrators' expectations for the academic achievement of students. The conceptual framework guiding this study used the ecological model of human development, which postulates that personal development is influenced by proximal processes. Key findings focused on expectations, academic performance, and ways to help students meet academic standards. This information was used to create a parent-teacher professional development seminar, which presented strategies to urge academic achievement and encourage student engagement with content. The seminar also provided parents and teachers with information about the impact that their expectations may have on students. Recommendations for improvement include careful review of current critical inquiry strategies that are used to increase student engagement and academic achievement. Implications for social change include using the professional development project and other appropriate opportunities with parents and educators to inform them about the importance of their role and the expectations they have for student academic achievement.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### Introduction

Philosophers have debated how generations of parents have passed down their ideals, attitudes, and goals over the centuries. For example, Locke (1689) presumed that parents' morals and beliefs can be projected onto children because children's beliefs are undeveloped waiting to be filled with knowledge. It is believed that trust, values, and even false consensus are persistent across generations. These characteristics are tracked back to the beliefs parents transmitted onto their children during their upbringing (Butler, Giuliano, & Guiso, 2012). Parents attempt to instill ideals, attitudes, and goals in their children through their interactive socialization (Ladd & Pettit, 2002). The previously mentioned authors have supported the idea that parents' beliefs and values are passed down and become those of the children. Yet, educational policy initiatives, such as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2001), are holding everyone connected to the education of students answerable for their academic success. However, minimal evidence is recorded regarding elementary school students' academic achievement as it relates to teacher, school administrator, and parent influences. Therefore, the main purpose of the current project study was to investigate teacher, school administrator, and parent expectations for student academic achievement.

Positive behaviors and academic successes are strongly associated with high parental expectations (Anthony & Stone, 2010). According to Bowen, Hopson, Rose, and Glennie (2012), students whose mothers' expectations for academic achievement are high report lower dropout rates. These authors posited that students advance in subjects

whenever parents expect high performance. Likewise, children have greater beliefs in their own abilities in math when encouraged by their parents (Turner, Steward, & Lapan, 2004). Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) also argued that children's school performance was indirectly influenced by parental expectations.

Over time, underperforming students become unmotivated and drop out of school. According to the Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER, 2007), the State of Mississippi's Office of Dropout Prevention was directed to increase Mississippi's graduation rate from 60.8% during the 2005-2006 school year to 85% by the 2018-2019 school year. The consequences of dropping out of school have a profound effect on society. Compared to high school graduates, in Mississippi, dropouts' unemployment rate is 70% higher. Some other costs for high dropout rates are incarceration, low paying jobs, and health issues (PEER, 2007).

The combination of parental expectations, student achievement, and dropout issues has personal as well as societal ramifications. Empirical evidence suggests that parental socio-economic status and educational level play a direct role in student achievement (Neuenschwander, Vida, Garrett, & Eccles, 2007). Parents who provide their children with adequate resources give their children an advantage over their peers whose parents are not financially able to provide those additional amenities (Phillipson, 2010). Moreover, more highly educated parents tend to expect their children to achieve a similar level of educational attainment (Phillipson, 2010). In other words, parents' high expectations may encourage their children to perform at higher standards.

### **Definition of the Problem**

The local problem that motivated this study was a decline in student achievement in an urban middle school. Students at this school demonstrated poor student achievement on the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT during the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years (SY). According to the state accountability model, schools are required to achieve a predefined quality of distribution index (QDI) score showing each school district's performance. Despite some evidence of growth, the research site did not meet those required scores; the school was labeled an at-risk school, then a low-performing school, and finally an academic watch school. The educational problem that anchors this investigation is low student academic achievement in an urban Mississippi Title I intermediate school. The local setting for this research, Victoria Middle School, a pseudonym, has performed poorly on the state test. In 2011-2012, the Mississippi Curriculum Test, 2nd Edition (MCT2) was used for evaluating the students in the subjects of language, arts, and math for 3rd through 8th grade. The MCT2 results for the 2011-2012 school year alone clearly showed that student achievement was low at this site. The percentage of 4th graders scoring proficient or higher in language arts was 32%, which was significantly below 57% (a statewide average). Similarly, only 28% of 5th graders at this school achieved a proficient score, compared to 55% for the state, and 6th graders scored 44% compared to the statewide average of 58%. In math, the number of fourth graders scoring proficient or higher was 40%, compared to 58% statewide; only 37% (vs. 62% statewide) fifth graders achieved this score, and 45% (vs. 63%) of the 6th graders at the school (Mississippi Department of Education, 2014). Even though between

2009 and 2012 there was an increase in the standardized assessment scores, the number of students rated “proficient” or above in Reading/Language Arts and Math was not sufficient enough to meet the federal requirements for Annual Measureable Objectives (AMO). Specifically, Victoria Middle School did not meet the expected annual yearly growth rate during the 2008-2009 SY in the Black, Economically Disadvantaged, White, and Students with Disabilities subgroups; in 2009-2010 SY, it failed to do so in the categories of Blacks and Economically Disadvantaged subgroups; in 2010-2011 SY, all subgroups except the White subgroup failed to meet the required standard; and in 2011-2012 SY, the target was not met in the Students with Disabilities Subgroup.

School personnel, parents, and students must work wholeheartedly to improve student academic achievement. Several programs and services are presently offered by both the district and school to address the issue of low academic achievement. At the time of the study, the chosen school offered several opportunities for tutoring at the elementary level. Some tutoring programs were offered during the school day, while other opportunities were provided after school. For example, during the school day, the program America Reads Mississippi is provided by AmeriCorps tutors. Tutoring is also available during some homeroom periods and teacher-off periods. As a part of trying to improve student academic achievement, the school provides quarterly Parent-Teacher-Organization (PTO) meetings, monthly newsletters, and weekly correspondence of students’ grades, behaviors, upcoming events, and expectations.

Low student motivation and academics are generally believed to be the result of low parental expectations. A decline in motivation and academics are believed to be a

direct result of parents not emphasizing the importance of education (Minghua, 2012). Minghua (2012) reported that parental demographics such as socio-economic status is a great predictor of the educational expectations they will have for their children, and that low expectations were more common among parents in the bottom social classes, attributing this link to the living conditions and the level of education. Minghua also reported that parents from lower socioeconomic status tended to not have an expectation for their children to exceed beyond parents in their education journey. Benner and Mistry (2007) also demonstrated that student expectations were directly influenced by their parents' attitudes towards education. Similarly, student educational attainment and achievement test scores were also shown to be a direct result of parental expectations (Neuenschwander et al., 2007). The previously mentioned researchers have shown a link between parental expectations and attitudes which influence student motivations concerning their successes. Regardless of the services and programs that are provided, if students do not have the desire to succeed, as an educator.

### **Rationale**

#### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

The local problem that motivated this case study was a drastic decline in student achievement within Victoria Middle School which is located in a school district in Mississippi. In order to address the decline in student achievement, it is important to have knowledge of the parents' beliefs and attitudes. Research conducted by Boocock (1972) more than four decades ago examined the impact of parental expectations for their children. Boocock reported that high academic achievement resulted from parents setting

goals and expectations for their children, starting with pre-school years. In a more recent study, Grace, Jethro, and Aina (2012) found that income and social status were not the main predictors of student achievement, as their home environment that reassures learning and expresses high expectations for future job success is much more influential. Parental expectations are believed to be transmitted directly through supporting behaviors such as home environments that create a climate for academic pursuits.

According to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), student academic performance declined and student academic growth status had not been fulfilled in Victoria Middle School for the 2008-2011 period. The NCLB requires that schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in Reading/Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and an area referred to as the “Other Academic Indicator.” At this site, adequate yearly progress has not been met since the 2007-2008 school year in either subject area.

Students’ scores on standardized tests are used by the Mississippi Department of Education to classify schools into different accountability statuses. As a result of the MCT2 scores for 2008-2011 school years, the accountability status of the school that served as a study site was identified as at risk of failing or a “D” school. This classification is taken from the MDE’s quality of distribution index (QDI). According to the MDE (2014), the QDI cut points are applied as follows: 200 – 300 (A), 166- 199 (B), 133- 165 (C), 100- 132 (D) and 0- 99 (F). The QDI scores for Victoria Middle School are 108, 112, and 100 for 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010- 2011 school years, respectively. The QDI is one of three components that the MDE uses to rate each school

district as a part of the new accountability system. As a result of the QDI scores for the proposed research site, the growth goal had not been met for the prior three years.

According to the accountability criteria of the Mississippi Department of Education, academic achievement within the school that served as the research site is inadequate. Title I public elementary or secondary schools must enter into Program Improvement (PI) if accountability is not met for two consecutive years (MDE, 2014). If the school fails to improve, other requirements will be placed upon the school and it is likely that the administration as well as teachers will be replaced. If the Mississippi Department of Education mandates sanctions on the school, the community will inevitably be affected because parents may lose confidence in the school and move their children to other schools within the district, leading to school closure.

Decreases in academic performance also affect students' future employment. Often, less-educated students do not have high-paying jobs, which have a strong potential to cause hardships and lead to poverty. If students do not want to obtain a quality education, they will not be prepared for the workplace and will not have the skills or knowledge necessary for success (Dalton, Glennie, & Ingels, 2009). Marzano's (2003) research showed that student motivation and academics were generally influenced by low or high parent expectations of their children's academic performance. These factors collectively led me to investigate local problem of low student motivation and academic achievement.



### **Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature**

Student academic achievement dramatically declined at the school used in this study, making it important that the underlying causes, including potentially the involvement of parents, be investigated. A significant factor contributing to inadequate academic achievement and described in the literature is low student motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000); low student motivation can eventually lead to a student dropping out of school. Some of the most common related issues that plague American high schools are low reading levels, math deficiencies, high dropout rates, and a lack of effective teachers (Fleischman, 2009). The Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation Expenditure Review (2012) which is an entity of the Mississippi state legislature reported that the Legislature appoint the Office of Dropout Prevention to collaborate with Mississippi's public school districts to improve the graduation rate by 24.2% within fourteen years. This goal was specifically set to boost the graduation rate from 60.8% in 2004-2005 to 85% by 2018-2019. The number of 8th-grade students that gained scores at or above the proficiency level was, however, higher in 2011 than in 2009. The score gap between fourth grade students whose family incomes were high and low widened from 2003 to 2011 in seven states, Mississippi was not included in this score gap. At grade eight, Black-White score gaps decreased from 1998 to 2011 in only one out of thirty-one participating states, Delaware. Similarly, Hispanic-White score gaps decreased from 1998 to 2011 in only two out of twenty-two participating states, California and Oregon.

According to the Mississippi Department of Education (2011), the school district that served as a research site had 64% of economically disadvantaged students scoring

below “proficient” in comparison to 51% of all students in the Mississippi area. In addition, based on data from MDE (2012), The Children First Annual Report 2011 indicated that graduation rate for Mississippi was 73.7% while the local district’s graduation rate was significantly lower at only 56.2%. Stated in the 2011 Annual Report, the overall dropout rates for the state and the district were 16.7% and 34.6%, respectively. These are clear indicators that there needs to be an increase in student academic achievement in the district, and the study site in particular. An increase in student academic achievement will lead to graduates that will obtain higher employment and earnings which mean that they will be less likely to draw on public money for health care and welfare. They will also be less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system.

The research site chosen for this project study has demonstrated presence of a significant problem with student academic achievement. Academic achievement has been strongly linked to parental expectations (Rubie-Davies, Irving, Widdowson, & Dixon, 2010). This suggests that parents must instill educational values within their children in order to see an increase in academic achievement. Parents’ perceptions of educational values often influence a child’s success (Bowen, Rose, Powers, & Glennie, 2008). Thus, the primary responsibility of encouraging learning rests with the parents.

#### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this research study was to investigate parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ expectations for student academic achievement. It is necessary to obtain knowledge of the standards and beliefs supported by teachers, administrators, and parents

about the ways student achievement can be increased. The results of this research may be used to help promote educational reform programs on the importance of educating parents and teachers of their role in students' school success. This, in turn, may increase student motivation and academic achievement.

### **Definitions**

The following terms and phrases are defined with the purpose of establishing knowledge of terminology used in this study:

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*: AYP is a measurement tool used to determine the academic performance of school districts and public schools (NCLB, 2010).

*Economically disadvantaged students*: These are students that come from low-income backgrounds (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

*Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2)*: The MCT2 is the revised statewide curriculum designed to assess competencies in language arts and mathematics. It measures how well students are comprehending skills outlined for each grade by the State of Mississippi (MDE Office of Research and Statistics, 2012).

*The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001*: The NCLB is an act of Congress aimed at closing educational gaps and raising achievement levels by establishing measurable goals and setting high standards (NCLB, 2001).

*The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*: NAEP is a national assessment of student knowledge in specific subject areas (NAEP, 2013).

*Parental expectation*: Parental expectations are the expectations parents have for the academic achievement of their children (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

*Parental educational attainment:* Educational attainment is the highest grade that parents complete in an educational system (U.S. Census Bureau Glossary, 2013).

*Quality of distribution index (QDI):* The QDI is a composite score that is used to assess or rank school district performance (MDE, 2009)

### **Significance**

The study aims to investigate teachers', administrators', and parents' expectations for student academic achievement. By understanding the impact of parent, teacher, and administrator expectations, student achievement may be enhanced by parents recognizing the positive effect of higher expectations (Arnold, 2004). It is important that parents recognize the potential of their expectations for affecting their child's educational attainment and understanding how this affects academic achievement. The research study is significant to this city and the community. The findings may lead to the development of programs and activities to inform parents and teachers on how their academic expectations affect their children.

Some governmental issues that are faced by any low-motivated and low-achieving school are welfare, dropout rates, crime, and employment. If schools do not succeed, community morale is often affected adversely. Teachers and administrators need to believe that they are building a significant foundation for the community. Educators want their community to flourish. They want to be responsible for an increase in graduation rates, higher performance levels, inspiring minds, engaging students, and increased attendance. These attributes contribute to an increase in high school graduation rates, which often leads to less poverty because a greater proportion of residents are

qualified and capable of entering the workforce. School personnel, parents, and students must work wholeheartedly to improve student academic achievement. This study is of value because its goal is to investigate an important problem that hampers student academic achievement.

### **Guiding Research Question**

As reported in the No Child Left Behind 2009 and 2010 report cards, the state accountability status for the proposed research site is *At risk of failing*. On the other hand, in 2011 and 2012, it was rated as *Academic Watch* and *Successful*, respectively. Given the low academic achievement at the current research site, it is worth exploring how parent and teacher expectations might contribute to student achievement. It has been noted by the Mississippi Department of Education that student achievement has declined. Even though there has been an increase in the district's state accountability level within the last two years, there is still evidence of low student accomplishment. Therefore, the study's purpose was to investigate student academic achievement expectations of teachers, administrators, and parents.

Extensive research has been conducted on how parent expectations affect student academic achievement. For example, Marzano (2003) reported that parental encouragement of high performance positively affected their children's academic process. Thus, Marzano suggested that parents obtain training from schools in order to enhance their ability to make their expectations known to their children. All stakeholders should take an active role in educating, motivating, and encouraging students. School counselors may act as influential starting points for the attainment of social capital, in

particular to the disadvantaged students, such minority students, those from low income backgrounds, and first generation college enrollees (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011). If parents and community members recognized the potential of higher expectations, student achievement could be improved (Arnold, 2004). It is important that parents recognize the potential of their expectations for affecting their children's academic achievement.

Despite the vast body of extant research on parent expectations and student achievement, studies concerning the effect of parent and teacher expectations on the academic achievement of children, and the expectations administrators have for teachers and students, are limited. More research in these areas is vital to comprehend the complexities of the effect parental, teacher, and administrator expectations have on student academic achievement. This case study investigated the expectations of teachers, administrators, and parents for children's academic achievement.

Study findings may help promote educational reform programs aiming to help identify students with low parental support. This, in turn, may improve student motivation, academic achievement, and parental awareness. Therefore the research questions guiding this study are:

- What are parents' expectations for the academic achievement of their children?
- What are teachers' expectations for student academic achievement?
- What are administrators' expectations for student academic achievement?

### **Review of the Literature**

The literature review is divided into seven subsections: (a) conceptual framework, (b) historical overview, (c) parental expectations, (d) parental socio-economic status/educational attainment, (e) teacher expectations, (f) administrator expectations, and (g) parent and student achievement in other countries. The research questions that guided this investigation should illuminate several themes related to the phenomenon of interest, namely the link between parental, teacher, and administrator expectations and student academic achievement.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that guided this study is the ecological theory of human development developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which refers to personal development as being influenced by proximal processes (Benner and Mistry, 2007). Benner defined proximal processes as interactions between the people and their immediate environments that raise the level of their development. Benner indicated that adult expectations influence children's expectation for themselves as well for their academic achievement. The proximal process can have a direct or indirect influence on an individual. Consequently, over time, as these interactions increase in complexity, they may be affected by additional contextual factors, such as the socioeconomic status (SES) and parents' educational level.

The ecological theory of human development defined four kinds of systems that shape development and describe how to behave in a given situation—the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem involves the immediate

environment, such as the family. The mesosystem is the interactions or connections between two aspects within the microsystem, such as home and school. On the other hand, the exosystem is an external force that indirectly affects a person, while the macrosystem is the larger cultural context (Ahuja, 2013). In order to understand how children's development and factors that lead to failure and success, one must understand how the four systems of development interact. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of development has provided an awareness of all the determinants that are associated with child development. It has also shown the connection between all of the factors and their impact on development. Through this model, one can see how lives are balanced within their environment (Ahuja, 2013).

#### **Historical Overview of Parent Expectation and Student Achievement**

The association of parental expectations and student achievement has been a concern for many years. Past research indicated that parental expectations could influence students' success (Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). The connection between parental expectations and student achievement is complex and involves many mediating factors (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992). Therefore, one can conclude that academic achievement is positively correlated with parental expectations (Boersma & Chapman, 1982). Research has indicated that children's desires for success are often dependent upon parental expectations (Christenson et al.).

Parental behaviors, such as contacting the schools and demonstrating positive reinforcement of school performance, do have a direct effect on students' academic performance (Seginer, 1983). According to Gigliotti and Brookover (1975), a child's



perception of high parental expectations correlates with achievement. Parental and self-expectations are highly correlated, according to Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, Meece, & Midley (1983). Parents' expectations for school success are seen as the most influential aspect of parental involvement and thus most closely tied to student achievement (Epstein, 2001).

Henderson and Mapp (2002) found that children that succeeded in school tended to have parents who valued learning and expressed high expectations. Children whose parents are actively and positively engaged in their education perform at a greater level than those whose parents are not (Epstein, 2001). According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), parents influence their children's education through three mechanisms of influence—modeling, reinforcement, and close- and open-ended instruction. A parent can model a pro-school attitude and behavior, and they can imply that school is important by their actions.

As a result of parental expectations, children tend to go to college (Hossler & Stage, 1992) and perform better in school (Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987). Parental expectations are also associated with better academic performance because they influence children's expectations (Patrikakou, 1996). Bornholt and Goodnow (1999) found that parent perceptions and children's self-perceptions were closely related because parental expectations contributed to the students' self-perceptions. Similarly, Visser (1987) found that parents could be encouraging of their children and have high expectations of their performance even when they were not competent themselves. Parental expectations have an effect on children whether that is large or small, positive or negative. In order to

understand how close of a relationship there is between parental expectations and achievement, one might become better aware of how parents communicate their expectations to their children (Christenson, 1992).

### **Parental Expectations for Student Academic Achievement**

Often, academic aspirations of schoolchildren are clearly linked to the beliefs of their parents. As a result, children aim to be like their parents and desire to be as knowledgeable as they are. Research from theorists, such as Flowers and Flowers (2008) and Palmer, Davis, and Hilton (2009) support this belief. According to the findings reproved by Flowers, parental expectations and involvement have an effect on reading accomplishments of high school students. The performance may be high or low depending on the parents' level of expectation. Palmer stated that family support and involvement promoted success among junior and senior male students in a Historically Black College and University.

Chen and Gregory (2009) found that children achieved higher grade point average and were more academically engaged when parents had high expectations. According to Rutchick (2009), parental expectations also influenced the children's expectations of themselves. The author noted that these parental educational expectations often had an influence on children's academic performance even five years later.

Student outcomes are directly affected through parental interactions, parental beliefs, and academic support (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Moreover, the value parents place on education is reflected in the students' valuing of their own education. According to Taylor, Clayton, and Rowley (2004), academic socialization is a term used

to refer to the actions of parents who promote student academic success. Children usually value the opinions of their parents. If the importance of education is discussed early, children will know the expectations set for them in terms of excelling in school and finishing their education.

Mother and teacher expectations are believed to be predictors of a young person's future educational attainment as well. The effects of proximal processes on youth achievement outcomes were examined by researchers such as Benner and Mistry (2007) and Suizzo and Stapleton (2007). Benner and Mistry noted that youth had higher school expectations and academic achievement when parents expected them to advance in school. Suizzo and Stapleton focused on the distal and proximal environments as influencing the development of a child. They found that maternal education influenced children's home environment. They further noted that children imprint within themselves their parent's expectations. Thus, when parents make education a priority, their children have a greater interest in school. Two other research studies supported the idea that maternal expectations predict educational attainment. Flouri and Hawkes (2008) later noted that girls at the age of 10 had instilled within themselves their mother's expectations, and parent and adolescent expectations were interrelated (Yanyan, 2011).

Parents' expectations and youth perceptions of those expectations appear to exert a unique influence on motivation (Wood, Kuerz-Costes, & Copping, 2011). In their study on predominantly middle-class African American adolescents, Wood et al. found that parental expectations were undoubtedly related to the adolescents' attainment expectations, educational attainment desires, and beliefs about the usefulness of

education. Positive parent expectations for performance in school led to students avoiding bad behaviors, while striving for academic success (Bowen et al., 2008). Based on Chen and Gregory (2009), middle school years are considered the most influential in terms of instilling behavior and attitudes towards academic performance. However, if these positive factors are missing, there can be devastating ramifications.

### **Effect of Parental Socio-economic/Educational Status on Student Academic Achievement**

Parents' education and income levels are interdependent, as better educated parents have a greater potential for obtaining higher incomes. In general, educated parents are financially able to create a solid foundation for school by providing extra resources. This foundation is a strong building block for success. According to Corcnan, Noonan, and Reichman (2005), family race and poverty status are among the main reasons for the differences in early academic achievement. Similarly, it is believed that African American boys' academic outcomes are affected by family characteristics (Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000). Thus, parental SES is believed to often regulate parental expectations and beliefs that are believed to predict or regulate how a child will achieve (Phillipson, 2010).

Conger and Elder (1994) addressed the SES from a different perspective. They believed that parents under economic stress are more likely to be depressed and cruel to their children. This premise is based on the fact that economic stress and poverty may be associated with parent-child conflicts, which often lead to a decrease in grades and emotional and social growth. In addressing socio-economic status, Minghua (2012)

reported that inaccurate and lower expectations were exhibited by parents in the bottom social classes, presumably due to inadequate living conditions and educational backgrounds. It is thought that prominent families pass on values in regards to the significance of relationships, hard work, and education. Educational attainment is another factor influencing expectations. Early adolescent academic achievement can be explained through a self-fulfilling prophecy (Bandura, 1977). Bandura believed that a child is likely to adjust his/her desires and aspirations to those of the parents.

Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009) conducted a longitudinal study and found children's beliefs and behaviors to be related to parental educational attainment which are believed to be another factor that influences expectations. Neuenschwander et al. (2007) reported the educational level and family income corresponded with the amount of reading and school involvement. According to Eccles (2005), parental characteristics, such as education, income, and occupation, influenced the development of a child's values and engagement in certain behaviors and activities. As a result of these distal parental influences, it is believed that a child's academic attainment will eventually be determined.

It has been hypothesized that, if parents have not attended college, they may be incapable of providing transitional support for their children into college (Yazedjian, Toews, & Navarro, 2009). A high level of parent education is expected to be linked to students' academic success and attitudes towards achievement (Dubow & Huesman, 2009). According to Frome and Eccles (1998), parental education is a strong predictor of academic and job-related achievement in adulthood. Eccles's model proposes that

parents model achievement-related behaviors, which foster higher levels of educational attainment within students. Eccles also believed that children's educational successes are socialized by parents who encourage academic performance.

Dotterer, McHale, and Crouter's (2009) multilevel model analysis indicated that mother's educational expectations were positively related to youth's interests, regardless of the slight interest decline over time. Parents seem to exhibit behaviors that children may later emulate and internalize as their own (Jacobs, Davis-Kean, Bleeker, Eccles, & Malachuk, 2005). This is evident in the study conducted by Narcisse (2013), whereby the author interviewed 44 successful African American mothers. Narcisse found that mothers' socialization, along with emotional and active support, provided their daughters with the confidence, structure, and flexibility that enabled them to achieve their career aspirations. Parental engagements and self-competence displayed by the parents indirectly transmitted messages to their children about their practices and different involvements (Jacobs et al.).

Wilson, Smeeding, and Haveman (2007) pointed out that parental educational levels are greatly associated with how well students achieve. It is believed that an impressive number of parents with high socio-economic status set high expectations for their children, since they can provide the amenities required for success.

Neuenschwander et al. (2007) also suggested that children brought up in homes with greater monetary and societal resources perform better academically. Nicholas-Omoregbe (2010) also contributed to the theory that parental education influences student achievement. In his study, the author revealed that the way parents, teachers, and

students view successful student outcomes is related to the parental academic achievement. In other words, students' lives and outcomes are influenced by the family unit. Okantey (2008) also believed that family is the foremost influence on in the lives and outcomes of students. According to Messersmith and Schulenberg (2008), high school curriculum, mediocre grades, a lack of educational aspirations, and minimal parental education levels were indicated as factors contributing to youth not meeting their expectations to graduate.

### **Teacher Expectations for Student Academic Achievement**

Reading, writing, and mathematics are the skills children develop during their early school years. These tools are essential for academic success later in life. According to Black (2006), teachers are considered the main facilitators of student academic development. More than a half-century ago, Merton (1948) noted that many children are victims of the self-fulfilling prophecy, whereas a person fulfills expectations of the significant others in his or her life. Evidence of the self-fulfilling prophecy is seen in the work of Hinnant, O'Brien, and Ghazarian (2009) who noted that minority children, those living in low income homes, and those with poor communication and interaction skills may perform later in life in line with the expectations of their teachers. Not surprisingly, teacher expectations tend to have a greater influence on students from low-income families, as they often lack support at home that would motivate them to strive for academic excellence (Sorhagen, 2013). In such cases, students that succeed do so due to their teacher's expressed belief in them and their abilities. This leads to the assumption that positive teacher attitudes motivate and encourage students to succeed.

For example, Rubie-Davis et al. (2010) indicated that teacher expectations were recognized as having extensive effects on student outcomes. These outcomes were believed to be the result of students being given the opportunity to learn.

Apparently, teacher-student relationships can also inform and affect academic performance. According to Prihadi, Hairul, and Hazri (2012), positive teacher expectations enhance their students' self-esteem and motivation to succeed. Likewise, students' low academic performance and behavioral issues are linked to their perceptions of teacher expectations. Even though students' test scores may be exemplary, it is believed that the achievement levels of students are lower when teachers underestimate their abilities. Likewise, the level of achievement is greater when teachers overestimate student abilities, as this sets a target, motivating them to try harder (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Sorhagen, 2013).

Some teacher expectations may be influenced by race, gender, or socioeconomic status of their students, with disadvantaged minorities often referred to as idle (Kenyatta, 2012). This underestimation of potential by teachers reiterates lowered expectations of African American students. Kenyatta believed that, if teachers confronted, adjusted, and practiced their expectations of their students, this might have immediate and positive ramifications. Similarly, teachers' expectations are related to classroom behavior as well as student academic success. Teachers expect students to be responsible for their own learning, courteous behavior and committed attitudes, as well as willingness to do their best, and to be good citizens (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). However, empirical evidence suggests that even highly self-motivated students tend to perform better if supported and



encouraged by the teachers. In other words, most students will rise to the challenge when they are exposed to higher expectations (Hinnant et al., 2009).

### **Administrator Expectations for Teachers and Students**

The view that a good principal is the key to a prosperous school is widely accepted. Accordingly, the Obama administration requires replacement of principals in persistently low-performing schools undergoing federally funded turnarounds. Following their recent study, Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) reported that, on average, a highly effective principal raised student achievement by an equivalent of seven months of learning. While teachers affect their own students directly, the principal has the potential to influence the performance of all students in a school, as they set standards for both teachers and student population.

Finnigan (2010) believed that expectancy, motivation, and performance were interrelated. According to this view, it can be assumed that a mutual relationship between principals and teachers provides instructional leadership and support for changes in student learning and performance. In general, administrators and teachers should have unified attitudes and expectations concerning proactive strategies that are central to positive behavior support and instructional techniques. This sense of unity ensures that all staff members strive for the same goals (Scott, Levy, & Pincus, 2009).

Administrators influence how teachers teach and students learn by assisting their teachers in translating their knowledge into practice. When teachers and administrators have high expectations of their students, this provides a learning environment in which most students can achieve their potential (Timperley, 2011). In order for a continuous

academic school success, principals must create positive relationships. They must also develop an organizational culture that promotes great teaching and learning. Therefore, administrators expect practicing and aspiring leaders to develop safe collaborative and vibrant organizational cultures. It is believed that, if all school employees demonstrated mutual trust, admiration, and support, student achievement would increase. An environment would be created in which employees and students can be successful (Hensley & Burmeister, 2008). According to Mullen and Jones (2008), teachers and principals should model an environment of respect and honor. To improve performance, principals should develop teacher leadership roles. Because collaboration is encouraged among teachers, administrators expect to see sharing of ideas and coaching of other teachers in order to promote successful student achievement (Mullen & Jones).

Administrators should view themselves as lifelong learners, and see their development as important to their professional growth. Therefore, the same attitude should be expected of the teachers. According to Holland (2009), administrators expect teachers to share a commitment to the goal of the school. Most administrators believe that teachers should learn more about students' environments. This can be achieved by understanding the behaviors and values of children from other cultures. According to Holland, principals believed that teachers should be acquainted with the conditions of students' home life. The researcher also believed that teachers should acquire skills for implementing parental involvement to help students succeed in school.

Positive results in school and student achievement are believed to be linked to principals communicating their expectations for high performance (Soehner & Ryan,

2011). The responsibility of the principal is to inform the teachers of the new educational tools and strategies that can improve instruction. Therefore, it can be assumed that teachers are expected to utilize these new strategies and tools to promote effective instruction and student learning within their classrooms (Vanderhaar, Munoz, & Rodosky, 2006).

Teaching techniques and instructional strategies are expected to be learned by practicing teachers (Holland, 2009). These strategies could include critical thinking in their lesson or pacing the delivery of material. Another expectation of teachers, according to Holland, is to learn and refine skills of effective interaction with students, parents, and other teachers. An example of this approach could be having the sensitivity of dealing with non-academic problems that are brought to school by students or even other colleagues. Over time, principals also expect teachers to assume autonomy and decision-making ability (Holland). Eventually, teachers are expected to become self-directed professionals who demonstrate leadership, cooperation, and a genuine concern for student success (Soehner & Ryan, 2011).

#### **Parents and Student Achievement in Other Countries**

Following their study conducted in Pakistan, Kazmii, Sajjidz, and Perveza (2011) reported that authoritarian and authoritative fathers demanded high academic achievement from their children. This parenting type tends to be exhibited through inquiring about academic activities and being actively interested in children's school matters. Education in Finland is reported to be highly correlated with socio-economic

measures. Friend, DeFries, and Olson (2008) found that genetic influences develop mostly within children whose parents possess high socio-economic standing.

A Nigerian study conducted by Fan (2012) revealed that students from high socio-economic backgrounds outperformed those from other backgrounds. Berthelsen and Walker (2008) conducted a study in Australia and found that most parents expected high school completion and post-secondary studies from their children. Their findings indicated that the level of parental involvement increased with the household income level. The studies discussed above indicate that researchers from other cultures have also addressed links between parental expectations and student achievement, as they pertain to socio-economics, family, expectations, and student achievement.

The review of the literature demonstrated an apparent correlation between student academic performance and teachers', administrators', and parents' expectations. Thus, the purpose of this project study was to investigate parent, teacher, and administrator expectations for the academic achievement of children.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study are threefold. First, higher academic achievement may be attained with a greater understanding of how children are reared by their parents and the environments in which they live. Second, understanding the factors that are associated with students having higher expectations may prompt a creation of parent programs, parent centers, and teacher workshops. These programs or centers could focus on educating parents and teachers about their important role in the children's academic

success, and emphasize a positive academic home and school environment, as well as various parenting and teaching strategies.

In addition to understanding various factors related to high expectations, social support is another factor that should be considered. Programs may target those youths who do not have strong social support to promote later positive outcomes. Understanding the value of high expectations will possibly help support disadvantaged youth to strive toward high educational attainment. The project for accomplishing these goals will involve designing and implementing a professional development seminar, which will be attended by teachers wishing to learn the importance of high and positive expectations. During the seminar, opportunities will be provided for teachers to collaborate with colleagues about practices they use to encourage high expectations and motivate students. The goal of the 3-day professional development seminar will be to inform teachers of the impact that high expectations have on student achievement. Teachers will be able to take away other best practices that are currently being used by their colleagues.

### **Summary**

The literature review indicated that student achievement appears to have been an issue for decades. During recent years, U.S. states have developed and established a level of success standards to fulfill or meet state required assessment targets. However, the barrier of low parent and teacher expectations for students' success may prevent them from achieving their full academic potential. The lack of student achievement is evidenced by the escalating number of students in the lower percentile on state testing. The Mississippi Department of Education documented the decrease in the number of high

school graduates and an increase in the prevalence of high school dropouts. The purpose of this study is thus to investigate teachers', administrators', and parents' expectations for the academic achievement of students, as it is believed that the former will have a direct effect on the latter.

There is a need to understand the barriers that exist as they relate to parents' and teachers' expectations and student academic achievement. Extant research has demonstrated that parental expectations guide student motivation (Marzano, 2003). One way to approach this problem is by conducting a qualitative study to investigate teachers', administrators', and parents' expectations for student academic achievement. A case study was conducted, whereby the data needed to investigate this phenomenon was collected through interviews with teachers, administrators, and parents. The goal was to make meaning of their understanding of their role in the academic achievement of children.

The following chapter will focus on the methodology and will commence by describing the study design. An explanation will be provided about why a qualitative case study design was chosen to address the research questions. In addition, participant and sample selection, ethical considerations, and data collection and analysis will be discussed. This will be followed by the description of the researcher's role and the procedures used to conduct this study. The findings of this study may be used to help promote educational reform programs aiming to inform teachers, administrators, and parents of the importance of their roles and their expectations for students' academic success. This, in turn, may increase student motivation and academic achievement.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this project study was to investigate teachers', administrators', and parents' expectations of student academic achievement. The following primary research questions guided the study:

1. What are parents' expectations for the academic achievement of their children?
2. What are teachers' expectations for student academic achievement?
3. What are administrators' expectations for student academic achievement?

As part of this study, I conducted interviews with teachers, administrators, and parents in order to gain a better understanding of their expectations and their views pertaining to the academic and instructional factors contributing to student achievement. This aligned with Merriam's (2009) description of qualitative research as being interested in how people perceive their lives and experiences. I specifically selected a case study approach for the present study because it allows for the constructed views of the expectations of respective stakeholders (Hatch, 2002). The data collected was used to address the local problem of poor student academic achievement at the school that served as a research site. This chapter will thus provide a description of the case study approach which gives insight into teachers, administrators, and parents expectation for academic achievement. The setting will discuss the demographics of the school that has a population of 529 students. A detailed description explaining the selection of participants and sample based on their association and knowledge of the research questions will be elaborated. Finally, an

explanation of data collection using teacher, administrator, and parent interviews and well as open and axial coding for data analysis will be discussed.

### **Qualitative Research Design**

According to Merriam (2009), a qualitative research approach is appropriate when the aim is to understand the behaviors of a certain group and the perceptions that drive the behaviors related to a specific issue. In order to understand an issue better, researchers use a series of steps to collect and analyze information (Creswell, 2008). In their effort to draw conclusions from the study findings, researchers can adopt deductive or inductive reasoning. Therefore, a qualitative research design was chosen to explore the educational expectations the teachers, school administrators, and parents have regarding the academic achievement of students. According to Creswell,

Qualitative research is an inductive process in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words from participants; describes and analyzes the words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner. (p. 46)

In this work, deductive quantitative method was not chosen because the objective was to gain knowledge of parents', teachers', and school administrators' expectations pertaining to students' academic achievement. In addition, as the study addressed a local concern, its findings did not need to be generalized. Thus, an inductive, qualitative approach was adopted, as it would allow for purposeful sampling, one-to-one interviews, and narrative results. In sum, a case study approach allows for gaining a much deeper meaning from the participants' perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).



### **Case Study Approach**

Case studies are employed when the aim is to gain deep perceptions of the subjects and seek patterns and causes for their behaviors (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). A descriptive case study approach was selected in order to gain insight and discover teacher, school administrator, and parent expectations of student academic achievement. According to Creswell (2008), a case study is a bounded system using multiple sources of information that are studied for a period of time to report a case description. Similarly, Merriam (2009) noted that a case study is defined as such because a particular group is being analyzed. The bounded system in this study comprised the parents, teachers, and school administrators for grades 4-6 at the particular school site, which was the focus of the present study. This allowed detailed accounts of these teachers', administrators', and parents' expectations to be reported.

Qualitative case studies enhance the understanding of a particular phenomenon by describing that phenomenon using a detailed narrative (Merriam, 2009). They can be further defined by their disciplinary orientation (i.e., ethnography, historical, psychological, and sociological) or function. In this context, function refers to determining if the overall intent of the study is to interpret, describe, or evaluate some phenomenon or to build theory. In this descriptive case study, an investigation of parents', teachers', and school administrators' expectations, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to student academic achievement was conducted. In order to meet the study objectives, teachers, administrators, and parents were interviewed, allowing detailed pictures of the expectations of the interviewees to emerge. Data from the three sets of

interviews (or three data points) were analyzed and triangulated. Triangulating teacher, administrator, and parent perspectives can reveal a wider range of attitudinal and behavioral issues as well as enhance the validation of the results (Yin, 1994).

Other research methods were considered but were not deemed suitable. For example, grounded theory is used to build theory or address changes over time (Merriam, 2009). Another method considered, but not selected, was ethnography. Ethnography was not applicable because the problem was not related to a cultural aspect of a specific group. Merriam explained that the ethnography design is used when the researcher uses a cultural lens to understand the phenomenon and develop a cultural description. The goal of this project study was to understand and report the expectations of parents, teachers, and school administrators, however, rather than focusing on the cultural aspect of a specific group; this led to rejecting ethnography as the choice of method. The last qualitative research design considered for this study was narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is a method used to communicate and give meaning to experiences through narratives, life histories, and storytelling.

After careful consideration of several qualitative methods, a case study was deemed the most appropriate for the problem, purpose, and guiding questions of the project study. Yin (1994) believed that interviews could be used to gain vital information. As determined by Yin, interviews are an integral source of most human case studies, which should be reported and interpreted by interviewees who can provide insight into the phenomenon of interest. The interviews allowed the opportunity of understanding the expectations from the participants' perspectives. Detailed insight into

expectations and academic achievement, from a participant's perspective, allowed the development of intentional awareness and facilitated interpretation of the experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The purpose of this case study was to obtain multiple views and realities pertaining to expectations (Stake, 1995).

### **Setting**

This study was conducted in a school district located in a southern state east of the Mississippi River. According to the Mississippi Department of Education, this school district is comprised of 16 schools: eight elementary schools, two intermediate, junior, and high schools, one alternative school, and a community college. Only one middle school, serving a population of 529 students, was selected from this Mississippi school district for the present research study. The demographic composition of the school student population is Asian/Pacific Islander ( 1%), Black (83%), Hispanic ( 1%), and White ( 15%). There are 279 males and 313 females enrolled within the school, with 88.9% of the students receiving free and reduced-price lunch. The total number of teachers is 29, corresponding to the student/teacher ratio of 20. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

### **Participants and Sample**

The study participants were selected using a purposeful convenience sampling, as suggested by Creswell (2008). The goal of this sampling method was to select respondents who will provide detailed and pertinent information to the purpose of the research. The study inclusion criteria demanded that each and could provide pertinent information for this research study. The number of participants in a qualitative study is

dependent upon the purpose and type of study being conducted, as well as the questions being answered (Hatch, 2002). This view regarding the required number of study participants is also shared by Kvale (1996), who stated that as many subjects as needed should be interviewed to obtain the information required to meet the study objective. Therefore, the sample for this study included three parents of students in grades 4-6, as well as three teachers, and one administrator, who provided valuable information pertaining to expectations that are aligned with the study's purpose and research questions. All participants were from a single middle school in the school district in which I was employed at the time of the study. When explaining sampling in qualitative research, Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) stated that a purposeful sampling of participants is used when the goal is to select informants based on the knowledge they possess relative to the research questions being investigated. Therefore, the participants in this study provided essential information about their expectations for student academic achievement.

The participants were chosen because they could provide rich detailed information that is pertinent to the research questions on expectations. The participants were chosen because they were a parent, teacher, or school administrator of a 4-6 grade student attending the school that served as a study site. Regarding the parent participants, the goal was to have at least five individuals willing to take part in the study. Thus, with the permission from the district, the potential parent participants were contacted by letter, which was taken home by all 4-6 grade students in their Quality of Education Program (QEP) folders. It is the local district's policy that all communications are placed in this

folder on a weekly basis to be seen and signed by the students' parents. The parents that were willing to take part in the study were instructed to sign the consent form and include their email addresses and phone numbers. Those respondents received a contact letter or email to schedule the interview in one week's time.

The number of teacher participants was limited to the first three 4-6 grade teachers (out of the population of 20) willing to take part in the study. Again, with the permission of the district, these teacher participants were contacted through a written invitation, which was placed in their school mailboxes by the secretary. Upon the receipt of the invitation, the interested participants were asked to respond with a confirmation email and by returning the signed consent form. These participants received a contact letter or email to schedule the interview in one weeks' time.

The number of administrative participants in the project study was limited, due to the small number of such posts in the school. Thus, the goal was to have one administrator willing to participate in the study. After scheduling an appointment with the potential participants, I conducted a face-to-face meeting explaining the research study and asking for permission to interview the teachers as well as members of the administration. The chosen administrator participant also completed the consent forms and provided an email and phone number. Finally, the respondent received a contact letter or email to schedule the interview in one weeks' time.

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

Ethical standards for human research subjects are based on the 1979 *Belmont Report*. The report established three basic principles that must be observed in research

with human beings—respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Seidman, 2013). In abiding with the government regulations, local Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) must review and approve all research involving human subjects. Upon receipt and approval of the proposal from the IRB of Walden University, the data collection process could begin.

Once the signed letter of cooperation from the superintendent was received, the initial contact with the students' parents was made through a recruitment letter. The teachers and school administrators were also sent a letter of invitation to participate in the study. The letters were sent to all the parents of 4th through 6th grade students. It described the study purpose, and provided an explanation of how the results would be utilized, as well as the measures that would be adopted to ensure confidentiality. The participants were identified based on the responses to the initial letter sent to parents and teachers (See Appendix B). In approximately one week from the initial communication, the potential participants were notified by letter or phone that they had been chosen for the study. At this time, an interview was scheduled for each participant. Approximately a week before commencing the study, a third notification was sent reminding participants of the time and location of their interviews, and reiterating the study purpose. During the individual interviews, the parents were asked a set of questions regarding their expectations for the academic achievement of their children in school, using a semi-structured interview protocol that was developed based on the review of the pertinent literature (See Appendix C). Similarly, the teachers took part in interviews guided by a semi-structured interview protocol constructed in line with those used in extant studies (See Appendix D). Finally, administrators were asked a set of questions in regards to

their expectations for teachers and students with respect to student achievement (See Appendix E).

The guidelines set forth by Hancock and Algozzine (2006) were used for data collection: (a) identify key participants in the situation whose knowledge and opinions may provide important insights regarding the research questions, (b) develop an interview guide, (c) seek a private, neutral, and distraction-free location, (d) record the interview, and (e) adhere to legal and ethical requirements for all research involving people (pp. 39-40). The interview questions were structured in a clear, concise, and nonthreatening manner and were followed with probing questions, if further clarification was deemed necessary (See Appendix C, D, and E). All interviews were conducted in the library because the surroundings provided privacy and were suitable for this purpose. Each interview was recorded with an iPad and a mini-recorder that provided high audio quality. I also noted important keywords and documented gestures or pauses in a reflexive journal. Once completed, I transcribed the interviews verbatim and ensured the participants' privacy by omitting any references to their identity or that of the school or students.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were organized into three sets, respectively pertaining to teachers, school administrators, and parents, which rendered three different perspectives of expectations for student achievement. I used an inductive data analysis strategy to interpret the gathered data. Qualitative data analysis condenses raw data into categories or themes based on the researcher's interpretations thorough examination of the data. In this study,

data analysis commenced by putting the findings into printed form, allowing the open and axial coding methods to be coupled to analyze the variables. The first cycle of coding involved open coding where data was divided into categories in order to identify themes (Creswell, 2008). Each data element was designated a specific code. Some codes were used repeatedly throughout, to find repetitive consistencies in expectations among parents, teachers, and school administrators. A code symbolically assigns a comprehensive feature for language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2009). Then, the data were reread to determine prominent themes in the text, which were conceptualized into broad themes. After these general themes had been identified and defined, I looked for relationships among other categories, which allowed me to reduce overlap and redundancy among the categories (Saldana). Hatch (2002) asserted that the aim of the analysis is to organize and probe data, enabling the researcher to see patterns, recognize themes, determine relationships, and generate explanations, interpretations, and theories. Data analysis processes qualitative data so that others can be made aware of what has been learned.

In order to further analyze the data, a second cycle of coding, called axial coding, was conducted. Saldana (2009) stated that the purpose of a second coding cycle is to reorganize and reanalyze previously coded data. The axial coding described each category's characteristics and explored the links between the previously determined categories and subcategories. Saturation was reached when no new information emerged during coding. Finally, a diagram was used to display the findings, allowing the focus on the themes and linking parent, teacher, and school administrator expectations.



## **Findings**

To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of teachers', school administrators', and parents' expectations for academic achievement, I interviewed a seven out of nine proposed participants, as two parents could not be interviewed. Thus, the findings reported here are based on the accounts shared by three of five parent participants, three teacher participants, and one administrator participant. I asked the interviewees if students' academic performance was average or exceeding their expectations and what they did to help promote student success. Based on the format of the interview questions, there were three sets of data, respectively pertaining to parents, teachers, and the administrator. The three data sets rendered several common emerging themes, whereby the most prominent ones were (a) expectations, (b) academic performance, and (c) ways to help promote success. The study also revealed several subthemes regarding expectations, which included the effect of expectations and the ways to communicate expectations. In addition, a fourth theme, which was identified as standards, emerged from the teacher and administrator data sets.

### **Parents**

As reported by Davies-Kean (2005), parents play an integral part in students' achievement and academic motivation. Parents also serve as good examples of behaviors and values within the educational environment. Marzano (2003) indicated that parental expectations influenced student academics and motivation. According to the findings of the present study, the three participants discussed expectations, academic performance, and ways to promote success.

**Expectations.** When asked about their academic expectations, all participants indicated that they expected their child or children to always do their best. One of the three parents indicated that she encouraged her child to “always put her best foot forward in all that she does.” Parent 2 replied, “It is very important to excel because that guarantees them a life of prosperity.” All parents added that completing homework was expected. Parent 1 stated, “Practice makes perfect is my motto and by completing homework she is receiving the practice she needs to become better.” All parents also had hopes of their child going to college. As expressed by Parent 3, “I expect for my child to remain a[n] honor roll student throughout high school and that she earns a full academic scholarship to pay for her college tuition.” This behavior is demonstrated by Parent 2, who conveyed, “I always expect my children to do their best and never give up. It doesn’t matter if it’s with school or athletics.” Parent 2 also believed in “supporting them [her children] in their activities.” All parents had high expectations and noted that their children know it. “She knows she is expected to be more than an average achiever,” stated Parent 1. “They know my expectations. They know I want nothing less than their best,” acknowledged Parent 2.

**The effect of expectations on academics.** When asked how their expectations affected their child’s academic success, participants felt that their children did their best in an effort to please them. One of the parents reported, “I think she does her best at whatever she does because she aims to please me. She wants me to be proud of her.” Another parent stated that her expectations encourage her daughter “to be that advanced math student and that proficient plus student on the state test.” Two parents believed that

their expectations helped build self-worth and self-esteem within their children. Parent 3 expressed, “I believe that being recognized for her good grades she makes motivates or encourages her to continue to meet or excel the expectations that I have for her.” As a result of all parent participants’ expectations, all of their children were reported as being honor students and performed in the top percentage of their respective classes. All parents indicated that they believed their expectations for success would eventually lead to their children graduating from high school and receiving college scholarships.

**Ways to communicate expectations.** All participants indicated that they communicated their expectations by modeling and verbalizing them. Parent 2 stated that she “models good work and study habits” because she had a full time job and was currently in school. She hoped that this would set an example for her children. Parent 1 was in “favor of corporal punishment when necessary” but believed in modeling her expectations first. She continued by saying that she clearly explained what she expected of her child and defined what the “consequences are for not delivering what is expected.” All parents said that they verbalize their expectations by clearly explaining what they want. Communication was mentioned by all of the participants as a necessary element helping promote success. Two parents implied that they constantly discussed school with their children. Parent 1 stated, “I think parents should encourage children to love school. I constantly remind my child why she should want to do her best.” Parent 3 communicated her expectations by “always telling her [daughter] how important it is to get a good education.” She continued by saying that she always checked on her daughter’s behavior and grades to make sure that she was successful in school. All

parents communicated their interests in and about the schoolwork of their children. They also mentioned frequent discussions pertaining to schoolwork, encouragement of schoolwork, and supplying resources to aid with the schoolwork. One parent maintained that she made her daughter read at least an hour each day, corrected her mistakes on graded assignments, and gave practice work on skills that she also possessed.

Communication is a way of conveying information, feelings, or expectations to others and can be verbal as well as nonverbal. Several parents indicated they use forms of wordless communication, such as body language, facial expressions, and behaviors, such as punishment. The use of punishment as a nonverbal form of communication was noted by Parent 1 and 2. When discussing ways to communicate expectations, Parent 2 noted that she “believes in punishment as well as positive reinforcements when they do what is expected.” Parent 1 responded that she only administered corporal punishment when it was necessary to reinforce her expectations.

**Academic performance.** When speaking of academic performance, all participants agreed that their children were exceeding their expectations. They also noted that their expectations were set and known by their children. One parent indicated, “I want nothing less than their best.” This feeling was shared by all parents. Parent 1 expressed, “She exceeds my expectations. I want her to be great, but she is amazing.” Another parent stated, “I expect my child to graduate within the top ten percent of her class.” High expectations are set by all participants. All parents expressed a desire for their child to be high school and college graduates. The parents implied that their children’s success is the ultimate goal, but also elaborated on things that could hinder or

even prevent academic performance and success of their children. They gave examples of certain behaviors that should be practiced as well as those that should be avoided. One parent elaborated on things she wanted her child to avoid, such as “behaviors that would hinder academic success, such as irresponsible friends, fighting, and bullies.” Parent 2 gave a more detailed answer. She conveyed, “I expect my children to avoid drinking, being disrespectful, not paying attention in class, hanging around the wrong crowds, and just anything that would hurt them.” Clearly, the parents shared the view that academic success hinged on having good habits. Thus, students should avoid activities that would interfere with or hinder their academic lives.

**Ways to help promote success.** Parents discussed ways to support academic success for their children to meet their desired expectations. One parent indicated, “Simple practices of providing proper nourishment and needed materials can help children succeed.” That same parent conveyed that she keeps her children “supplied with needed materials to perform well in school.” Parent 1 summed up her role, stating, “I help my child succeed in school by being a good parent. By that I am a mother, father, cook, pastor, doctor, counselor, [and a] taxi driver. I am whatever she needs to be her best.” All participants affirmed that they support their children in their activities. Parent support was demonstrated by attending parent meetings, award programs, and performances. Some other ways discussed by parents for promoting academic successes were encouraging them and thus helping build their self-esteem, being a parent as well as a friend, and celebrating their child’s achievements. Encouragement was mentioned by all parents as a way of promoting success. Parent 1 believed, “parents should encourage

children to love school.” She continued by stating that she reminded her child “why she should want to do her best.” Another way of promoting success that was common among the parents was open lines of communication between the teachers and parents. All parents also felt that parents and teachers should work together in order to promote student success. Parent 2 communicated, “we should work together to find what works to help each individual child to succeed.”

### **Teachers**

After interviewing the three teacher participants, it was evident that all shared the view that children rise to expectations. The teachers expressed that the majority of their students worked to the level that was expectations of them. According to the findings, the participants discussed issues on expectations, academic performance, ways to promote success, and standards.

**Expectations.** All participants stated different expectations for their children concerning academics. Teacher 1 expected her students to “come to class everyday prepared to master skills and take pride in their learning.” However, Teacher 2 expected his students to “come to class ready to learn, [to] respect everyone, and to always do their best.” Teacher 3 stated that she wanted her students to “apply the knowledge given to their everyday lives.”

All teacher participants noted that their high expectations for students are known. “The students know that I place a very high emphasis on learning and doing well on state tests,” said Teacher 1. She also stated that she encouraged her students to “take pride in learning and to practice study habits, which will result in learning that will last a

lifetime.” Teacher 3 said that she discussed “expectations on a daily basis and set obtainable expectations.” She continued by saying that her expectations are clearly defined and her students have many opportunities to strive to meet them. One teacher believed that “students willingly exceed the expectations established because they know that I have their best interest at heart.”

**The effect of expectations on academic achievement.** According to the findings, teacher expectations had just as much effect on student academic achievement as those of the parents. Teacher 3 stated, “Students are motivated to perform when they know you genuinely care about their learning.” When asked about how they believe their expectations affected student achievement, all participants mentioned that how they expected their students to perform influenced the level of achievement their students demonstrated. Teacher 3 conveyed, “I think that setting expectations for my students directly affects their academic performance. When they know that I care and I expect them to give me their very best each time, their performance level increases.” As stated by Teacher 1, “A high percentage of them [students] show academic growth by moving from minimal and basic to proficiency on state tests within the year they are in my classroom.” Students not only grow academically but personally as well when they experience success. This is expressed by Teacher 2, who responded, “My expectations improve self-esteem because the students state how they feel good about themselves when they perform well.” As a result of setting high expectations and acting upon those expectations, all three participants indicated that their students perform well on state tests.

**Ways to communicate expectations.** Teachers use communication as a way of

establishing expectations. Communicating high expectations is believed to enhance academic achievement. According to the findings, expectations can be communicated through written and spoken words, modeling, and even through reinforcements. The teacher participants attested using at least two of these methods of communicating. All participants indicated that their expectations were written and posted in the classroom. One teacher stated, “My expectations are written in the classroom, so [that] students can visually see and be reminded.” All participants also agreed that they verbally convey to their students what they expect. Teacher 1 stated, “I talk to my students all the time about making decisions which are going to impact their future.” Teacher 3 shared, “We discuss expectations on a daily basis and set obtainable expectations.” In the event that students do not meet expectations, teacher participants have indicated that the students should be reminded of what is expected of them and clearly define consequences. One teacher indicated that he wrote, modeled, and verbalized his desired expectations. He was also the only teacher who relied on reprimanding students for undesirable behaviors. According to the findings, the most common ways of conveying expectations were written and spoken communication.

**Academic performance.** When speaking of academic performance, all participants expressed that at least 75% of their students performed at the “average” level on skills taught. Teacher 1 justified her position by stating that “students score mainly proficiency level, not advanced.” Even though Teacher 2 rated his overall students’ performance as average, he claimed “it really depends on the child.” He felt that some of his students “perform exceedingly well while others only perform minimally.” Teacher 2



shared, “It was difficult at times because many were below grade level. But it really depends on the child. Some of my students perform exceedingly well, while others only perform at minimum if at that.” While some teachers may have experienced average performance from their students, Teacher 3 stated that her students’ performance exceeded her expectations because they work extremely hard. She continued to say, “We strive to [achieve] 80-85% mastery on skills and state test[s].” She claimed that she actively encouraged learners to meet challenging expectations that motivated them to perform at their best. Teacher 3 noted that setting high expectations and teaching at her best enabled her students to achieve more than other students do. Even though teachers indicated average academic performance from their students, they also reported that students showed academic growth during the school year, as well as on the state test.

**Ways to help promote success.** The findings indicated that teachers promoted success in their classrooms primarily through encouragement. One teacher mentioned that she encouraged her students to try their best each day. Another stated that a result of his encouragement was building students’ self-esteem. He mentioned that he did that by taking personal time to get to know his students and providing additional help and time to complete assignments.

In addition, all three teacher participants used cooperative learning groups as a means of promoting student success. Through cooperative learning, when grouping low and high achieving children, the latter tend to perform at their best. One teacher added, “I provide them with many opportunities in which to work in cooperative groups, so that they may learn from each other.” Another teacher responded that he incorporated games

and cooperative learning groups into his teaching practice because it helped the students become more involved with learning. All participants expressed that students participating in cooperative groups demonstrated better reasoning and critical thinking skills.

Each teacher also talked about his or her own personal way to help promote student success. Teacher 2 and 3 maintained that they provided additional support or assistance in the form of giving extra time to complete assignments. One teacher stated that he personally taught “different strategies to solve problems and took personal time to get to know them [his students].” Teacher 3 communicated that she established and maintained a close relationship with parents that help her students to succeed. This teacher also reported having created a “safe environment,” which was important for student learning. In addition to the aforementioned means of promoting academic achievement, all teacher participants felt that parents and teachers should collaborate to allow students the best for learning. Teacher 1 followed the motto for success she referred to as TEAM. She believed in order for learning to occur, “everyone must be in the consensus of awareness that learning takes place not only at school, but at home, as well.” The findings revealed different ways to promote academic achievement. Each teacher identified his or her own ideas of how to promote academic success within the classroom.

**Standards.** Teachers had their own personal standards for their students, which played an important role in student learning. Teacher 2 stated that he placed high standards on his students, noting, “I believe the higher your standards are for students the

greater their chances are to succeed.” Another teacher replied, “I expect each child to try and do their best to reach their personal academic goals.” Teacher 3 believed that her standards for student achievement were aligned with those of the school district. She replied, “I just believe that every student can learn and I don’t accept excuses. I allow students to develop and move forward at their own pace. I encourage individual growth and celebrate small victories.” She went on to say that she believed that, if her students worked toward the high standards she had set, they would achieve the desired outcomes. Still, she acknowledged that her expectations varied depending upon the needs of her students. One teacher responded that a “good teacher expands students’ knowledge beyond the required skills in hopes of planting seed that foster a desire by the student to want to learn more.”

Two participants mentioned the role Mississippi state standards played in directing their planning and instruction, whereby these were used to create the nine-week pacing guides. One stated, “The pacing guide is used to direct teaching, thereby keeping me on track of which skills the students need in order to be successful in 7th grade.” Similarly, the other teacher noted, “The district’s standards are there to help students receive the skills they need to succeed to the next grade, but my standards are more personal.” All participants felt that their standards aligned with those of the district to help promote student learning, along with planning and instruction.

### **School Administrator**

While teachers directly influenced only those students within their classroom, principals affected all students within the school. This impact was possible through the

visions of the administrator. When asked about her vision for the school, the administrator responded that her vision was to “promote a professional learning environment where all stakeholders benefit from a safe and organized school that focuses on lifelong learning.” In helping to meet the vision of her school, the administrator acknowledged that she served as an instructional leader. School leadership played an essential part in the development of achievement. The administrator believed that the quality of education can only be raised if there are productive and effective teachers, as well as a greater expectancy for both students and teachers. In her interview, the administrator discussed expectations, academic performance, ways to promote success, and standards.

**Expectations.** Being an instructional leader was a hallmark for this principal. The administrator mentioned her desire in creating an environment where academic success was possible for all students. She expressed that she spelled out her expectations and learning goals for all students. The administrator also revealed that she expected students to adhere to the standards set forth by the district, which are to receive an average of 60D or higher in social studies or science, math, language arts, and reading. The administrator continued to speak about her personal expectations, stating, “[In school] I expect for them to stay focused, try their best, have a good attitude, and show respect. At home, I expect them to find a quiet place to study, review the skills from that day, and get prepared for school the next day.” When asked how students and teachers perceived her expectations, the administrator replied, “Well, according to the 2013-2014 Federal Programs Survey, 63% of the teachers feel that they [her expectations] are very

reasonable. I am not sure on how the students feel.”

**The effect of expectations on students’ academic achievement.** The findings yielded by the interview with the administrator suggested that principals are instrumental to improved school performance. She felt that expectations had a great effect on academic success and justified her statement by saying, “...’s test scores have increased 33 points in 3 years. That data proves that my motivation has had great effect on students’ academic success.” According to the findings, the administrator’s expectations for achievement had a huge impact on student performance and academic success. However, administrator expectations alone did not render success, as the accompanying actions helped students achieve greater success.

**Ways to communicate expectations.** Expectations can be behaviors or observable results, which can be communicated in various ways. According to the administrator, when her expectations were set, they were realistic, obtainable, and clearly communicated. The administrator explained that student expectations were “posted in each classroom as non-negotiables.” According to the administrator, “non-negotiables” were student behaviors that were firmly established and would not be adjusted.

When asked how teacher expectations were communicated, the administrator replied, “Expectations are also discussed in [Professional Learning Communities] PLCs and Grade-level meetings.” The administrator admitted to teaching and interacting with teachers and students in a way that encouraged them to rise to meet their desired expectations. She elaborated on this, noting, “Teachers are provided professional development training to help communicate effective ways of reaching students.” The

teachers were reported as being constantly encouraged personally and professionally. The administrator mentioned that she provided fun activities to reinforce her expectations of the students. She “periodically gave words of encouragement over the intercom” and tangible rewards to motivate and remind students of their goals. Expectations were communicated and that influenced academic performance.

**Academic performance.** Student outcomes and academic performance are believed to be directly related. The administrator expressed that successful student academic performance hinged on principals providing staff with the resources and support they need, having quality teachers, and setting expectations for instruction. The administrator indicated that student performance was encouraged through “constantly counseling and encouraging students to do their best.” Effective principals provided constructive feedback on how to improve instruction. “This is done by visiting teachers’ classrooms to monitor instruction and giving feedback.” The administrator stated, “According to walk-throughs and informal and formal observations, students’ performances were average and the school is currently rated at a C.” She further noted, “Students are showing growth based on universal screeners and state test.” When asked to rate academic performance, she mentioned that based on the Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition (MCT2) scores, school performance was average. MCT2 is a content-referenced test affiliated with Mississippi Frameworks, which is in agreement with federal regulation.

When asked to describe the educational atmosphere of the school, the administrator replied, “Based on walk-throughs and formal evaluations, students are

somewhat actively involved in learning.” She also indicated that “students are somewhat encouraged to think critically and apply what has been learned.” In spite of rating the school’s overall academic performance as average, the administrator believed that an improvement has been made, due to the effective PLCs and teachers incorporating research based strategies, such as Kagan Cooperative Learning, into instruction.

Kagan Cooperative Learning is a type of structured peer interaction that reengages students who have become academically deficient while better preparing all students. According to Igel and Urquhart (2012), the primary elements of cooperative learning are developing interpersonal skills, individual accountability, and positive interdependence. Cooperative learning has been researched to increase student engagement which in turn improves academic achievement. If properly implemented, cooperative learning strategies may increase student engagement and achievement. When asked how successful academic achievement would look like for her school, the administrator replied, “Success for me would be having my students score 150 or above on the MCT2 test and 80% mastery on Common Assessment [a monthly administered test].” According to the findings, academic performance was affected by the principal’s visions as well as the actions taken to help promote teacher and student success.

**Ways to help promote success.** The findings suggested that administrators can increase student success by putting effort into encouraging, assisting, and praising their students. The administrator mentioned that she provided motivational activities and held award ceremonies to help promote student success. Resources, such as PLC meetings, common planning times, and support, were given for teacher success. To ensure that all

students were actively engaged in learning, teachers were required to use research-based strategies, such as Kagan Cooperative Learning and Lori Oczkus Comprehension strategies, which are used to strengthen comprehension. As the administrator explained Lori O strategy is based on a dialogue in which both students and teachers lead the discussions using the strategies of summarizing, question gathering, clarifying, and predicting. Teachers were also instructed to use graphic organizers. These strategies were proven to help promote student success through active involvement and critical thinking.

According to the administrator, the Teacher Student Team (TST) is another resource that is used to assist students having difficulty meeting both academic and behavior expectations. She explained that through the use of interventions the TST assist students to become successful in a regular classroom environment. The administrator indicated that, in order to create a productive teaching and learning environment, teachers and the administrator should “constantly strive towards high expectations, gather evidence of student learning, encourage critical thinking, and continue to use current research based instructional strategies.” The administrator also suggested that she and the teachers can “constantly review and analyze data to address students’ needs” as a means of continued success. The administrator mentioned various ways through which she promoted student academic success. As noted, successful academic achievement requires teamwork and cooperation of all involved. The administrator acknowledged the role of her teachers in promoting student success.

**Standards.** “Setting standards is important to the functioning of the school,”



according to the administrator. The administrator believed that her standards affected achievement and student outcomes. She indicated that the standards of her school “are preparing students for College and Career Readiness.” The administrator felt that the standards defining academic success that were posed upon the students were aligned with those of the district as well as the state.

In addressing the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks, the administrator said that, in her school, the framework was followed for planning and instruction. She replied that the Standards are frameworks for implementation. They are used to guide instructional strategies that emphasize what students should learn and do. According to the findings, the teaching and planning guidelines were first established by the state, which imposed them upon the district, which relayed them to the schools in order to direct teacher instruction.

### **Evidence of Quality and Trustworthiness**

The data sources for the current study were parent, teacher, and school administrator interviews. Threats to validity were addressed through triangulation. Data triangulation is achieved by using multiple sources of data to corroborate the study findings (Hatch, 2002). Triangulation from three separate data sources (Creswell, 2008) justifies the themes and enables obtaining various views of the same phenomenon. Insights into the participants’ perspectives were gained through comprehensive interviews on academic achievement. Group feedback rendered areas of agreement and helped identify differences. By interviewing three different categories of participants, I was able to examine the expectations for student academic achievement from different

perspectives. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2006), findings based on evidence attained from multiple sources are more convincing. Stake (1995) asserted that the use of triangulation verifies research accuracy and authenticity. In addition, triangulation and usage of various sources addresses the trustworthiness and validity of the gathered data (Creswell, 2008).

To ensure validity and reliability, member checking was also conducted. Member checking involves allowing the respondents to review the interpretations, giving them the opportunity to determine if their views are accurately represented (Merriam, 2009). Thus, in order to facilitate this process, after completing the data analysis draft, the participants received an email attachment of the individual findings to review. An appointment was made for a follow-up phone conference to clarify any misconceptions and added details. Member checking allows the study participants an opportunity to correct or challenge any disparities of the researcher's interpretations. Any additional comments or corrections that were made at the time of clarification were added to the data.

Additionally, I provided rich thick descriptions, along with verbatim quotes, to contextualize the study. This also helped me to continuously self-reflect and thus avoid any biases that may affect the investigation. Pilnick and Swift (2010) recommended reflexivity as a key strategy for researchers to recognize their role and to enhance research credibility. Reflexivity means that researchers should reflect on how their connections to the study and assumptions pertaining to the phenomenon of interest may affect the investigation (Merriam, 2009). I also transcribed the audio-recorded the

interviews immediately upon their completion and the transcription was verbatim. In order to protect participant privacy, the transcribed interviews and signed consent forms were color-coded and numbered, before being filed in a locked cabinet.

Adhering to Guba's (1981) model of trustworthiness helped further establish validity and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is dependent upon credibility, dependability, confirmability, and applicability. Credibility was established through purposeful sampling, which increased in-depth understanding of the phenomenon by selecting participants who are actively involved with students and can provide rich detailed information. The data from the interview transcripts is presented in the respondents' own language. If the study were to be replicated, dependability would have been established by maintaining and preserving all transcripts, notes, coding practices, and audio devices. Confirmability was determined by connecting the data to the sources and reporting the experiences of each participant in such a way that it presented all perspectives equally so that the reader can arrive at an impartial decision. In addition, an overlap in expectations between this study and other studies may indicate that the research findings would have been confirmed by other researchers.

### **Conclusion**

Parent and teacher expectations were investigated for the academic achievement of 4-6 grade students, along with the expectations of the school administrator for both teachers and students. The Mississippi Department of Education noted a marked decline in student achievement. Thus, the central research questions that guided the study were "What are parents' expectations for the academic achievement of 4-6 grade students?"

and “What are teachers’ expectations of students?” By understanding the factors associated with students having higher expectations, school stakeholders can create parent programs that educate parents about the importance of their role and positive academic home environments in their children’s success.

The research design for the study was qualitative. In the selection of the participants, purposeful sampling was used to identify and recruit persons whose perspectives were needed to gain information about expectations and current strategies that are rendering positive results. The study was conducted using in-depth interviews, which were transcribed verbatim, from a group of three parents, three teachers, and one administrator. The interview data were interpreted and organized into themes, triangulating participant responses and ensuring that the findings were accurate and credible.

The study findings identified expectations of teachers, administrators, and parents. The themes that emerged regarding expectations were the effects of expectations, ways to communicate expectations, academic performance as it relates to expectations, ways to promote success, and achievement standards placed on students. All participants felt that expectations influenced academic achievement. Several participants felt that students’ academic performance could be increased by demanding more from them. Moreover, being actively involved in student learning by attending various school related functions was noted as a way to promote academic success.

Information gathered in this study will be used in professional development seminars held at the school. The seminars will focus on the expectations of the local

parents and teachers and provide suggestions for improvement of student academic achievement through critical inquiry. Understanding the importance of high expectations will help support youths in achieving greater educational attainment. This is the rationale for this project study.

The next section will present the rationale behind the decision to examine expectations in this study. This will be followed by a brief description of the project chosen to address the problem. Potential barriers to the professional development seminar and an implementation plan for the project will also be addressed. Later within the section, an evaluation plan for the project will be discussed and the ways the project study may affect social change delineated.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

The local problem that inspired this study was a decline in student achievement and student motivation at an area school. I designed a project to address these problems that consisted of a 3-day professional development seminar for 4th-6th-grade teachers in Mississippi. I also conducted an investigation of the findings from this case study in an effort to prepare children to succeed academically and increase motivation, finding that parent and teacher expectations generally affected student achievement. The study identified the ways through which parents and teachers communicated their expectations to children, as well as how they promoted academic success within children. These results suggested that it would be beneficial for parents to attend the professional development (PD) seminar developed as part of this project. This seminar was conceived in part as an effective means of gathering and disseminating information pertaining to student achievement and ways to motivate children. Professional development also allows teachers an opportunity to have contact with each another, enabling them to grow professionally, expand their perspectives, and change their misguided ways of thinking (Klieger & Yakobovitch, 2012). Teachers can take this opportunity to collaborate with respect to their expectations and gain awareness of other avenues of educating, encouraging, and motivating their students, in order to enhance their performance and motivation. It might be of benefit for parents and teachers to be more aware of the power that their expectations hold for students. This qualitative case study was conducted at an intermediate school in Mississippi to investigate teachers', administrators', and parents'

expectations for the academic achievement of 4th-6th grade students. The study findings noted that all parents engaged by the study believed that their expectations for their children influenced their academic success. Parent participants identified several practices they perceived as instrumental in their child's success, such as expressing their desire for high achievement, monitoring homework, supporting school-related activities, and accepting only behaviors that are productive for learning.

As a result of these findings, parents will be informed of the extent to which that their expectations influence their children, as well as to learn other ways to promote achievement and motivation. Providing parents and teachers with the information and practices necessary to help motivate students is one way to promote students achieving academic success. This parent-teacher PD is a chance for the parents to conference, discuss concerns, and make queries regarding school events and their children. During this interaction, parents will get strategies on how to help their children excel at school. Parents will also be made aware of practices they may use to encourage success and develop motivation in students. One goal of the parent-teacher PD session is to provide information on the affects that parental expectations have on their children, including communicating strategies that encourage academic achievement and student motivation.

### **Professional Development (PD)**

Teacher professional development plays an important and beneficial role in educational changes (Klieger & Jakobovitch, 2012). It is also essential in the teachers' continuous life-long learning (Telese, 2012). The findings yielded by this case study led me to design a 3-day PD seminar for 4th-6th-grade teachers that will teach them the

importance of high and positive expectations. During this seminar, teachers will be given the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues about practices they use to encourage high expectations and motivate students. PD activities may improve teacher knowledge and skills related to student learning, with an ultimate goal of closing achievement gaps. The issues of teaching and learning and influencing change in teaching practices are better addressed when teachers are allotted an opportunity to collaborate. Teacher collaboration can be done during PD activities. In addition, to prepare students to be successful in today's work force, teachers must develop new approaches to decision making which also can be developed during PD (Gonzales & Lambert, 2014). NCLB (2001) indicated that professional development opportunities are needed to significantly elevate the quality of instruction in order to raise student achievement. Based on the data reported by NCLB, PD should foster improved student performance and professional learning, while being in accordance with rigorous state and local student educational achievement standards. The goal of the 3-day professional development seminar will be to provide 4th-6<sup>th</sup>-grade teachers with information about the impact that high expectations have on student achievement. Blank (2010) reported that, in order a PD to yield effective results, the teacher professional development design must be consistent with subject or grade curriculum and support the school improvement plan. As a result, teachers will be able to take away best practices that are currently being used by their colleagues.

#### **Description and Goals**

A 3-day professional development seminar will provide teachers and parents with the information about the need to continuously implement practices that encourage high



expectations for students. A school-wide professional development seminar will equip 4th-6th-grade teachers with skills and knowledge necessary for implementing these practices into their teaching styles, thus giving students the chance to experience the demands of high expectations. This, in turn, will influence student motivation, which will ultimately influence their academic achievement. Parents will be provided information about the need to possess high expectations and will be able to implement the suggestions from the session into their parenting style. This will provide parents the opportunity to see if their positive expectations resulted in an increase in student motivation and achievement. If the outcome is positive, this may give students a sense of self-worth and determination. For the most part, parents and teachers are responsible for ensuring academic success for students. They can do so through demonstrating positive and high expectations.

### **Rationale**

The local problem that prompted this research study was low academic achievement and low student motivation. The problem will be addressed by the project through communication and recommendations of current critical inquiry strategies that are used to increase student academic achievement and motivation. The study sought a solution to the declining academic performance of students and aimed to identify strategies that could be used to encourage student success. The project is supported by research findings based on teacher, administrator, and parent interviews. The problem of low academic achievement is addressed by this project by communicating the study findings and informing parents and teachers of current practices that have the potential to

improve student motivation and academic achievement, high parent and teacher expectations in particular. All participants indicated that high expectations positively influenced motivation, which increased academic achievement.

The project includes a professional development seminar that helps inform the participants of the importance of expectations, as well as provides suggestions for the ways these can be conveyed to the students. Research has shown that the values parents and teachers place on education are reflected in students valuing their own education (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Thus, students who are motivated and have high expectations may increase their chances for success. The project was developed based on the data analysis that focused on parent, teacher, and administrator expectations. The project format was chosen based on the research conducted on professional development as an effective communication tool (Telese, 2012). Informing parents and teachers of their influence and providing an opportunity for parents and teachers to learn about best practices may increase the exposure students have to experience the high expectations that lead to student success. Therefore, the professional development seminar was designed with the goal of communicating research results and making recommendations for current practices to encourage academic success and increase motivation.

### **Review of Literature**

Making every effort to improve student motivation and academic success, a 3-day professional development seminar is proposed. The program will allow parents and teachers to gain awareness of the impact expectations have on academic achievement. A

review of literature was conducted to gain more information on the concerns that surfaced during the researcher's qualitative case study that explored teachers', administrators', and parents' expectations. The findings yielded by the parent and teacher participants' interviews related to student achievement and parent-teacher expectations were interconnected. Extant literature thus focused on the topics of expectations, academic performance, and ways to promote success, best practices, and professional development seminars, as these were the main themes that emerged from this study.

Journal articles and books were found through the Walden Library, by using the following search engines, ERIC, ProQuest, Thoreau, and Google Scholar. Key terms such as *expectations*, *student achievement*, *parent expectations*, *teacher expectations*, *administrator expectations*, *academic performance*, *parent teacher organization*, and *professional development seminars* were searched. Only articles published in peer-reviewed journals within the last five years were retrieved. Each article was reviewed for relevance and grouped by category. In addition, aiming to find other primary sources related to the researched topic, the reference section of each relevant article was reviewed.

### **Theories to Guide Project Development**

A professional development seminar will be created to inform 4th-6th grade teachers of the impact of positive expectations through critical inquiry and to obtain ideas of best practices that have been found to increase academic achievement and student motivation. PDs led by teachers will offer opportunities for synthesizing and integrating

vast amounts of resources drawn from various teaching and learning practices (Pella, 2011). In order to affect a change in teaching, it is necessary for teachers to receive guidance and support throughout the implementation stages that can be achieved via PD.

Teachers learn through inquiry into their practices, decision-making, and conversations (Klieger & Yakobovitch, 2012). Teachers can also observe each other, articulate their ideas, and discuss their viewpoints. The teachers incorporating the information from the seminar on expectations may influence motivation and academic achievement of their students. Teachers are believed to share some common characteristics that may lead to professional learning, which in turn leads to student achievement (Blank, 2013). According to Blank, professional development that focuses on content, engages teachers in different activities, and provides hands-on learning for the teachers will actually improve student academic success. The author also reported that teachers setting learning goals for themselves improved their knowledge, which eventually increased student achievement.

Parents who have the opportunity to learn about the influence their expectations may have on the academic achievement of their children may place themselves in a situation that enables them to support their children. According to the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (2014), everyone benefits if learning is supported by the educational entity and the family. The parents, teachers, schools, and communities are stronger and more empowered. The development of the PD was guided by the interactive model of program planning. Caffarella (2002) defined this model as a step-by-step multi-component guide that aids in the development of planning educational and

training programs for adults. When planning a program, the needs, ideas, and context should be considered (Caffarella, 2002). The program planning model will guide the development of the 3-day PTO seminar for 4th-6th grade teachers on using critical inquiry to model higher expectations.

### **Expectations**

According to Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies (2007), parental involvement is important for students to achieve better test scores, higher graduation rates, and be adjusted. Thus, the PD sessions are valuable strategies that can serve to inform parents and teachers of the impact of incorporating high expectations. Student achievement is posited to be profoundly impacted by expectations (Mistry, 2009). By constantly reinforcing the idea that students have the necessary ability to achieve academically, teachers and parents are helping them believe in themselves. According to Pringle, Lyons, and Booker (2010), high expectations produce high performance. Therefore, many students may invest a greater effort in academics than they have in previous classes if parents and teachers expect that. The Pygmalion effect states that a person will accomplish more, or demonstrate high performance when it is expected of him or her (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Many individuals will perform well to achieve or exceed this expectation. Based on this premise, if a teacher goes into a classroom expecting a high level of cooperation and behavior, this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to Rubie-Davies et al. (2010), the experience and desires of parents are likely to be emulated in the self-expectations and beliefs of students.

Parents can communicate their interests in and about the schoolwork of their children through expectations, which must be reinforced daily. This is done through frequent discussions regarding schoolwork and providing means for the completion of schoolwork (Marzano, 2003). When parents expect, demonstrate, and validate high expectations from their children, they associate themselves less with peers who exhibit bad behaviors (Bowen, Hopson, Rose, & Glennie, 2012). Consequently, family environment has important implications for students' achievement motivation. Parental support, parenting techniques, and their influence on children could affect comprehension and success (Kodi & Baharudin, 2010). Thus, high levels of expectations expressed to students are part of the enhancement of their achievement.

The more children interact with their peers and the curriculum the more they are believed to learn. This is also believed to be one advantage of Kagan strategies of learning. Meaningful engagement reaches a greater number of students and allows them to develop meaningful relationships with the curriculum, which will eventually provide background knowledge. Learning is facilitated through prior knowledge because it offers the opportunity to establish connections between new information and previous experiences. Therefore, it is evident that prior knowledge significantly influences student achievement.

If students are supported and motivated, their high level of success on lesson concepts will be most likely achievable. Conversely, students that are not motivated will likely be limited to a lower level of success (Marzano, 2003). According to Ward, Strambler, and Linke (2013), set expectations are important for students to achieve

success in the education environment. Thus, educators should communicate to their students what they expect from them in the classroom. In addition, students should be held responsible for these expectations. Ward and colleagues believed that educators should demonstrate classroom practices, along with verbal expectations.

PD may help promote student motivation and academic achievement through demonstrating high expectations. Empirical evidence shows that children exhibiting positive achievement motivation have a desire to learn and believe that school is important (Brown, 2004; Bowen et al., 2012). During the PD, teachers can outline their expectations of parents and students. As a result, the parents will be informed about what children are learning and the expectations that are set forth for students by the teachers, as well as the ways they can assist in meeting them.

### **Academic Performance**

Thus far, researchers have not been able to explain the low results of the effort to close the achievement gap and address poor academic performance. However, some researchers have posited that personal and social-familial contributions are possible explanatory variables (Lee & Shute, 2010). According to this premise, student involvement, learning techniques, school environment, and social-familial influences are factors that contribute to K-12 academic achievement. Lee and Shute (2010) proposed that, for optimal school performance to occur, student attitude, behavior, and cognition must work in accordance with their social-contextual environment. Therefore, by engaging families through PTO, it is believed that students will make greater gains. According to Evans (2013), effective partnerships improve children's academic, social,

and emotional development. When schools forge partnerships with families, they can communicate factors that improve student academic achievement and success.

Oates (2009) attempted to explain the achievement gap by reporting that education success, non-financial assets, school accountability, and preconceived opinions were viable explanations for the evident black-white academic performance gap. The author found that school accountability and preconceived opinions were the essential reasons for test performance differentials. It is believed racial and socio-economic privilege results in a community that hinders school success for certain groups. According to Oates, student performance is more affected by what happens to students when they get to school than their social and cultural capital. It was further noted that the preconceptions regarding ability of specific races to achieve success in education has the greatest effect on black and white students' performances than any other factor.

Polidano, Hanel, and Buddelmeyer (2013) reported that the most important factor for the gap in school completion is educational aspirations of low SES students and their parents. This notion is consistent with the concept that own and parental aspirations are important in predicting test score outcomes. Low academic performance is also believed to contribute to school completion (Polidano et al.). Hence, experts have posited that test scores from early school years are an important predictor of school completion. According to the authors, there is the chance that school dropout is much higher among youth from low SES backgrounds. It was suggested to provide parents with information on the potential disadvantage that their children face if they leave school early in hopes of lifting educational aspirations and academic performance. Goal setting is believed to be



another plausible explanation for the gap in academic performance. Student performance on assessments and belief in their own ability is assumed to be improved as a result of setting personal goals (Smith, 2012) and having confidence in achieving those goals (Wesson & Derrer-Rendall, 2011). Therefore, one may conclude that, by setting and attaining goals, students develop inner confidence that, in turn, leads to fulfillment of academic performance. Experts have posited that academic success and performance gaps are the outcome of factors in the environment and a divide in the resources (Sparks, 2011). According to the Department of Education, the policies for school and education funding can intensify opportunity gaps.

Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (2011) reported that peer pressure, negative stereotyping, and test prejudice might contribute to achievement gaps and low academic performances. Although society wants to close the achievement gap and increase student performance, little progress has unfortunately been made to that effect. As recorded in Education Week (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011), recommendations, such as reducing class size, raising academic standards, and improving the quality of teachers, have not resulted in reducing the disparity in academic performance among socioeconomic classes.

By attending the PD, teachers and parents can be made aware of how academic engagement (Oates, 2009), goal setting (Smith, 2012) and environmental factors (Sparks, 2011) may affect academic performance. The goal of the project is simple—parents are encouraged to communicate about school and their expectations of high performance. As reported by the U.S. Department of Education (2008), student learning is greatly

enhanced by parents talking with their children. In particular, talking about school and being responsive to children's problems was posited to lead to improved academic performance and school success. Professional development seminars address these initiatives and give strategies for improved student and teacher performance (NCLB, 2001).

### **Ways to Promote Success**

Walker (2008) reported that Reg Weaver, president of the National Education Association, emphasized the need for students to be well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills that will enable them to be competitive in 21st century society. This can be achieved through PD and PTO sessions where everyone is working together to support learning. It is believed partnership among family, school, and community raises student aspirations and motivation. Successful parents are proactive in their child's education. Parents promote academic success in many ways. For example, by supervising their children by monitoring and controlling their behavior, parents optimize their academic achievement (Marzano, 2003). Effective home supervision includes monitoring homework, promoting after school activities, and limiting the amount of time spent watching television (Marzano, 2003). Providing environments that are rich in interesting activities arouses children's curiosity and enhances exploration. Children's thinking can be stimulated with puzzles, educational books, and computer games. In addition, parents that provide their children with educational learning materials can accelerate academic growth (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

According to Vagi (2007), parents promote success by either teaching their children in certain subject areas or hiring coaches to tutor their children. In his study, Vagi reported that, as a result of these actions, children achieved higher reading levels and growth in math. Rockwell (2011) and Davies-Kean (2005) indicated that having parents that are involved in school activities enhances student confidence. Davis-Kean (2005) further stated that mothers who expose their children to complex language and learning activities promote intellectual and academic success through independent thinking and problem solving. Cohen, Pickeral, and McCloskey (2009) found that interpersonal relationships within a school might be a distinct dimension of school climate that can function to build morale and connectedness among students and teachers, which leads to student success. These positive student-teacher relationships may be linked to positive student outcomes, exemplified through higher student success. According to McCollum and Yoder (2011), the way that students perceived teacher expectations has a greater effect on the academic aspirations of students than does their school environment. The culture of the school, as well as the relationship among teachers and students, is believed to influence school environment. This directly affects academic expectations, school satisfaction, and academic performance (McCollum & Yoder, 2011). Thus, it is likely that school experience and teacher relationships influence academic aspirations. Students who desire to succeed put forth efforts in academic endeavors and engage in classroom learning activities. Therefore, one can conclude that student aspirations are indicators of high levels of academic success.

Johnson and Street (2012) proposed that, for students to achieve academic performance gains, teachers should focus on instruction, practice, and application. Their study findings indicated that effective programs establish initial learning, allow practice of skills and concepts taught, and provide an opportunity to apply these skills and concepts to real world activities. According to Johnson and Street, best practices in both curriculum and instruction must occur to obtain student growth. Moreover, teachers need appropriate and current instruction materials to teach the instructional standards. For methods to be effective, they must promote the learning of the educational materials and keep students engaged for success.

Clearinghouse Report (2007) provided evidence on a multi-year prevention program that was designed to help elementary school children who demonstrate early aggressive and disruptive behaviors improve academic achievement and experience success. The two child-focused components of the program are proposed to enhance emotional, behavior, and academic success. On the other hand, the two parent components are posited to promote positive relations, effective discipline practices, and parent involvement in school. Therefore, one may conclude that implementing and improving upon these entities will improve academic performance and student success. With respect to improving academic performance, Elias and Leverett (2011) explained that, in order to not leave children behind, school officials needed to continuously consult on the educational, social, and psychological development of students. According to the authors, this can be achieved by developing internal abilities, establishing relationships with outside authorities, and focusing on social and emotional learning programs.

Presumably, another effective instructional method of promoting student academic success is implementing supplemental instruction. Supplemental instruction such as peer-assisted learning may develop study- skills, enhance motivation, and academic performance (Ning & Downing, 2010). Current learning strategies and techniques may also increase interest and improve students' quality of learning (Omalicheva, 2012).

By attending the 3-day PD seminars, teachers can collaborate on the suggested implementation of supplemental instructions to enhance expectations. During the PD, teachers will share ways they have adjusted their teaching practice and discuss new strategies for motivating students, improving academic performance, incorporating higher-order thinking, and setting higher expectations. In addition, by attending the PD sessions, parents can gain important information on the impact their set expectations may have on the level of academic achievement their child demonstrates. Parents will also be given information about implementing strategies to enhance their expectations as well as their child's expectations in hopes of improving student academic success.

### **Best Practices**

Best practices are effective teaching strategies and instructional activities identified by researchers, which are used to support student achievement (Morrow, Gambrell, & Duke, 2011). The opportunities provided through PD can help teachers become knowledgeable of current best practices. During these seminars, teachers are also given support and information on how to effectively implement these practices and strategies into their teaching and instruction. Among the currently available practices,

most widely utilized are differentiated instruction, expository teaching, inquiry-based instruction, and cooperative learning.

Tomlinson (2000) defined differentiation as a means of tailoring instruction to meet individual needs. According to Tomlinson, differentiation comprises four specific elements: (a) content, i.e., what needs to be learned; (b) process, i.e., the means of engagement; (c) products, referring to the projects used for applying what has been learned; and (d) learning environment, with the focus on the functionality of the classroom. Tomlinson also stated that, because differentiation addresses the different interests and ways students learn, it is an optimal approach to learning, as it meets the objectives of varied student populations. By incorporating differentiated instruction, teachers are helping all students achieve. Teachers are utilizing students' learning styles and social learning, which is believed to increase student engagement and performance. Through PDs, teachers can acquire new strategies and techniques for better teaching practices, which will provide the best learning experience for all students.

The direct approach is also widely practiced, which includes deductive, demonstrative, and expository strategies. In adopting the expository teaching strategy, the teacher is the purveyor of knowledge through lecturing and students simply receive the information. However, Klahr (2009) highlighted the importance of having variability in direct/expository instruction. He further suggested that students should be given some level of guidance to measure what has been learned, as well as be allowed to practice those skills independently.

Expository instruction is believed to go beyond presenting facts; rather, it is geared towards providing clear and concise information, so allowing students to easily make connections among concepts. Structuring a lesson using expository instruction helps students to remain focused (Mahdavia & Tensfeldt, 2013). According to the National Reading Panel (2006), an effective strategy would include direct instruction that entails providing explanations, modeling, guided practice, and demonstrating application. This is supported by Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich, and Tenenbaum (2011) who noted that outcomes concerning unassisted-discovery tasks seem limited. Their findings suggest that optimal approaches to teaching include guided scaffold tasks, timely feedback to learners' ideas, or worked examples to help with successful completion of the task. Teachers can develop this strategy through continuous support and opportunities for providing/receiving feedback during professional development.

Experiential approach to learning is also widely adopted in teaching. It includes exploratory approaches, such as inductive and problem-solving, discovery and laboratory, as well as reflective and inquiry strategies for learning. Maab and Doorman (2013) referred to inquiry-based learning as a teaching culture and classroom practice in which students inquire and ask questions, explore, and evaluate. Their learning is driven by open questions and multiple-solution strategies and the teacher is proactive in assisting struggling students and challenging others. This approach to learning uses content to improve how students process information and problem solve. When teacher adopts this approach, he/she is the facilitator of learning, thus allowing the responsibility for learning

to lie with the students. IBL emphasizes the “how”, rather than “what” of learning. Hence, students are required to construct knowledge through active engagement.

Instructional strategies are moving away from rote memorization toward making the learning process actively engaging (Sigler & Saam, 2012). Research findings reported by James, Rabe, and Rosen (2013) suggest that using discovery learning approaches promotes meaningful learning and student success. (IBL) describes educational instruction that is driven by student inquiry, rather than teacher lessons. According to James et al., the role of investigator allows students to develop the skills of observation, questioning, testing, analyzing, and drawing conclusions.

An important IBL characteristic is that it asks questions that promote higher-order thinking. Spronken-Smith and Walker (2010) contended that inquiry learning involves motivating and interesting questions. It also employs a range of resources from which students can obtain information. Finally, the teacher plays a new role as guide or facilitator. However, in order for teachers to effectively function in this role, professional development must be provided to encourage and change teaching styles and practices. Achieving large-scale implementation of IBL in day-to-day teaching requires devoting considerable attention to teachers’ education and their professional development.

Best practice strategies are ways of implementing programs that have been previously shown to be effective, both in widespread practice and through research studies conducted at multiple sites. When teachers commit to using best practices, they are committing to using all available resources to ensure student success. However, for this initiative to yield maximum benefits, teachers need professional development where



they can collaborate with colleagues about what works or not and get new ideas in order to implement strategies.

### **Impact of Professional Development Seminars**

The project that implements the findings yielded by the study is a 3-day professional development seminar, as effective PD remains at the core of teacher improvement. In particular, effective professional development exemplifies what teachers are having success with in their classrooms (Beavers, 2009). Teachers attending PDs come with a vast supply of pertinent experiences that must be valued, and the opportunity to share and receive confirmation must be given, as it is critical to teacher learning. Professional development programs must provide teachers a vehicle for professional growth and adaptation for the classroom (Beavers, 2009).

The goal of PDs is to demonstrate strategies that are successful in student achievement, rather than focusing on the inadequacies of teacher instruction. Reeves (2008) suggested that the learning environment for teachers should be safe and allow for others to consider alternatives to mastery that meet their own classroom needs. Teachers should be encouraged to share best practices, take part in anonymous case studies, and demonstrate how they overcame academic or behavioral challenges. Through the development of effective networks, teachers are allowed to share thoughts, ideas, and best practices that create a vision that allows for the development of teacher leaders, as well as optimal and sustainable professional development for teachers. Professional development is supportive, continuous, and provides the opportunities for the teachers to reflect on their teaching practices (Duncan-Howell, 2010). The establishment of

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is one way in which to develop professional collaboration and learning in order to share effective ideas, strategies, and practices to improve student learning (Prytula, 2012).

The impact of professional development seminars and parent-teacher meetings on student learning is huge. During the PTO meetings, current practices for enhancing student academic success, as well as other issues, can be addressed. Similarly, PD seminars can be used to discuss and voice concerns of teachers and administrators on expectations and student learning. In addition, teachers can provide information on the ways they incorporate expectations in order to achieve student successes.

### **Implementation**

The findings of this research offer the opportunity to disseminate the gathered material in the form of an informational seminar within the school. In the following sections, I will examine what was uncovered and discuss the impact of the professional development seminar. To implement the project, a meeting will be scheduled with the professional development program coordinator to discuss how the seminar content meets the mission of the school district and the result of expectations on increased student learning. I would suggest having a meeting with the professional development team and the president of the PTO, to work out additional details of which I may not be aware. After meeting with the professional development team, I will discuss with the administrator her role and responsibilities in the implementation of the PD sessions. In the meeting with the administrator, I will provide an overview of the program.

I will serve as the program designer as well as the program instructor. The content, delivery method, and assessment strategy for the professional development seminar will be developed. The content will be applicable and aligned to the program objectives. I will meet with the director of professional development to discuss the requirements for the professional development seminar. As the program instructor, I will be responsible for relaying the information to the participants while maintaining their attention. For a successful implementation of the seminar, it is essential that everyone involved acknowledges the importance and relevance of the topics presented. Once the support for the project has been gained, the potential resources, existing support, and potential barriers for the creation of a successful PD will be identified

#### **Potential Resources and Existing Support**

Permission from the superintendent would need to be obtained prior to contacting school administrators about conducting a professional development seminar. The school district has professional development days already allotted on the school calendar. The proposed research site allows their gymnasium or cafeteria to be utilized for group seminars and workshops. Existing tables, chairs, and a large meeting area could potentially serve as resources for the PD seminar. Other resources necessary for the professional development seminar include access to a computer with Power Point software, a surge protector and an extension cord, a projector unit, and a microphone. Copies of the Power Point presentation in handout format, along with writing utensils, will need to be provided for all attendees. During the seminar, restroom facilities equipped with paper towels and soap should also be accessible to the participants.

Existing supports for seminars and workshops at the local school include a district calendar in which professional development days are noted, a district professional development coordinator, and a space suitable for large group meetings. Skilled teachers within the school will also serve as a resource for follow-up and support for new teachers. The administrator might identify teachers whose students excel because of incorporating high expectations within instructions and from students.

### **Potential Barriers**

One potential barrier that might affect the success of the professional development seminars is limited teacher interest in the initiative. Within the school district, teachers attend numerous professional development programs and might not have a desire for any additional seminars. To encourage attendance, teachers will be eligible to receive continuing education units (CEUs) for attending professional development seminars. Another potential barrier might also be the disinterest of parents, which would affect their participation. Some parents may feel that the session is not important or does not concern them. In addition, some parents may be working during the time of the scheduled session. All parents will receive a letter stating the importance of their presence, along with an overview of the research findings that contributed to the content of the PD.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

It is imperative that the information about the study be conveyed to the school and parents of the community. School officials will be informed of the professional development seminar opportunities, dates, locations, and times. The administrator will

determine when the presentation will be held, based on the schedule of other pre-determined professional development programs set by the district. The seminar will be held on three different days during the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others**

Everyone involved in this study has his or her own personal responsibility. As a researcher, I must maintain the integrity of this project study. This will be achieved by preserving the confidentiality of the participants while making the general findings of the project available to the public. The professional development coordinator will review the seminar information about student academic achievement and parent, teacher, and administrator expectations. She will also suggest to the building principal when to schedule the seminar, based on the dates available on the district's prescheduled professional development calendar.

Acting as the program designer, I will develop the content, delivery method, and assessment strategy for the professional development seminar. I will align the content to the program objectives and meet with the professional development coordinator to discuss the requirements for the professional development seminar. In my role as program instructor, I will set up the venue and obtain the necessary instructional technology for the seminar. I will relay the information in a manner that will encourage participants to incorporate change upon completion of the seminar. I will also be responsible for tracking teacher enrollment. While at the seminar, the teachers are expected to actively participate in the seminar while taking notes and asking questions. They will also analyze and synthesize information, as well as implement the information

presented. Parents will provide feedback to the teachers regarding possible strategies that could be used to increase student achievement and motivation. In turn, parents will become knowledgeable of the strategies teachers use. All seminar attendees will also complete the summative assessment. The principal's responsibility is to select and recruit the teachers to present their personal accomplishments and strategies during the PD. My desire is for everyone involved in educating students to come away from the seminar with a greater awareness of the impact that expectations have on student academic achievement. I hope that the PD presentations will motivate teachers, administrators, and parents to take on the role of encouraging students, becoming more involved in student learning, and setting higher expectations for students. As a result, I hope that students will be encouraged to take on the responsibility of becoming successful learners.

### **Project Evaluation**

Questionnaires were prepared in order to determine whether the seminars and sessions are producing the desired results. These questionnaires will be distributed at each presentation and the information they yield will be used to make improvements on an ongoing basis. The summative evaluation data will measure program outcomes and compare the overall perceptions of the program with its intended success (Spaulding, 2008). The results of the evaluation will be used to make informed decisions regarding the content and length of the presentations to increase the effectiveness of the seminar. The key stakeholders will be the teachers, administrators, and parents who may benefit from the information.

### **Implications Including Social Change**

The PD project meets the demand of the learners in my local community because it focuses on the importance and the impact that expectations have on academic achievement. The project provides elements of effective professional development in that it is site-based, ongoing, collaborative, and incorporates reflective evaluation. It is believed that attending professional development seminars allows teachers to learn new information and implement that new knowledge in order to make their teaching practices more effective. This should equate to more students being taught by highly expectant teachers, which should lead to greater student achievement. In addition, by attending the PD, parents will learn the importance of expectations and acquire skills and strategies to use in order to become more effective parent facilitators of learning. This should equate to greater parent expectations and potentially result in improved student achievement.

### **Local Community**

These programs are important to students because expectations can define their success. Low expectations can have a devastating effect, not only on students, but also schools, homes, and communities if there is no motivation to succeed. Low motivation can eventually result in low self-esteem, greater drop-out rates, and increased unemployment. The reciprocal of low self-esteem is an abundance of self-worth, which results from high self-esteem and achieving or exceeding one's expectations. The students' self-worth benefits the school and the community, because there will be a greater number of higher achieving graduates entering the colleges and work force. This is important to families because they want the best for their children, and this includes

school and societal success. The impact this study may have on the local community, as well as society as a whole, would be evident in an increase in parent-teacher expectations, student motivation, and ultimately academic achievement.

### **Far-Reaching Implications**

If this PD program is found to be successful in this school, it could potentially provide an avenue for improvement in the local school district and any other educational setting. Because the program is individualized, it can address the concerns of a specific school. It is designed to be facilitated by the existing staff currently excelling within their school. Ideally, this program would be implemented nationally, thus providing all teachers with information that can be incorporated into their daily teaching practices with the potential of increasing the graduation rate. If students are not motivated and do not feel support from their parents and teachers, they are more likely to drop out. Providing parents with information that can help them to become better facilitators of their children's learning will increase parent knowledge of the importance of their role in their child's success. This, along with strategies that can be adopted to improve expectations, may, in turn, bolster student motivation and self-esteem and thus enhance academic achievement. Students who have high self-esteem, motivation, and expectations for success have a great means of accomplishing great things. This study is also significant in the broader context of scholarly research because it will add to the literature involving parent and teacher expectations on academic achievement.



## **Conclusion**

The current project was developed in response to the need to improve student motivation and academic achievement through setting and conveying greater teacher, administrator, and parent expectations. Based on the findings yielded by the interviews with these three groups of stakeholders, which focused on their expectations for student success, a professional development series was developed in an effort to improve student motivation and academic outcomes. The goal of the PD is to provide pertinent information and thus encourage teachers, administrators, and parents to promote student learning by demonstrating and setting high expectations for students.

A 3-day professional development seminar was chosen because of the effectiveness of this method in informing large groups. During the seminar, teachers and parents will be informed about the impact their expectations have on student motivation and academic achievement. The teachers will also be given detailed information on the current practices of other teachers within their school who possess high expectations and whose students are achieving above or beyond their peers. Parents will be given valuable information about the significance of parental expectations and will be given strategies they could adopt in order to improve their children's motivation and academic outcomes. Meetings will be held with the school superintendent, the school board, the professional development coordinator, and the administrator to discuss the seminar topics, resources, and dissemination of the information.

PD programs will be ongoing, site-based, and relevant to the school's needs. In determining the effectiveness of the PD, a summative evaluation will be conducted after

the completion of the program. The results of the assessment will assist in adjusting the program content and format for future presentations in order to increase the potential for success. These systemized programs are motivated by the specific data yielded by the interviews with teachers and parents and are relevant to their practices and expectations.

Student motivation is one implication envisaged for social change as a result of the PD. This, in turn, may result in enhancing self-esteem, which may improve school performance. The desire to succeed in school leads to increased graduation and preparedness for the workforce. In the broader national context, the program is providing an opportunity for students, schools, and the community, as it is envisaged that a greater number of students that are highly motivated and ready to be productive citizens in society will graduate from schools.

The following section will identify the strengths and limitations of the professional development in addressing the problem of student academic achievement and motivation. Recommendations for addressing the problem differently and alternative solutions to the problem will also be suggested. This will be followed by my reflections and conclusions regarding the project study. My reflections will include a discussion of scholarship, project development, and leadership. I will provide an analysis of myself as a practitioner, scholar, and project developer. Finally, I will address the project's potential impact on social change. This section will conclude with my reflections about the project's implications for future research and possible directions for further studies in this field.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this case study project was to investigate the expectations of teachers, school administrators, and parents of 4th- through 6th-grade students about their students' academic achievement. It also included developing a professional development seminar to increase the awareness of the impact of expectations and to provide strategies to help improve academic achievement and student motivation. This final section delineates the strengths and limitations of the overall project study in addressing the problem, and makes suggestions for remediation. I also discuss my scholarship as a practitioner and leader of social change. Finally, this section closes with a discussion of the study's implications for positive social change and suggestions for further research on the problem in this field.

### **Project Strengths**

The greatest strength of this project is that it was designed as a data-driven, individualized professional development program focused on recognizing the importance of setting high expectations through critical inquiry. This individualized program was based on real data derived from interviews with the teachers, administrators, and parents within the school. The teachers are also allowed an opportunity to engage in two lessons where critical inquiry skills are used to model high expectations of students. The study findings are expected to assist teachers and administrators with creating collaborative professional development programs that are based on the practice of inquiry skills in an instructional lesson, modeling and supporting the development of higher expectations for

students. Another strength of the project is the expected impact it may have on this school by addressing the problematic issues of academic achievement and motivation. The study may assist teachers and school administrators with creating and implementing programs to improve parent expectations and student achievement.

#### **Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations**

The project is limited by the requirement of teacher and parental involvement that is imperative to its success. There is a minimal chance that some teachers may not feel the need to change their practices and perceive this as an added pressure. Their willingness to participate is vital to the success of the project. Thus, it might be advisable to provide incentives and rewards for high student performance as a means of increasing teacher participation. It is also recommended to encourage teachers to utilize Kagan strategies to implement effective classroom discussions. Principal observations and walk-throughs are recommended for monitoring the effective use of Kagan strategies.

The information reported here is limited to the opinions of the study participant pool members, which was small in size. Because I only investigated one school in the district and limited the participants involved with students in Grades 4-6 only, an accurate representation of perspectives on expectations may not have been obtained. I recommend that further research include the expectations of elementary and high school teachers and parents. This would provide a better overview of the expectations that all district teachers, administrators, and parents hold for academic achievement of students, thus, providing bases for using critical inquiry to model higher expectations and achieve greater student academic achievement.

### **Scholarship**

I believe that the knowledge I have acquired during this study has made me a better researcher and writer. I learned that, when faced with a challenge, I should ask questions and seek information that will help me gain clarity. When I began this journey, I did not fully appreciate the importance of collegiality or embracing someone else's views. I saw strength in self-sufficiency and did not typically reach out for assistance unless I absolutely had to. In my role as a teacher, I was often a valuable source of advice for others. As a result, having to ask for help made me feel very awkward during this journey. Fortunately, this process has taught me differently and has helped me change my concept of thinking. I have learned that, to be fully effective, ideas should be combined with collegial engagement. Most importantly, I should not be embarrassed to ask for help in order to reach the desired goals and attain self-improvement.

This collaboration and dialogue with fellow classmates and my committee has caused me to grow as a student and educator. I have developed a much deeper respect for online learning than I had before. My scholarship was developed through reading, research, and instructor feedback. Before I commenced this study, my biggest challenge was scholarly writing. While I have already made significant progress in this field, I am continuously acquiring new knowledge of how to effectively organize my thoughts, elaborate on those thoughts, and then connect them in a logical manner.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

During this process, I have learned how to research and analyze data, which was helpful in developing the appropriate project. I learned that professional development

must be data-driven, rooted in sound educational theory, and be relevant to the participants. Thus, I designed a professional development seminar as a part of this study based on individualized data derived from the study findings which is specifically intended to foster social change in that community. The program must be monitored with specific outcome-based measures that will direct the success and effectiveness of future presentations to help promote student academic success. Therefore, a summative evaluation of the project will be used to measure the delivery of the PD program. This summative evaluation will allow me to reflect on what is required to improve future presentations.

### **Leadership and Change**

Through this process, I have learned that a good leader not only leads but also follows. A leader needs to continue to learn and grow. A good learner acknowledges when he/she needs help in order to become more effective. By obtaining greater knowledge, a leader can bring about even greater social change. A leader needs to acknowledge and praise his or her colleagues for their achievements. As a result of conducting this research study and having worked on the writing of this dissertation for almost two years, I have learned how strong my commitment is in completing a project. I have also developed self-confidence necessary for becoming an effective leader. Consequently, this increased self-confidence has given me the courage to apply for and diligently pursue several leadership positions within the district. At this point in my career, my responsibility in promoting social change focuses on better educating my

students using current practices, while assisting fellow colleagues in becoming better teachers.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

I have definitely grown as a scholar. Through investigation and research, I gained a deeper understanding of the expectations of teachers, administrators, and parents for students' academic achievement. I researched, identified, and reported on several programs that could be used to reach teachers and parents in order to enhance student academic achievement. These programs also suggested strategies that could be used to enhance parent and teacher performances. I have acquired information about different levels of expectations and have learned how to present information during professional development. Through this process, I have also become a better researcher and writer. As a result of research and class assignments, I have become a more confident and committed individual, as well as a valuable collaborator. I have also learned to love the process of acquiring new ideas to better myself as an educator, as I have come to appreciate that, no matter how much I already know, there is always more to learn.

In analyzing myself as a scholar, I must reflect on my level of commitment to this project. I set goals for what I wanted to learn and accomplish in life and from this Teacher Leadership program. Along this journey, there were many times I felt like giving up. Yet, facing obstacles and challenges has helped me to learn to persevere and try even harder to succeed. I decided that I was not a quitter and took the proper steps to refocus. I take pride in my work and strive for excellence in everything that I do. I have learned that, with perseverance and faith, everything is possible.

**Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

As an education practitioner, I have learned that it is important to be a life-long learner in my field in order to grow within the profession. I must continue to conduct research on current teaching practices because education is an evolving profession. This project afforded me the opportunity to continue my education and delve deeper into the understanding of expectations and practices that are most effective in enhancing student academic achievement. As a practitioner, I have acquired greater understanding of the value of asking for help and seeking opinions of others who may be more knowledgeable in certain areas. Going forward, I will work on interacting with colleagues who have social change and student achievement as their goals.

**Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

As a project developer, I have learned how to make research-based decisions informed by the knowledge of ways to promote success within a particular setting. I used the information that I found in the extant literature on high expectations, critical inquiry, academic performance, and ways to promote student success to inform the content of the professional development seminar within a particular school. Because I am passionate about encouraging a positive change, I am continuing to improve my project development skills, as this will help me become a more proficient scholar practitioner.

**The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

The outcomes from this project can have an explicit impact on this school. Within the school and district in which this study was situated, school programs can help improve motivation and student expectations through inquiry. Family programs can aid



with suggestions and resources to help parents with educating their children. These initiatives may help in creating social change in this city.

One of the school system's core values is being committed to continually improve its educational process by outlining desired learning outcomes and expecting high levels of student performance. The professional development seminar can promote positive social change by informing the stakeholders of the importance of establishing high expectations for students and suggesting current practices to promote student academic achievement. High student expectations through critical inquiry may increase student motivation and, in turn, influence their academic performance. This increased performance may lead to higher graduation rates, college readiness, and better preparedness for the workforce. Globally, public consciousness of the impact of expectations is needed as well. This program can be applied to any school or district that believes student academic achievement is impacted by parent or teacher expectations.

#### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The project could have positive social implications because individual needs are being addressed. By schools developing their own PDs on expectations using their own data and collaboratively working with peers and administrators, it will be ensured that their specific needs are met. Application of PD can potentially affect any teaching practice and student performance that has been identified as needing improvement. The key for an effective PD is that it must be data driven and supported by teachers and administrators. The current study only addressed the expectations for student academics of 4th through 6th grade teachers, administrators, and parents in one intermediate school

located in Southeast United States. A future direction for this study would be to investigate the views of elementary and high school teachers, administrators, and parents. Ideally, the study would involve a comparison of findings across different grade levels, as this would help establish whether teacher, administrator, and parent expectations change as students progress through grades.

### **Conclusion**

Individualized behaviors and attitudes are influenced by various systems, including friends, family, work, school, social environments, and the community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, in light of the need for increased student motivation and academic achievement, investigating the expectations of teachers, administrators, and parents is a timely and appropriate initiative. Educators strongly believe that parent and teacher expectations have a significant impact on student achievement. The teachers and parents that took part in this study indicated that they possess extremely high expectations and provide ways to promote student academic achievement. Student success is contingent on all stakeholders working together to determine what works for every child.

The results of the study led to the development of a project that allows schools to design their own PD based on the analysis of their own data pertaining to expectations. The project was designed as a data-driven individualized PD seminar that demonstrated how a critical inquiry lesson could be used as an instructional tool to model high expectations. It also provided the opportunity for teachers to design and develop lessons that incorporate the instructional development of inquiry skills as a way to model and

support student high expectations. The more teachers collaborate on best practices for what works within their classrooms, the greater student engagement, learning, and teacher growth will be. As teachers become more skilled scholar practitioners, students will have more potential for achieving greater academic success.

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## Appendix A: Professional Development Seminar Design Proposal

### **Description**

Based on the information gathered through, teacher, administrator, and parent interviews, a three day professional development series has been developed to explicitly describe how high teacher, administrator, and parent expectations for students can improve academic achievement. Professional development will be planned for teachers, parents, and administrators in order to demonstrate ways that high expectations can positively affect student learning with an ultimate goal of closing achievement gaps among student groups (Desimone, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this 3-day professional development training is to present teachers, administrators, and parents with an overview how expectations can improve the academic achievement of students. This 3-day professional development project uses the development of a lesson on critical inquiry skills to model high expectations with students. Inquiry is a characteristic of higher order thinking. Students learn from individual discoveries and peers. The goal of an instructional lesson on inquiry is to develop student higher order thinking through a process of individual discovery and collaboration with peers, in order for students to gain a deeper understanding of concepts through the cognitive processes of inquiry. It is believed that teachers potentially influence student learning through the modeling of their expectations and behaviors. Therefore, the lesson on inquiry skills is used to model higher expectations. By setting a high level of expectation for all students through the lesson, the teacher can presumably enhance student motivation, set expectations for their

performance and the outcome of the lesson, potentially having a positive influence on student achievement.

The 3-day PD is centered on the practice of inquiry skills in an instructional lesson as a way to model and support the development of higher expectations. Day 1 will provide teachers, administrators, and parents with a demonstration on how a critical inquiry lesson can be used by the teacher as an instructional vehicle to model higher expectations with students. Day 2 will present the necessary instructional skills teachers need to model higher expectations through the development of critical inquiry skills during a lesson. Finally, Day 3 will provide the opportunity for teachers to design and develop their own lessons, which use the instructional development of inquiry skills as a way to model and support student higher expectations. At the conclusion of each PD session, feedback will be gathered to answer questions or address any issues in the following sessions.

### **Project Goals**

The goal of the project is to assist teachers, administrators, and parents, and parents by disseminating information concerning the impact of expectations on student academic achievement. The project is aimed to provide teachers, administrators, and parents with the knowledge necessary to enhance expectations in order to increase student engagement and academic achievement.

- A. Educate teachers, administrators, and parents on the foundations for understanding the impact of higher expectations through critical inquiry for student achievement.

- B. Provide teachers and parents with the necessary skills to implement higher expectations through critical inquiry within the classroom and at home.
- C. Provide teachers with the opportunity to collaborate with peers to develop lessons that can be incorporated within their classroom and content area.
- D. Provide on-going support to teachers once they are in the classroom at the beginning stages of implementation and communicate with parents ways they can be supportive at home.

### **Project Outcomes**

The program outcomes are to foster collaboration with teachers, administrators, and parents in the implementation of research-based programs on parent-teacher expectations. Parents and teachers will have an understanding of the impact that establishing high expectations have on academic achievement. Parents and teachers will be able to create an environment of higher order thinking to enhance student performance. Finally, parents and teachers will acquire several ways to incorporate high expectations through critical inquiry when working with students.

- A. Teachers, administrators, and parents will understand the foundations the impact of higher expectations through critical inquiry for student achievement.
- B. Teachers will be presented with the skills necessary to implement higher expectations through critical inquiry within their classrooms.
- C. Teachers will collaborate with peers and develop lessons plans for their personal use and then they will share with other teachers, parents, and administrators.

- D. Teachers will have access to extra support once the initiative is underway and lessons that incorporate a higher expectation through critical inquiry is implemented within classrooms.
- E. A training team will be established to support new staff in the subsequent years.

### **Program Objectives**

- A. As a result of the introduction to higher expectations through critical inquiry teachers, administrators, and parents will be able to identify the components of critical inquiry when planning lessons or working with students.
- B. As a result of hearing from teachers who are already implementing higher expectations through critical inquiry, teachers will be introduced to the tools of critical inquiry such as: cooperative learning.
- C. As a result of the time spent with peers, teachers will leave the professional development with 8-10 lessons that can be implemented upon return to the classroom.
- D. As a result of the professional development, teachers will have a main contact and colleagues who are available for support in the implementation of higher expectations through critical inquiry.

### **Recruitment and Targeted Population**

The targeted population for the professional development activity is teachers, parents and school administrators of 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the targeted school. For the purpose of the study, parents will be recruited by sending a letter home with

students in their weekly folders. Teachers and administrators will be recruited for the training knowing that they will be asked to share practices and lessons.

Serving as the program manager, I will assume the following roles:

- Recruit teachers, administrators, and parents
- Align content with the program objectives
- Develop content, delivery method, and assessment strategy
- Develop and design activities for orientation and workshop
- Set up venue and obtain necessary instructional technology
- Track teacher sign-in
- Assist and mitigate problems that may occur during PD
- Conduct evaluations on participant experiences
- Analyze data to make recommendations for improvement
- Follow-up: Teachers will have a main contact and colleagues who are available for support in the implementation of critical inquiry skills to model and support higher expectations.

## Professional Development Series Schedule

### Day 1

The goal of Day One is to provide teachers, administrators, and parents with a demonstration on how a critical inquiry lesson can be used by the teacher as an instructional vehicle to model higher expectations with students.

8:00 – 8:30 Teacher arrival/Sign in

8:30 – 8:45 Ice Breaker

8:45 – 8:50 Purpose and Goal of Professional Development

9:15 – 9:30 The importance of high expectations for students,

Why teach critical inquiry and how it relates to expectations for students

9:30 – 11:00 Present lesson on critical inquiry skills as an instructional vehicle to model higher expectations. Teachers Pair/Share on Strengths of lesson and ways of improvement

11:00 – 12:00 Lunch

12:00 – 12:40 Teachers will use the provided lesson plan template to expound upon a previous lesson incorporating higher expectations through the development of critical inquiry and then create a second lesson using the same format.

12:40 – 12:45 Break

12:45 – 1:30 Continue working on lesson plans

1:30 – 2:00 Questions and Answers

2:00 – 2:15 Evaluation

**Day 2**

The goal for Day Two is to present the necessary instructional skills teachers need to model higher expectations through the development of critical thinking skills during a lesson.

8:00 – 8:30 Teacher arrival/Sign in

8:30 – 9:00 Instruction for high expectations with opportunity for students to develop critical thinking skills

9:00 – 11:00 Present lesson on critical inquiry skills as an instructional vehicle to for higher expectations. The importance of using higher level questions during the lesson Teachers Pair/Share on Strengths of lesson and ways of improvement Volunteers share what they have done so far.

11:00 – 12:00 Lunch

12:00 – 12:40 Continue to work on lesson plan from day 1. Teachers may help others that need assistance.

12:40 – 12:45 Break

12:45 – 1:30 Collaboration: Share lesson with the group. Collaborate on what was learned and maybe adjust lesson plans

1:30 – 2:00 Questions and Answers

2:00 – 2:15 Evaluation



**Day 3**

The goal of Day Three is to provide the opportunity for teachers to design and develop their own lessons which use the instructional development of inquiry skills as a way to model and support student higher expectations.

8:00 – 8:30 Teacher arrival/Sign in

8:30 – 9:00 The importance of high expectations, Developing a project study lesson with higher order questions to guide students in critical thinking.

9:00 – 11:00 Teachers will develop 8-10 lessons using higher order thinking

11:00 – 12:00 Lunch

12:00 – 1:30 Continue working on lesson plans

1:30 – 2:00 Teachers will choose a lesson to discuss during PLC and share how they will implement it. Lessons will be gathered and emailed to the other teachers.

2:00 – 2:15 Questions and Answers, Evaluation

Modeled Lesson Day 1

Subject: Measurement of peanuts

### **Introduction**

No two human beings look exactly alike. Not even identical twins. But how about raccoons? Or goldfish? How hard is it for us to tell individuals apart? How hard is it for *them* to tell individuals apart? Biological variation is the basis for evolution. Being bigger or smaller, faster or slower, producing seeds earlier or later—these ranges of characteristics are the fodder for natural selection. But recognizing and measuring these differences can be trickier than it might seem.

### **Synopsis**

Teachers make careful observations in order to make individual identifications and also to explore the range of variation in a particular sample of biological structures (peanuts). When trying to measure variation, teachers will often be confronted with special problems. When they make their measurements, variations may arise that are caused by the *measuring tools*. At the conclusion of the exercise, teachers will have an understanding of how higher expectations can be modeled through a lesson to develop critical inquiry skills.

### **Objectives**

Teachers will understand how high expectations can be used to develop critical inquiry skills. This particular exercise emphasizes the concept of *variation*. First, it calls attention to the natural variation that exists between individuals of a single species, which is one of the objectives of (*Life Sciences*). Then, it asks teachers to measure that variation. In the course of doing so, teachers discover another important meaning of the word variation: the fact that two people might measure the same phenomenon using the same tools, but obtain different results. This activity demonstrates higher expectations in that it requires teachers to describe and compare measurable attributes. The learning objectives for this exercise also include teachers to strategically use appropriate tools and techniques to gather, analyze, and interpret data which is one of the common core mathematical practices.

### **Procedures**

*FIND YOUR PEANUT:*

Give each teacher a peanut to study carefully. Tell them not to mark their peanuts in any way. They are expected to sketch their peanuts or describe them in writing. After a few minutes, put all the peanuts together in a bag, mix them up, pour them out with a flourish, and ask them to find their own peanut. Teachers will pass their written work to another student. These teachers must now find the peanuts on the basis of this written work alone. No discussion allowed. Teachers will learn that they must be thorough in their observation and documentation.

Teachers will be instructed that higher expectations are being modeled by requiring thorough observation, documentation, and critical thinking. It will be explained that the act of sketching helps to communicate complex and abstract ideas. Teachers will also be informed that drawing taps into the creativity of students by helping them to envision. And, it enhances thinking and imagination which are characteristics for higher learning. The concept of writing will be explained as a strategy which requires expressing ones thinking and learning through vivid language which is also a characteristic of higher learning.

The possible follow-up discussion will nurture students through higher order thinking as they construct meaning and knowledge. These questions will inspire students to probe, analyze, connect and infer which higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy are to be used.

- What characteristics were useful for distinguishing individuals?
- Were there some characteristics that were not so useful for this exercise but that might be significant in the life of the peanut?
- Where was the peduncle attached to the peanut?

**MEASUREMENT:**

This exercise on the variation in length of different peanuts is used by teachers to develop inquiry skills.

- Each person will get 10-15 peanuts and a ruler.
- measure and record the maximum length of each peanut, to the nearest millimeter
- Once data have been gathered, find the following:

**mean:** Add up your individual measurements and divide by the number of peanuts. This will give you the average size of the peanuts in your sample.

**Median:** Arrange your measurements from shortest to longest, and then find the length of the middle peanut.

**Mode:** Record the most common length in your sample. In some cases there may not be a mode—i.e., all the peanuts are different lengths. In other cases there might be more than one mode.

**Range:** Find the shortest and longest peanuts in your sample.

Please record these numbers on the attached data sheet as well.

At the end of Day 1, teachers and parents will have an understanding of how higher expectations can be modeled through a lesson to develop critical inquiry skills.

## Day 2

### Synopsis

Teachers make careful observations in order to make individual identifications and also to explore the range of variation in a particular sample of biological structures (peanuts). When trying to measure variation, teachers will often be confronted with special problems. When they make their measurements, variations may arise that are caused by the *measuring tools*. At the conclusion of the exercise, teachers will have an understanding of how higher expectations can be modeled through a lesson to develop critical inquiry skills. They also will have been presented with the necessary instructional skills to model higher expectations through development of critical inquiry skills during a lesson.

### Objectives

Teachers will understand how high expectations can be used to develop critical inquiry skills. This particular exercise emphasizes the concept of *variation*. First, it calls attention to the natural variation that exists between individuals of a single species, which is one of the objectives of (*Life Sciences*). Then, it asks teachers to measure that variation. In the course of doing so, teachers discover another important meaning of the word variation: the fact that two people might measure the same phenomenon using the same tools, but obtain different results. This activity demonstrates higher expectations in that it requires teachers to describe and compare measurable attributes. The learning objectives for this exercise also include teachers to strategically use appropriate tools and techniques to gather, analyze, and interpret data which is one of the common core mathematical practices.

### Procedures

High expectations are achieved through the wording of questions. The possible follow-up discussion about variation will nurture students through higher order thinking and expectancy as they construct meaning and knowledge. These questions will inspire students to infer, monitor and clarify, analyze, and synthesize. The following questions also require teachers to reason abstractly and quantitatively by making sense of quantities and their relationships.

The second part of this exercise explores the variation in measurements that *different* people get when they measure the *same* peanuts. I will write all the means on the board from the previous day's work. Then ask:

1. How do they compare?
2. What about the *mean of the means*?
3. Is this a good estimate of the *average* peanut?
4. How does the *median* compare to the *mean*? What is the effect of one very large peanut on these two numbers?

5. How does the mode relate to the *mean* or the *median*?
6. Does the *range* for each student or for the whole class tell you something about peanuts? Are all peanuts close to the *mean* in size or do they vary widely from the *mean*?

*MEASUREMENT and THE HUMAN FACTOR:*

Each teacher in the class will measure the lengths of the *same* sample of peanuts. The results will be tabulated and analyzed to look for differences that are the result of the ways humans measure objects. A container with peanuts marked with the numbers 1 through 15 will be passed around. The peanuts will be passed around continuously until everyone has measured all peanuts.

- The same 15 peanuts will be measured by all persons using a metric ruler.
- Measure each peanut to the nearest millimeter.
- Record its length next to its number on your data sheet.
- Once data have been gathered, calculate the mean for your data.

The possible follow-up discussion will nurture students through higher order thinking as they construct meaning and knowledge. These questions use good questioning feedback techniques to keep students focused and directed. They also inspire students to evaluate and express their thinking and learning by designing new solutions.

1. What is the source of these differences?
2. Is there an instrument that could have been used to get a more accurate measurement? Explain.
3. What could be done differently?

Higher academic expectations were established by providing teachers a model of a lesson to help in the development of critical inquiry skills. At the conclusion of Day 2, teachers will have been presented with analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing as instructional tools to model high expectations.

Adapted from Budnitz, Norman (2001). Center for Inquiry Based Learning.  
Retrieved from <http://ciblearning.org/teacher-resources/inquiry-exercises/>

The following Measurement Chart will be used on Day One as a tool to help analyze, evaluate, and synthesize the recorded data from the peanut measurements. Teachers will order data from smallest to largest; then, teachers will tabulate the mean, median, mode, and range of the data.

### Measurement Chart

<i>Measurement</i>	
<i>Peanut measurements</i>	<i>Ordered From small To large</i>
<i>Mean</i>	
<i>Median</i>	
<i>Mode</i>	
<i>Range</i>	

The following Human Factor Chart will be used on Day Two as a tool to help analyze, evaluate and synthesize the recorded measurements. The measurements of the same set of peanuts will be used to identify the variations among various measurements. After measuring, the teachers will tabulate the mean, median, mode, and range of the data.

### The Human Factor Chart

<i>The Human Factor</i>	
<i>#</i>	<i>Peanut Measurement</i>
<i>1.</i>	
<i>2.</i>	
<i>3.</i>	
<i>4.</i>	
<i>5.</i>	
<i>6.</i>	
<i>7.</i>	
<i>8.</i>	
<i>9.</i>	
<i>10.</i>	
<i>11.</i>	
<i>12.</i>	
<i>13.</i>	
<i>14.</i>	
<i>15.</i>	
<i>Mean</i>	
<i>Median</i>	
<i>Mode</i>	
<i>Range</i>	

The following Lesson Plan Template will be used on Day Three of the Professional Development. Teachers will use this template to develop and design their lessons which use the instructional development of inquiry skills to model and support student higher expectations.

**Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_ **Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Week of:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>MONDAY</b>	
CCSS & MP/Objective:	Vocabulary:
I Can Statement(s):	
Learning Structure: (Lesson Structure: Fluency, Application, Concept Development, Debrief. Also include materials & resources) <b>Materials :</b> <b>Resources:</b>	
<b>TUESDAY</b>	
CCSS & MP/Objective:	Vocabulary:
I Can Statement(s):	
Learning Structure: (Lesson Structure: Fluency, Application, Concept Development, Debrief. Also include materials & resources) <b>Materials :</b> <b>Resources:</b>	
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	
CCSS & MP/Objective:	Vocabulary:
I Can Statement(s):	
Learning Structure: (Lesson Structure: Fluency, Application, Concept Development, Debrief. Also include materials & resources) <b>Materials :</b> <b>Resources:</b>	
<b>THURSDAY</b>	
CCSS & MP/Objective:	Vocabulary:



I Can Statement(s):	
Learning Structure: (Lesson Structure: Fluency, Application, Concept Development, Debrief. Also include materials & resources) <b>Materials :</b> <b>Resources:</b>	
<b>FRIDAY</b>	
CCSS & MP/Objective:	Vocabulary:
I Can Statement(s):	
Learning Structure: (Lesson Structure: Fluency, Application, Concept Development, Debrief. Also include materials & resources) <b>Materials :</b> <b>Resources:</b>	



### *Ice Breaker Activity*

#### **Lost on a Deserted Island**

The situation is dire — following a shipwreck, everyone has been stranded on a deserted island! Each

person is allowed to bring one object to the island — ideally something that represents them or something that they enjoy. The first part of this icebreaker is simple: each person is asked to describe what object they would bring and why. This need not be realistic; if someone loves music, he or she might choose to bring a guitar, or an animal lover might choose to bring a dog, a food lover might choose to bring sirloin steaks, and so on. Encourage people to be creative.

After everyone has introduced their object and why they have chosen that object, the team-building portion follows. Divide into smaller groups and ask everyone to work together to improve their chances of survival by combining the various objects that they introduced. If necessary, you can add more objects, but be sure to use all the objects that everyone mentioned. If you wish, you can reward the most creative group with a prize.

## A Professional Development for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents on the Modeling of High Expectations through the Development of Critical Inquiry Skills

Tracy Shells

### Ice Breaker Activity Lost on a Deserted Island

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## Purpose of Professional Development

- Professional development activities are developed to improve teachers' knowledge and skills. PD is believed to be connected to student learning with an ultimate goal of closing achievement gaps among student groups (Desimone, 2009).

## Goal of Day 1

- The goal of Day One is to provide teachers, administrators, and parents with a demonstration on how a critical inquiry lesson can be used by the teacher as an instructional vehicle to model higher expectations with students.

## The Importance of High Expectations?

- “High expectations for students is one of the “defining” characteristics of all comprehensive school reform programs. When teachers have high expectations for students and provide tasks that are engaging and of high interest, students build self-esteem, increase confidence and improve academic performance. Student confidence is critical because it is linked to student’s willingness to tackle challenging learning activities.”

- Brophy, 2010

## The Importance of High Expectations?

- “There is a linkage between expectations and motivation.” - Anderman & Anderman (2006)
- “Teachers who demonstrate the highest expectations show their students that they expect rigorous, challenging, high quality work.”

- The Southern Regional Education Board ([www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org))

## Why use “Critical Inquiry”?

- The Common Core State Standards require students to demonstrate deeper levels of thinking than ever before. Therefore, students need to develop deeper-thinking skills and improve their comprehension across the curriculum. This can be done through critical inquiry learning. According to Zatra-Gomez, Roman-Martinez, and Gomez-Miranda (2014), teachers should use inquiry-based learning because “students become more involved in learning and acquire increased knowledge of the subject.”

## Inquiry-based Learning

- The inquiry approach is more focused on **using and learning content** as a means to develop information-processing and problem-solving skills. The system is **more student centered**, with the teacher as a facilitator of learning. There is more emphasis on “how we come to know” and less on “what we know.” **Students are more involved in the construction of knowledge through active involvement.**

## How does critical inquiry relate to expectations?

Teacher beliefs shape learning for all students; therefore, unless teachers hold high expectations and incorporate critical thinking and inquiry for all students, achievement gaps will continue to occur.

- Torff (2011)



## Expectations and Critical Inquiry

- Finnigan (2010) believed that there is a linkage between teacher expectancy and student motivation and performance. Therefore, the expectancy of teachers using current effective strategies is believed to increase student understanding and performance.
- Teachers can establish a relationship with students which is believed to impact academic expectations, school satisfaction, and academic performance (McCollum & Yoder, 2011).

## Expectations and Critical Inquiry

- **THE PROBLEM:**  
Culture folk beliefs
- **WHY IT'S A PROBLEM?**  
Culture folk beliefs hold that classroom activities that require critical thinking work only for students who are ready to handle them, since these activities can pose a bit of a challenge.
- **WHO CAN HELP?**  
Educators
- **HOW?**  
When confronted with learners who appear disadvantaged stop regarding them as not ready for high critical thinking activities.
- **RESEARCH**  
Torff (2011) stated that disadvantaged students could handle the rigorous curriculum if given the chance.

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**A modeled lesson on  
critical inquiry skills used  
to cultivate higher  
expectations**

**Presented by: Tracy Shells**

## **Teachers Pair/Share**

**Discuss:**

**Strengths of lesson**

**Ways to Improve upon the lesson**

In groups of five, teachers will expound upon a previous lesson and then design and develop a second lesson which uses the instructional development of inquiry skills as a way to model and support student higher expectations.

## Wrap-up

- Questions and Answers
- Evaluation



## Goal of Day 2

- The goal for Day Two is to present the necessary instructional skills teachers need to model higher expectations through the development of critical inquiry skills during a lesson.

## The Importance of High Expectations

- We must exhibit high expectations in order to have our students ready for college and careers. The Common Core State Standards have significantly changed what we expect of students. "Students will be required to engage with complex informational texts and apply literacy skills across disciplines. In math, they will be faced with challenging problems that connect mathematical understanding and procedural skill."

- Phillips and Wong (2013)

## The Importance of High Expectations

- Marzano (2010) believed that students should be engaged in learning. This can be done by communicating high expectations for all students by asking questions of “low-expectancy” students.
- “Teaching instruction should reflect the diversity of behaviors that can positively affect student learning.” – Marzano (2010)

## Why use “Critical Inquiry”?

- “The inquiry-based approach encourages cooperative learning through which the student gains experience with formulating questions, constructing a set of experiments, gathering data and drawing conclusions. This method fosters students' ability to think in diverse ways, to
- develop creativity and independence in learning, to awaken curiosity and wonder, to develop generally positive attitudes towards learning and to improve scholastic achievements.” -

Sasson, I. (2014)

## How does critical inquiry relate to expectations?

- According to Spader (2014), teacher expectations have an impact on overall student achievement and expectations. Therefore, one can conclude if students are required to critically inquire then they will.

## Expectations and Critical Inquiry

- Finnigan (2010) believed that there is a linkage between teacher expectancy and student motivation and performance. Therefore, the expectancy of teachers using current effective strategies is believed to increase student understanding and performance.
- Teachers can establish a relationship with students which is believed to impact academic expectations, school satisfaction, and academic performance (McCollum & Yoder, 2011).

## References

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**A modeled lesson on  
critical inquiry skills used  
to cultivate higher  
expectations**

**Presented by: Tracy Shells**

## **Teachers Pair/Share**

Discuss:

Strengths of lesson

Ways to Improve upon the lesson

## **Volunteers**

Share what they have

done so far

**Continue to work on lesson plans from day 1. Teachers may help others that need assistance.**

## Collaboration

- Share lesson of incorporating high expectations and higher order thinking skills for self and students.



- Collaborate on what was learned and maybe adjust plans.

## Wrap-up

- Questions and Answers
- Evaluation





## Goal of Day 3

- The goal of Day Three is to provide an opportunity for teachers to develop 8-10 critical inquiry lessons for classroom use.

## The Importance of High Expectations

- “Teachers form expectations about their students’ chances for academic success and then interact with students on the basis of those expectations. That is, teachers treat their “high-expectancy” students differently from their “low-expectancy” students. Students quickly recognize this differential treatment and begin to act in accordance with the expectations that the treatment implies.”

- Marzano (2010)

## The Importance of High Expectations

- According to Marzano (2010), communicating high expectations is an instructional strategy. By addressing the issue of low expectations and different treatment, it enhances the achievement of those students who traditionally do not do well in the K-12 system.
- To ensure rigor in teaching and learning, “It is important to establish high expectations so students can apply mathematical skills to new and unknown problems, thus showing that they understand the principles involved.”  
- Phillips and Wong (2012)

## Why use “Critical Inquiry”?

- “Students need to be prepared in STEM for STEM careers. Chen (2009) found that ‘strong academic preparation in high school was associated with a higher STEM degree completion rate’ (p. 17). To achieve goals such as strong academic preparation and quality in STEM teaching, it is encouraged to use inquiry projects, problem based learning projects, and active learning.”  
- SABO, C., BURROWS, A., & CHILDERS, L. (2014).

## How critical inquiry relates to expectations

- The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) conducted a case study on school improvement initiatives that appeared to have promising strategies. High Schools that Work (HSTW) was one of them. HSTW aims to improve student achievement by creating “a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement in high schools” (SREB, 2005, p. 2). There must be high academic standards and rigorous curriculum. Teachers are expected to adopt instructional and assessment practices that hold all students to the same high standards.

- [http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre\\_pdfs/HSTW.pdf](http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre_pdfs/HSTW.pdf).

## How can I teach higher order thinking skills?

### Analyzing and Evaluating

- **Time lines** help students sequence events—a basic form of analysis.
- **Venn diagrams** help students compare and contrast two topics—a more advanced form of analysis.
- **Pro-con charts** help students consider positives and negatives of any topic—a basic evaluation.
- **Rubrics** help students assess projects using precise criteria—a more advanced evaluation.

- King, R. (2014)

How can I teach higher order thinking skills?

## Synthesizing

**Metaphorical Thinking:** Take any topic that you are currently studying and ask students to create a simile, a metaphor, an analogy, and a symbol representing the topic:

<p><b>Simile</b> —————</p> <p>Compare two things using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>.</p>	<p>• An electron is like an energetic kid running around her parents.</p>
<p><b>Metaphor</b> —————</p> <p>Compare two things by equating them.</p>	<p>• The proton and neutron are the parents in the atom.</p>
<p><b>Analogy</b> —————</p> <p>Compare two relationships.</p>	<p>• Compare the force that binds a nucleus to the marriage that binds a couple.</p>
<p><b>Symbol</b> —————</p> <p>Use one thing to represent another.</p>	<p>• Let's represent this force with a marriage certificate.</p>

- King, R. (2014)

## Synthesizing

- **Conceptual Blending:** Ask students to think more deeply about a system or situation by using conceptual blending. Pose a question that connects the system or situation to a different system or situation. Then have the students answer the question in as many ways as possible:
  - **How could Congress run more like a business?**
    - Members could have annual performance reviews.
    - Members could pay for part of their insurance packages.
    - Congress could have a mission statement.

- King, R. (2014)

## Synthesizing

- Perspective Shifting:** Ask students to consider a topic from a different point of view. You can do so by having students first list key aspects of who they are. Then, have them change one or more of those aspects in a new list. Finally, have them adopt the perspective suggested by their new list as they think about a topic you are discussing.

- King, R. (2014)

I am (also) ...	What if I were (also) ...
living creature	ghost
vertebrate	vertebrate
human being	human being
male	male
American	Falco-Indian
living in the 21st century	living in the 21st century
monolingual	bilingual
Hoodlum	Great Plains native
high school junior	elderly

## References

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- The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). Retrieved from [http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre\\_pdfs/HSTW.pdf](http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre_pdfs/HSTW.pdf)

## Teachers break into groups to develop 8-10 critical inquiry lessons.

- After completion, teachers will choose a lesson to discuss during PLC and share how they will implement it.
- Gather lesson plans and email to the other teachers.

## Wrap-up

- Questions and Answers
- Evaluation



## Summative Evaluation

Please circle the number that best represents your opinion of this session:  1- Poor      2-Average      3- Above Average 4- Excellent				
The relevance of the session information				
Instructors thorough knowledge of the subject matter				
Instructors presentation skills				
Helpfulness of teacher resource				
Overall rating of this learning experience				

What areas of this presentation did you find most useful?

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Explain why you believe setting high expectations are important.

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Give two examples how you can implement higher expectations into your teaching or learning.

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What would you change about today's presentation?

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## Appendix B: Recruitment Letter to Parents

March 25, 2014

Dear Parents,

Hello, I'm Tracy Shells, a doctoral student in the Teacher Leadership Program at Walden University. I am presently doing research on a project that will focus on understanding the expectations parents, teachers, and administrators have for the academic achievement of students. I am particularly interested in the views of parents, like you, whose child attends this school. I am interested in understanding the relationship between your expectations and your child's achievement from the parent's point of view. I would like your help in researching this topic further.

The project will involve conducting interviews with parents, and collecting and summarizing data. This project will involve Ms. Shells and the parents who consent to participate. You will be a participant in an individual interview session that will last approximately 45 minutes. The interview session will be audio-taped and all information will be strictly confidential. Your name or identity will not be used in the findings of the report. Ms. Shells will have sole access to the information collected. At the completion of the project, all responses will be destroyed.

I know that your schedule is very busy. I would appreciate your help. It is hoped that your participation in this project will be a unique contribution to current research on parental expectations. If you are interested in learning more about participating, you may contact me directly at [tracy.shells@waldenu.edu](mailto:tracy.shells@waldenu.edu) or (601) 209-4445.

Sincerely,

Tracy Shells  
Graduate Student Researcher  
Walden University



Script to use as a Guide for notification of parents who are participating:

Hello, I am Tracy Shells a doctoral student in the Teacher Leadership Program at Walden University. This notification is to inform you that you have been chosen to participate in the research project of parental expectations on student achievement. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Please know that all of this is strictly voluntary and your real name will not be used in the research study. I will show you the notes of the interview after they've been transcribed from the tapes to make sure I have clearly interpreted your views.

If you agree to be a part of this study, there are formal papers to sign so that the review board that over sees the study will know that you have given written permission and that I have promised confidentiality throughout the study. Their role is to make sure the research participants I select are protected and understand what they are agreeing to. You will receive these papers via email or QEP folders. They must be signed and returned before the interview can be conducted.

Do you understand what has been explained to you thus far and wish to continue with the process? If the answer is No, Thank you for your time and participation thus far. Have a good day. If the answer is Yes, You are to report to WCI's library on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ at (time) \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your help. One of the benefits of this research will be to add to the literature the voice of parents on the topic of parental expectations and student achievement and possibly help schools become more effective in the area of student achievement.

Thank you for your time and participation thus far. I am looking forward to seeing you on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ at (time) \_\_\_\_\_. Have a nice day.

### Appendix C: Parent Interview Questions

Thank you again for participating in my study. You have read, and signed the Consent form which explains the purpose of the study. Do you have any further questions about the study before we begin?

Today, I will conduct a one-on-one interview which is related to your life experiences as they pertain to this study. Remember that all information obtained during the study will be confidential and heard only by me. Let's begin the interview with you introducing yourself. I will be writing down this information as well as recording as it is providing me with background knowledge and history of you.

#### *Questions:*

1. What are some academic expectations you have for your child?

As far as succeeding in school, their behaviors, study habits, in school and at home?

2. What are some of the ways you let your child know what your expectations are?

Explain what things may be said to let your child know your expectations .

Explain what actions are demonstrated to let your child know your expectations.

3. What do you think is your child's perception of your academic expectations?

How does your child perceive the expectations you have for him/her?

4. How do you think your expectations affect your child's academic success?

How does it encourage or motivate them?

5. How would you rate your child's overall academic performance? Why?

Average, Exceeding your expectations...?

What do you expect from him/her? Explain

6. What expectations for academic achievement do you have for your child?

How important is it that your child graduate from high school?

How important is it that your child go to college? Why?

7. What are some behaviors that you expect your child to avoid that would interfere or hinder academics?

(Ex. Social media, wrong crowds, bullying, not paying attention)...

8. What are some things that you as a parent do to help your child succeed in school?

(Ex. Nourishment, materials, homework, extracurricular activities, conferences, reading...etc.)

9. How can we work together to promote the success of your child?

(Collaboration...)

10. What else is there you need to tell me?

## Appendix D: Teacher Interview Questions

Thank you again for participating in my study. You have read, and signed the Consent form which explains the purpose of the study. Do you have any further questions about the study before we begin?

Today, I will conduct a one-on-one interview which is related to your life experiences as they pertain to this study. Remember that all information obtained during the study will be confidential and heard only by me. Let's begin the interview with you introducing yourself. I will be writing down this information as well as recording as it is providing me with background knowledge and history of you.

***Please answer the following questions:***

1. What are some academic expectations you have for your students?

As far as succeeding in school, their behaviors, study habits, in school and at home?

2. What are some of the ways you let your students know what your expectations are?

Explain what things may be said to let your students know your expectations.

Explain what actions are demonstrated to let your students know your expectations.

3. What do you think is your students' perception of your academic expectations?

How do your students' perceive your expectations for them?

4. How do you think your expectations affect your students' academic success?

How does it encourage or motivate them?

5. How would you describe your students' overall academic performance? Why?

Average, Exceeding your expectations...?

6. What would successful academic achievement look like for your students?

(70% mastering the skills, 70% scoring proficient or above on state test?)

7. What are some things that you as a teacher do to help your students succeed in school?

(Ex. Encouragement, extra time or extra help on assignments? )

8. What role do standards for student learning play in your planning and instruction?

What high standards do you incorporate?

Explain how your standards may be above and beyond what is expected from the district?

How do your standards affect achievement and student outcome?

10. What strategies or practices do you use to ensure all students in your classroom are actively engaged in learning?

(Ex. Cooperative learning groups, enrichment,...etc.)

11. How can the administration, parents, and you work together to promote the success of students?

12. What else is there you need to tell me?

## Appendix E: Administrator Interview Questions

Thank you again for participating in my study. You have read, and signed the Consent form which explains the purpose of the study. Do you have any further questions about the study before we begin?

Today, I will conduct a one-on-one interview which is related to your life experiences as they pertain to this study. Remember that all information obtained during the study will be confidential and heard only by me. Let's begin the interview with you introducing yourself. I will be writing down this information as well as recording as it is providing me with background knowledge and history of you.

***Please answer the following questions:***

1. What is the vision the school is seeking to achieve?

What is your role in helping meet the vision?

1. What are some academic expectations you have the students?

As far as succeeding in school, their behaviors, study habits, in school and at home?

2. What are some of the ways you let the students/teachers know what your expectations are?

Explain what things may be said to let teachers/students know your expectations .

Explain what actions are demonstrated to let teachers/students know your expectations.

3. What do you think is the students'/teachers' perception of your academic expectations?

How do the students'/teachers' perceive your expectations for them?

4. How do you think your expectations affect students' academic success?

How does it encourage or motivate them?

5. How would you describe your school's overall academic performance? Why?

Average, Exceeding your expectations...?

6. What would successful academic achievement look like for your school?

(70% mastering the skills, 70% scoring proficient or above on state test?)

7. What are some things that you as an administrator do to help your students/teachers succeed in school?

(Ex. Encouragement, extra time or extra help on assignments, needed resources?)

8. What role do standards for student learning play in your planning and instruction?

What high standards do you incorporate?

Explain how your standards may be above and beyond what is expected from the district?

How do your standards affect achievement and student outcome/ teacher performance?

10. What strategies or practices do you suggest teachers use to ensure all students in their class are actively engaged in learning?

(Ex. Cooperative learning groups, enrichment,...etc.)

11. What do you view as the strengths and weaknesses of the school?
  - How do you think the students are performing?
  - What factors do you feel helped to improve student success?
12. How well does the administration guide the work of the school and promote student learning and success?
  - How does the leadership encourage student performance?
  - How does the administration encourage collaboration and shared responsibility with teachers and students?
13. How would you describe the teaching and learning environment in the school?
  - Are students actively involved in their learning?
  - Are students encouraged to use higher order thinking skills and apply their learning?
  - How are students supported if they are having difficulty meeting expectations?
14. How can the administration and teachers work together to promote student success?
15. What else is there you need to tell me?



## Appendix F: Parent Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of parents', teachers', and school administrators' expectations for student academic achievement. The researcher is inviting any parent, teacher, or school administrator of 4-6 grade students to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Tracy Shells, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a teacher, but this study is separate from that role.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate parent, teacher, and school administrator expectations for student academic achievement.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Take part in a face to face interview after school hours lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded.
- Verify the accuracy of the information by member-checking the interview findings. This should take approximately 20 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What are some academic expectations you have for your child?
2. What are some of the ways you let your child know what your expectations are?
3. What do you think is your child's perception of your academic expectations?

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Warren Central Intermediate School or Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The study's potential benefits are to educate parents, teachers, and school administrators of the importance and the impact their expectations have on academic achievement.

### **Payment:**

There is none.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by keeping it in a locked file cabinet and a secure data file. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email at [tracy.shells@waldenu.edu](mailto:tracy.shells@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University’s approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date. The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

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Date of consent

---

Participant’s Signature

---

Researcher’s Signature

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## Appendix G: Teacher and Administrator Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of parents', teachers', and school administrators' expectations for student academic achievement. The researcher is inviting any parent, teacher, or school administrator of 4-6 grade students to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Tracy Shells, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a teacher, but this study is separate from that role.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate parent, teacher, and school administrator expectations for student academic achievement.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Take part in a face to face interview after school hours lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded.
- Verify the accuracy of the information by member-checking the interview findings. This should take approximately 20 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What are some academic expectations you have the students/ teachers?
2. What are some of the ways you let your students/teachers child know what your expectations are?
3. What do you think is your students'/teachers' perception of your academic expectations?

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Warren Central Intermediate School or Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The study's potential benefits are to educate parents, teachers, and school administrators of the importance and the impact their expectations have on academic achievement.

**Payment:**

There is none.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by keeping it in a locked file cabinet and a secure data file. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email at [tracy.shells@waldenu.edu](mailto:tracy.shells@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date. The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

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## Appendix H: Reminder to Participants

Hello, I am Tracy Shells, a doctoral student in the Teacher Leadership Program at Walden University. This notification is to remind you that you have been chosen to participate in the research project of parental expectations on student achievement. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Please know that all of this is strictly voluntary and your real name will not be used in the research study. I will show you the notes of the interview after they've been transcribed from the tapes to make sure I have clearly interpreted your views.

Please remember to have read and signed the Consent form. Thank you for your time and participation thus far. I am looking forward to seeing you on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ at (time) \_\_\_\_\_. Have a nice day.

## Appendix I: Research Protocol

1. The researcher and school administrator met and determine the location of the research site.
2. Generate a potential list of participants
3. Contact parent via letter to discuss (a) purpose of the study, (b) explanation of how the study results will be used, (c) explanation of confidentiality of participants.
4. The researcher will review returned interest letters. Contact potential participants via phone or letter. Explain confidentiality, consent forms, and taping of interview.
5. Schedule a time to complete research with each participant
6. Interview - The researcher will greet the participants at the door with a warm smile and a hand shake. The researcher will:
  - Review the purpose of the study
  - Explain how the information gathered during the interview is used
  - Provide an estimate of how long the interview will last
  - Review confidentiality of the interview
  - Remind participants that the interview is tape recorded
  - Remind participants that the interview can be stopped at any time
  - Have participant complete demographic information sheet
7. Once all documentation is reviewed, participants will sign and turn them in.
8. The researcher will conduct the interview.
9. Conduct the interview. One question will be asked at a time and silence during the interview is permitted as it allows the participant to think about their response. Each question will be explored thoroughly, with the researcher probing for deeper understanding. Some key phrases that will be utilized are: "Tell me about that"; "I'm listening, please go on"; "Can you explain that to me?" Closed questions will also be used to obtain more granular information on important issues in order to answer the research questions and determine understanding from the participants. The researcher will rephrase what was said to make sure the information was interpreted correctly. As the interview comes to a close, the researcher will ask "Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?"

10. Wrap up the interview with small talk, reassuring confidentiality and recapping what the information will be used for and expressing my appreciation.
11. Immediately label and number all recordings.
12. Listen to tape recorded interviews.
13. Transcribe and participant validate.
14. Assign accession numbers to transcript.
15. The researcher codes transcript and each participant validate the results.
16. Make copies and store data separately in secure location. Transcripts will be available upon request.
17. Contact participants to debrief them on results and thank them for their participation.