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# Stakeholders' Perceptions of Single-Gender Grouping Instruction and Student Motivation in Middle School

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# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Chundra Grisby

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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2018

Abstract

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Single-Gender Grouping Instruction and Student Motivation

in Middle School

by

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EdS, Walden University, 2011

MAT, Delta State University, 2007

MBA, Delta State University, 2003

BS, Mississippi Valley State University, 2001

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

A rural middle school in Mississippi has been labeled at-risk of failing or failing by the Mississippi Department of Education for the past 5 years, and the parents, students, teachers, and administrators have been looking for ways to improve academic achievement. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of students, teachers, parents, and administrators about single-gender grouping that was used to raise achievement levels in this Mississippi middle school. The theoretical framework for this qualitative case study was Deci and Ryan's work on student motivation for learning. The research questions focused on perceptions of single-gender classroom instructional settings in relation to students' motivation to learn. Interviews were conducted with 2 teachers, 2 administrators, 2 parents, and 5 male and 5 female students who were involved with 2 single-gender Grade 7 English and mathematics classrooms in the focus school. Transcribed interviews were analyzed for emerging ideas, coded, and organized into themes. The findings from this study showed that the single-gender setting had a positive influence on student achievement, and the students reported that this type of environment enabled them to be comfortable, more motivated, and focused. The culminating project is a program of professional development that applied participants' ideas for motivating learning such as active student engagement and working in teams. This study may stimulate positive social change by suggesting merits of single-gender instruction, helping teachers increase student motivation, and improving academic success in the classroom, which can allow students to maximize their learning potential and become more productive citizens in society.

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## Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my amazing husband, Collis L. Grisby, Sr., for all of your love, dedication, and support during this journey. My wonderful parents, Baker and Ida Haywood, for all of your encouraging words and faith in my ability to complete this journey. I love you all. I also want to dedicate this to my fantastic children, Ricky, Mario, Destiny, Calissa, and Collis, II. You all are my inspiration and the reason I have gone this far. Always remember, the sky's the limit.

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## Section 1: The Problem

Placing students in classes based on gender is a strategy used in some schools as a way of increasing student achievement. Some parents, students, and teachers believe that girls and boys learn better when they are in classes with students of the same gender (Wiegert & Che, 2010). However, for a specific strategy or intervention to work and have an impact on student achievement, it must be fully implemented, and all stakeholders must be fully involved and believe in its ability to constitute change (Marzano, 2003). For this study, I examined the perceptions of teachers, administrators, parents, and students involved in single-gender instruction within a coeducational middle school environment. In Section 1, I explain information pertaining to the problem of concerns about low student achievement and the practice of single-gender grouping as a method to improve student achievement.

### **Definition of the Problem**

This study was focused on a rural middle school in Southern Mississippi, a state that is ranked in the bottom percentile in K-12 student achievement and chance for success. When it comes to providing students with the necessary skills needed to compete globally, Mississippi ranks 49<sup>th</sup> out of 51 states in the United States in chance for success from childhood through career and 50<sup>th</sup> out of 51 in K-12 achievement (National Education Association, 2013). The school in this study consists of students in Grades 6-8 and educates approximately 288 students, of which 99% are African American (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). Over 85% of the student population comes from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and the average family income for Mississippi has

been \$18,610 (United States Census Bureau, 2013).

Student achievement is a concern at the school in this study because, for the past 5 years, this middle school has been labeled as *at-risk of failing* or *failing* by the Mississippi Department of Education (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012).

These academic trends reflect concern at the state level as well as the federal and local levels. Over 73% of the students are considered failing based on results from the yearly state assessments. This means that students in this school are not showing growth according to the adequate yearly progress (AYP) model, a federal accountability measure required beginning with No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Additionally, the quality of distribution index (QDI) is critically low (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012), which is a measurement used by the state of Mississippi to measure student achievement based on student performance on a particular day (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). It is a measurement of how well schools and districts are moving students between proficiency levels. According to the Mississippi Department of Education (2012), the levels of proficiency are A, B, C, D, and F. Table 1 shows how schools are labeled based on academic achievement alone, inadequate academic gains/no growth, and academic achievement with a growth component, appropriate academic gains/some growth, or outstanding academic gains/enormous growth. The Mississippi Department of Education uses the QDI and AYP of each school to determine where the school falls.

Table 1

*School Level Assignment Labels*

QDI	Inadequate academic gains	Appropriate academic gains	Outstanding academic gains
A: 200–300	High performing/ High performing	High performing/ Star school	High performing/ Star school
B: 166–199	Successful/Successful	High performing/ Successful	High performing/ Successful
C: 133–165	Academic watch	Successful	Successful
D: 100–132	At-risk-of-failing	Academic watch	Academic watch
F: 0–99	Failing	Low-performing	Low-performing

*Note.* Retrieved from Mississippi Department of Education website (2012)

Parents, teachers, administrators, and students have become concerned about the issue of low academic performance. Students are expected to show growth from year to year, but recently the students have not met this. For example, if a student scores in the basic category, his or her score must move to the proficient category during the next school term. If a predetermined number of students fail to improve, then the school is considered low performing and does not meet AYP. This particular school had more than 65% of the students not showing growth for the past 5 years. According to an administrator of the focus school, stakeholders are concerned about the low achievement level of the students and finding ways to increase student achievement. Therefore, during professional development sessions, the teachers and administrators discussed things that could be done to resolve the problem as well as some of the possible causes of the problem.

The requirement to meet AYP has not only impacted the state of Mississippi but also other states. For example, Powell, Higgins, Aram, and Freed (2009) noted that there has been a decrease in reading achievement since No Child Left Behind (2002) was implemented in rural school districts in Maine as well as rural school districts in Missouri. Additionally, Fuller, Wright, Gesicki, and Kang (2007) noted that even though the principals of the schools in Maine reported an increase in the number of schools that met AYP in mathematics, there had still been a percentage decrease in student achievement in reading since the implementation of NCLB.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Each year, students in Grades 3-8 across the state of Mississippi are given the Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition. According to the Mississippi Department of Education (2012), the assessment results are used as part of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System to provide information that teachers can use to accelerate student learning and improve instruction. The assessment results are also used to determine the status of public schools throughout the state of Mississippi. For a school to be deemed successful by the Mississippi Department of Education, a predetermined number of students must score in the proficient and advanced categories for the tested area. In addition, students must show growth both individually and collectively in each tested area. If students fail to show improvement or growth from the previous year then the school cannot reach a status higher than at-risk of failing otherwise known as D level (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). Therefore, I conducted this study to examine solutions to improving student achievement at the focus school.



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

Over 73% of the students at the focus school are not scoring in the proficient and advanced categories in language arts and math (Mississippi Interpretive Guide, 2012) based on the results that are divided into four proficiency levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and minimal. According to Thompson (2011), the formula used to calculate a school's QDI is a calculation based on the level achieved by students on the state assessment given as a percentage or  $QDI = [\% \text{ basic} + 2 (\% \text{ proficient}) + 3 (\% \text{ advanced})]$ . From 2007–2012, the QDI of this school has been fluctuating: 89, 104, 122, 106, and 100 respectively. During the 2009–2010 school year, this school met AYP and had an increase in its QDI but still was considered at-risk of failing.

State assessments indicated that the focus school did not have enough students scoring in the proficient and advanced categories to meet predetermined averages when compared to other schools and school districts in the state. For example, during the 2010–2011 school year, the focus school's QDI was 106 compared to other rural middle schools in the state of Mississippi: School X 257, School Y 245, and School Z 241 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). Although the QDI cut-off score has fluctuated over the years, this middle school remains in the bottom quartile for the state of Mississippi. In the latest QDI ranking, this middle school was ranked number 1549 out of 1612 in the state. As a result, this middle school has been labeled *at-risk of failing* or *failing* for the past 5 years.

In addition to academic concerns, the school has been flagged as unsafe by the Mississippi Department of Education due to the significant number of disciplinary

referrals reported by the school's administration. To help decrease the number of disciplinary referrals, the school was awarded a 3-year grant to implement positive behavior intervention and supports within the school. One of the requirements for implementation of this program was performing data analysis that would help develop a solution to improve student behavior while increasing student achievement. During one of the school's regular positive behavior intervention and supports meetings, teachers noticed that approximately 12 male students and 14 female students had consistently low QDI scores and eight or more office discipline referrals (Mississippi Student Information System Disciplinary Report, 2010). Thus, they identified a connection between low student achievement and behavior issues that could be used to develop programs to address the issue of discipline referrals.

To improve student behavior and increase student achievement at the focus school, an administrator noted that the administration has implemented several programs and used a variety of strategies, including tutoring programs and in-school interventions. Through restructuring some student's schedules, in-school interventions have been implemented in the focus school with the goal of providing help during the regularly scheduled school day to students who were struggling academically. The focus school used technology as a way of improving student achievement such as several computer programs to help students improve in mathematics and language arts (e.g., Study Island, Accelerated Reading and Math, and Reading Plus). Students were enrolled in these classes based on the results of their state assessments. One administrator noted that these programs and strategies showed some success, but acceptable achievement had not been

the result.

Having not reached satisfactory improvement in student academic performance, administrators and teachers discussed changing the school structure as a possible way to improve student success in school. Discussions led to consideration of single-gender classes. Based on research gathered by the principal and the counselor, they and the teachers decided to offer the single-gender classes for math and language arts/reading. This involved approximately 30 students within a school of 288 students.

An administrator from the focus school stated that the future of the students' progress and the school's rankings were of concern to school personnel and parents; thus, it was important that the situation be studied to try to address the problem. Because traditional practices of classrooms and instruction had not resulted in improvement of students meeting advanced or proficient levels on state assessments, a change was needed. The previous strategies of afterschool tutoring, in-school tutoring, and learning strategies courses had not improved levels of students' performance. As a result, administrators proposed that single-gender instruction in two classrooms be used as a new practice to improve student achievement. Therefore, my study of the single-gender class setting provides important information that can help the focus school make future decisions to increase student achievement.

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

Student achievement is determined by how well students are learning and retaining skills and concepts being taught to them in an educational setting. Students fall behind or fail when they struggle to learn or retain a certain percentage of the needed

skills and concepts. Increasing student achievement is the process of constant monitoring of data to make informed decisions for improvements. Increasing student achievement involves constantly monitoring data such as student attendance, behavior, and course failings (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007). Based on the collected data, school changes can be made to help students increase student attendance, behavior, and ability to succeed.

Research has revealed that it is important for parents to take an active role in their child's education. According to Wilder (2014), school administrators, teachers, and policy makers have recognized the positive impact that parental involvement has on student academic outcomes. For example, Hill and Tyson (2009) noted that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement.

Additionally, investigations on the perceptions of middle school aged students' parents and educators on parental involvement have shown that student achievement was higher for those students who had involved parents (Griffiths-Prince, 2009). Many parents are involved in their children's education throughout elementary school but are less involved during middle and high school because they are not sure how to be involved (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Finding ways to increase parental involvement could be a consideration for implementation at the focus school.

In addition to more parent involvement, technology may be a way to improve student achievement. For instance, Neill and Mathews (2009) conducted a study to examine how the use of two computer-assisted instructional programs influenced at-risk middle school students. The researchers used two computerized programs and two

different groups of students. Group A consisted of at-risk students and Group B consisted of students who were not at-risk. Group A used the computerized instructional programs, and Group B engaged in a traditional instructional program. Results showed that the number of students who met or exceeded growth had increased by 22% after using the computerized program for 1 year (Neill & Mathews, 2009). Despite this success in research, the focus school has incorporated computerized programs but has not seen significant improvement in achievement.

Finally, there may be other issues that hinder students' ability to excel academically that need to be addressed in programs. According to Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011), as students transition from elementary to middle to high school, some lack socioemotional competencies, which cause them to disconnect from school and impacts their health, behavior, and academic performance. To address this challenge, schools have implemented social and emotional learning programs such as character education. According to the Character Education Partnership (2014), character education is a "national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share" (para. 1). A study on the effectiveness of character education for student academic performance at the middle and high school levels revealed that the teachers believed that character education, when fully implemented, helped improve student achievement in areas such as test scores, attitudes, and behaviors (Graff, 2012). Character education may be a consideration for the focus school.

As the research and local statistics indicate, middle school achievement is a concern in many school districts. By investigating one change that was made in the focus school, instituting single-gender instruction, I intended to reveal any gaps in practice that stakeholders perceive as reasons why achievement continues to remain below acceptable levels. I also conducted the study to examine their ideas of single-gender instruction as a possible improved approach.

### **Explanation of Special Terms**

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):* A federal accountability measure used to track student growth from year to year (Thompson, 2011).

*Levels of achievement or proficiency levels:* Four proficiency levels of advanced, proficient, basic, and minimal as part of the Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). Advanced is students who consistently perform in a manner clearly beyond that required to be successful in the grade or course in the content area (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). Proficient is students who demonstrate solid academic performance and mastery of the knowledge and skills required for success in the grade or course in the content area (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). Basic is students who demonstrate partial mastery of the knowledge and skills in the course and may experience difficulty in the next grade or course in the content area (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). Finally, minimal is the level of students who demonstrate the knowledge or skills that define basic level performance (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012).

*Positive behavior intervention and supports:* “A school-wide system of support

that includes pro-active strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school environment” (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012, para. 3). All public schools in the state of Mississippi are required to use this program.

*Quality of distribution index (QDI):* A measurement of student performance on a particular day. It is a measurement of how well schools/districts are moving students between proficiency levels (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012).

*Rural middle school:* A middle school existing in an area defined as all territory, population, and housing units located outside of urbanized areas (United States Census Bureau (2013). Therefore, a rural middle school would consist of students, between the ages of 10-15, from all territory, population, and housing units located outside of urbanized areas.

*Social relationships:* How students act toward each other or groups of students with a common interest (Umberson & Montez, 2010).

### **Significance of the Study**

As low achievement reports indicate, new methods for improving instructional practice for these middle school students are needed. If student scores continue to miss the required levels of performance, the school will be taken over by an appointed state conservator or turned into a charter school. In the past, when schools have been taken over by a state-appointed conservator, students were displaced, and faculty and staff were fired or nonrenewed. Research shows a mixed view of single-gender grouping (McFarland, Benson, & McFarland, 2011; Wiegert & Che, 2010; Willis, 2007). Thus,

this study adds to the literature about single-gender instructional practice and has potential significance for state and local school leaders, teachers, students, and parents in stimulating middle school achievement.

### **Research Questions**

Low student achievement is a problem for many schools throughout the United States. When compared with other countries, the United States ranks in the lower percentile on the Program for International Student Assessment. The Program for International Student Assessment (2015) is a national test given by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to 15-year-old students every 3 years in reading, math, and science. According to the 2012 results, the United States was ranked 27th out of the 34 countries that were tested.

The administration at the focus school had implemented several programs before setting up single-gender instruction and used a variety of strategies, including tutoring programs and in-school interventions, to improve student achievement. Research suggested that grouping students based on gender could have a positive impact on how they learn. Studies have shown marked improvement in the achievement of girls who are in gender-based classes. Other studies indicate that gender-based learning has a negative impact or no impact on student achievement, and some researchers believe that gender-grouping is a form of discrimination and does not lead to any improvement in student achievement. My purpose was to investigate stakeholders' views of single-gender instruction to reveal different ideas about this practice and their ideas about possible gaps in practice that result in low student achievement. Some specific questions are:



1. How do students describe their reactions to their single-gender learning experiences?
2. What are parents' reactions to single-gender grouping?
3. How do teachers and administrators describe the influence of a single-gender academic setting on student learning?

### **Review of the Literature**

In this study, I investigated the students', parents', teachers', and administrators' perceptions about single-gender grouping in a coeducational middle school setting. To gather literature for this project study, I used ERIC, Academic Search Complete, and Education Research Complete, search engines on the Walden University's library system. I also used books, scholarly journals, Google Scholar, and The Department of Education website for the state of Mississippi to gather information. Keywords used in this search were: *motivation, single-gender, gender grouping, motivation, same-sex instruction, middle school students, achievement, professional development* and *NCLB*. I will first discuss the conceptual framework for this study then present literature related to the broader problem of low student achievement.

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used Deci and Ryan's (2008) theories of motivation to understand student participation in single-gender classrooms. Self-determination theory can be used to explain student motivation in a classroom setting as well and was helpful for me to better understand student participation in the single-gender classrooms (Brooks & Young, 2011; Cherry, 2017; Jang, Reeves, & Deci, 2010; Moos & Honkomp, 2011; Ng, Ntoumani,

Thogersen-Ntoumani, Deci, Ryan, Duda, & Williams, 2012). Deci and Ryan noted that self-determination theory is based on three factors that motivate students: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. If students are going to be motivated to learn, they must feel that they have an opportunity to choose the environment in which they will learn, which is known as autonomy. Autonomy involves self-organization and a personal choice regarding study behavior (Sierens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Soenens, & Dochy, 2009). People are autonomously motivated when their motivation comes from within (Kusurkar, TenCate, Vos, Westers, & Croiset, 2013). Students must also be competent in their learning environment, which means that they must feel that they can function in the learning environment (Brophy, 2004; Hayenga & Corpus, 2010). Finally, students must also be able to relate to others in the environment with them and have a sense of belonging. Relatedness is linked to students' needs to be affiliated with the individuals in which they will be sharing their learning environment (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Motivation is an important aspect in determining whether students will learn. According to the Center on Education Policy (2012), motivation affects every aspect of schooling from how students feel about school to how they feel about their teachers and peers. If students are motivated to learn, they will fully contribute to the learning process, whereas if they are not motivated they will not put in effort or will not be responsive to the information being instructed by the teacher. Putting in effort means that students set goals for themselves as well as expect more of themselves. Setting self-expectations is known as the expectancy-value theory (Fang-Ying, Ju-Shi, & Mei-Hsing, 2012). According to Dickhäuser, Reinhard, and Englert (2011), students perform better when

they have higher expectations of themselves, especially when difficulties arise.

Additionally, high self-efficacy--a person's belief that they can do something (Bandura, 1997)--occurs when students have high expectations for themselves. Students who exhibit high self-efficacy are generally more motivated to achieve. Students who expect to succeed in their endeavors are more likely to be successful because they are more motivated to learn and perform (Kelley & Decker, 2009). Therefore, motivation is a key to success in education.

Research shows that students who are motivated to learn choose to be involved in their education and learning. Students are more likely to want to learn when they make a choice to do so. When motivation is combined with intellectual skill and interaction with peers, students engage in their own learning (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). This type of learning is self-regulated learning, which is the process of teaching students how to learn through actively managing the behavioral and motivational aspects of the learning process (Erdem-Keklik & Keklik, 2013). Therefore, if student achievement is to be improved, students must be able to choose to participate in their learning as well as set high expectations for their learning. These ideas of motivation and self-determination helped me gain a richer view of the classrooms.

### **Addressing Low Academic Achievement**

Research suggests that low student achievement occurs when students are struggling or falling behind in academic performances and there is no consistency in behavioral and academic expectations (Balfanz, Rodriguez, & Brasiel, 2013). To address this issue, schools need to implement research-based strategies that include various

educational programs, professional development activities for teachers, after-school programs, and programs that are focused on the social attributes that may be distracting or discouraging the students.

Though it is difficult, it is important to look at low academic achievement terms such as underachievement, low achievement, and other school issues (Ford & Moore, 2013). Underachievement and low achievement are of major concern to educators of both regular education and gifted or high potential students (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2012). Educators have to reach students where they are and do what is needed to address the issues that are causing low academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011). Professional development sessions can help teachers address low student achievement (Durlak et al., 2011).

**Professional development.** Research indicates professional development's impact on teaching practices, which can positively impact academic achievement. For example, Garet, Wayne, Stancavage, Taylor, Eaton, Walters, ..., National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2010) examined the impact of professional development programs on middle school mathematics teachers in 77 mid- and high-poverty schools in 12 districts. Although the findings did not show a significant impact on academic achievement in the first year of implementation, professional development had a significant impact on the way that teachers taught, which can positively impact academic achievement during the second year of full implementation (Garet, Wayne, Stancavage, Taylor, Eaton, Walters, ..., National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2010). Therefore, one means of improving student

achievement is to provide meaningful professional development that is focused on teachers' needs.

It is important to also consider what type of professional development is offered. Professional development activities should be effective, meaningful and applicable to what teachers do daily (Dever & Lash, 2013) as well as match the needs of the teachers (DeMonte, 2013). Teachers benefit from professional development activities that are focused on helping them help students. However, these activities should cater to needs of each teacher individually in addition to required professional development that all teachers attend. Additionally, the individual needs of teachers should be considered when scheduling professional development activities (Bayer, 2014).

**After-school programs.** After-school programs can be a way to improve academic achievement. After-school programs offer a vital service to families by offering a safe environment for students during after-school hours as well as a place to aid struggling students (Farrell, Collier-Meek, & Pons, 2013). A meta-analysis on a broad sample of relevant studies surrounding after-school programs revealed that after-school programs had a substantial impact on student achievement, helped to increase the self-perceptions of the students, and resulted in fewer behavior problems (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). According to an administrator at the school, after-school programs have been tried but resulted in no significant improvements.

**Behavior management programs.** Implementing programs that focus on the social attributes that may be discouraging or distracting to the students may also help improve student achievement (Carr, Dunlap, Horner, Koegel, Turnbull, Sailor, . . . Fox,

2002; Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2016). Positive behavior support is a program that focuses on behavior management and aims to proactively approach those behaviors that could be distracting students from reaching their full potential in the classroom (Carr, Dunlap, Horner, Koegel, Turnbull, Sailor, . . . Fox). One benefit of fully implementing positive behavior support programs is that it promotes a positive school culture as noted by Carr, Dunlap, Horner, Koegel, Turnbull, Sailor, . . . Fox. Students attending schools with positive school climates have higher academic performances than those who attend schools with negative school climates (Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns, & Bolton, 2008). The Mississippi Department of Education adopted a positive behavior support program that is organized to aid schools in improving student behavior and school climate and has been implemented in the focus school.

**Achievement gap.** Research has shown that students from low socioeconomic schools perform at lower levels than students from more privileged areas. In addition, students are not as involved in their education and learning, therefore resulting in an achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Rätty, Kasanen, & Laine, 2009). The achievement gap is an issue that has been a constant topic of discussion in the K-12 public education system. The academic achievement gap has been a very persistent issue in American public education due to the disproportion in education between minority, low-income students and their more privileged white peers (Zhang & Cowen, 2009). Parents, educators, and other stakeholders in the K-12 sector have been trying to find ways to address closing this gap. A major focus of the NCLB Act (2002) is to narrow the achievement gap and ensure that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds attain

academic proficiency (Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011). NCLB (2001) set closing this gap as a national priority by holding districts and schools accountable for students' academic achievement based on state assessments. Therefore, students must be at school and engaged in the learning process if they are to perform well on these state assessments.

Attendance and engagement are two variables that schools often overlook when they are trying to improve student achievement (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). The school in this particular study was a small learning community school with a student population of about 500 students in grades 9 – 12. The school was located in a high crime, high poverty area, and had previously implemented strategies such as longer learning time, afterschool programs, extended year programs, and additional instruction as a means of closing the achievement gap. Even with the implementation of these strategies and programs, student achievement was still low. The researchers collected data regarding the attendance patterns of the students and found that the low achieving students also had high absentee rates. After analyzing the data, a school-wide plan was implemented to help improve attendance and student engagement. When students were absent from school a note was mailed to their home address to let them know that they had been missed by their teachers and peers. The other variable that was addressed by the school-wide plan was student engagement. Student engagement was increased through teacher demonstration and productive group work. With the implementation of those two strategies, students became more involved in the learning process and as a result their achievement improved (Fisher et al.). This article relates to my study in many ways. It

brings to light other strategies and programs that could be used to help improve student achievement and attendance.

**Federal legislation influencing instruction.** Emphasis on improved student achievement came to the forefront with the passage of the NCLB because it established an accountability system that all states were required to meet (United States Department of Education, 2012). With the passage of NCLB, improved student achievement has become an ever-increasing issue especially challenging for schools serving low income students. The passage of the NCLB Act placed greater emphasis on accountability for student achievement on the state (Ladd, 2017; Whitney & Candelaria, 2017; Dee & Jacob, 2011). With the passage of this Act, states had to find an accountability system or improve their accountability system for their public schools. States were required to administer mandatory state assessments as a means of accountability for their schools. They were also required to attain test scores of specified levels of the AYP to demonstrate improvement (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012). This meant that more scrutiny was placed on the teacher and what and how he or she was teaching that may translate into better test scores.

The implementation of these high-stakes tests has had a negative impact on some students. Powell, Higgins, Aram, and Freed (2009) conducted a study to investigate the impact of NCLB on the decisions that teachers and principals make pertaining to curriculum and instruction and the effects that these decisions have on student achievement and motivation in school. They concluded that students are becoming more anxious about these high-stakes tests, so much so that they are less motivated in school



(Powell, Higgins, Aram, and Freed). As I was conversing with some students about these high stakes tests in the focus school, several students stated that the challenges placed on them to be successful on these tests have overwhelmed them to the point that they would rather drop out of school. The Powell, Higgins, Aram, and Freed's study reinforced the use of motivation as a conceptual framework and incorporation in questions.

Researchers have examined what the emphasis placed on high-stakes school accountability, capacity, and resources under NCLB has on reading and math outcomes (Lee & Reeves, 2012). The results of this study showed that there were varied levels of progress among different grades, subjects, and subgroups. It also showed that NCLB did not have sustainable or generalizable policy effects on high-stakes accountability. Long-term instructional capacity and teaching resources were found to attribute to improved academic achievement.

Even before the implementation of the NCLB, states had systems in place for holding teachers accountable for their students' learning; what the NCLB Act did was create a new accountability system for all public schools in each state (Sanders, 2008). No longer could schools use their own accountability system but were forced to use the same accountability system statewide (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005). Added pressures on schools to meet AYP have been a cause for concern for another reason. "AYP refers to the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year as they progress toward the law's goal of having all students reach proficiency levels on state tests by 2014" (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2009, p. 1). Maleyko and Gawlik, (2011) stated that "states have the ability to statistically

manipulate their AYP implementation, which may give a false impression to the public that AYP is a consistent measure of school effectiveness across the country” (p. 600). One study found that schools were doomed to fail with the passage of the NCLB Act because of the emphasis placed on high-stakes testing (Hoff, 2009). Hoff’s study also noted that emphasis on these high-stakes tests, meeting AYP, and obtaining a decent QDI is problematic for public schools, parents, and the community. Parental involvement is a vital aspect of positive student success and because of all the emphasis placed on testing, parents have lost faith in the schools, which has made it hard for schools to obtain the parental involvement needed to ensure student success as well as meet the requirements of parental involvement set by the NCLB Act (Latunde, 2017; Hoang, 2010).

In their study of high school students, Combs, Slate, Moore, Bustamante, Onwuegbuzie, & Edmondson (2010) found that more than two-thirds of students graduating from high school have to take remedial classes in college because they are not college-ready graduates. Critics of NCLB believe that it pressures the teachers to teach to the state assessment rather than the curriculum and takes the emphasis off subjects that are not tested (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). What has happened is, teachers are no longer teaching students, they are teaching a test (Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder, 2008). Teachers should be teaching not only the content curriculum for the test but also ensuring that students are learning the other needed skills to be successful in their everyday lives (Pinder, 2013). With so much emphasis on high-stakes tests, teachers are forced to focus on their students’ showing growth and scoring in a specific category rather than whether

or not what the students are learning will help them succeed at the next level (Davies, 2008). Furthermore, this requirement has pressured to districts to continue to improve achievement.

In an attempt to provide some flexibility for states to move away from the AYP system that would more than likely lead to a vast majority of schools across the United States not meeting the 2014 proficiency target, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) was passed and replaced the NCLB (Saultz, McEachin, & Fusarelli, 2016). According to Saultz, Fusarelli, and McEachin (2017), the ESSA brought about some changes in the relationship between the federal and state governments by limiting the role of the federal government in executive authority and education policy. In addition, they noted that limitation of the executive authority was a vital development in policy that deviated from a number of issues, mainly the widespread use of waivers in education policy and that the passage of this law gave substantial power over education policy, back to the states.

**Single-gender grouping for instruction.** Research has suggested that grouping students based on gender could have a positive impact on how they learn. Willis (2007) conducted an ethnographic study investigating the thoughts of students, parents, and teachers on single-gender classrooms. The principle focus of the study was the way in which teachers and students behaved in the single-gender classrooms. The school was located in a low socioeconomic area in a large city where unemployment and crime were everyday realities. The sample included four primary school classes, two teachers from two different primary schools for a total of four teachers, 76 boys and 112 girls for a total

of 188 students. The teachers and students were interviewed, observed, and surveyed in an effort to gain insight into the single-gender class setting. The results showed that this type of setting was beneficial in elevating student achievement for both males and females because the students were more confident, engaged, and motivated when in classes with peers of the same gender. In fact, this study supports my choice of motivation as a conceptual framework and is also investigating student achievement.

Many studies have shown that there is an impact on learning for students in single-gender instructional settings (Belfi, Goos, DeFaine, & Van Damme, 2012; McFarland, Benson, & McFarland, 2011). A review of literature by Belfi, Goos, DeFaine, & Van Damme was conducted to see what effect class composition had on the well-being and academic self-concept of students. They elected to conduct an extensive literature review because not many studies had focused on the effects of class composition on the academic achievement outcomes of the students. Belfi, Goos, DeFaine, & Van Damme's review of the literature focused on single-gender classes versus coeducational classes as well as single-gender schools versus coeducational schools. The goal was to find out if there was an effect on the students' achievement outcomes based on their class or school composition. The results indicated that female students were more focused when they were in classes with peers of the same gender, but the results were inconclusive for the male students. An additional study was conducted to see if students in gender-specific classes outperformed students in traditional coeducational classes (McFarland, Benson, & McFarland, 2011). The sample consisted of 48 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students in a Midwestern public elementary school. The students were

grouped into three groups: Group A – 8 boys, Group B – 8 girls, and Group C – 32 boys and girls. Archival data were used to determine which group to place the students in. Data from surveys and achievement assessments were collected for analysis. Each group was taught by the same three teachers throughout the year. The school gave the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment twice a year, in October and April. The assessment results were collected for all students in the sample groups. The authors concluded that gender-specific classes resulted in improved student achievement.

Counter to the studies favoring single-gender instruction, the AAUW (1998) noted that no evidence exists that proves that gender-based education works or is better than coeducation. The AAUW stated that in order to fully examine the effectiveness of single-gender education, one must first understand what is meant by a good education as well as what constitute successes and failures in the attainment of an education. Although these are older studies, they are important as many researchers continue to value them by citing them in their studies (Lavy & Schlosser, 2007; Martino & Meyenn, 2002; Sax, 2010).

Another researcher who has criticized single-gender instruction is Sadker. Sadker (2011) stated that diversity in the classroom environment is important in education when it comes to grouping students because it helps prepare them for the real world, therefore students should be participating in coeducational classes. In a personal email interaction with Sadker, he noted that while a number of schools at risk have implemented single-gender classes as a way of improving test scores, the overall results have not been good. He noted that in the Vermilion Parish case in Louisiana, the school board used falsified

and improper research from the school principal's doctoral dissertation to allow sex-segregated education and eventually, after spending much money, had to settle a law suit and stop their sex-segregated classes. Sadker also stated that while there are several issues with gender-segregated classes, the most important issue is the legal one, because sex-segregation (similar to race segregation) could cause damage and can be done only under very specific conditions. The teachers and administrators at the focus school will be working together to ensure that no students are damaged due to their participation in the single-gender setting. I found Sadker's comments helpful because I have read articles by him in the field of gender issues and know that he has been working in this field for quite some time and his research helped to guide my study.

Another study examined mixed-gender science classes versus single-gender science classes (Caskey, 2006). The school in this study was a middle grades school located in a suburban school district in the Midwest. There were approximately 500 students enrolled in this school. During the 2002–2003 school year, the school became a pilot site for a departmentalized concept scheduling program. This program allowed for randomized scheduling of students which enabled them to be able to place some students in single-gender classes for science. The findings from this study revealed that gender-based grouping did not produce a difference in the academic achievement of the students or create a more positive class climate in science. In agreement with this, Pahlke and Hyde (2016) noted that their research found that same-sex schooling is no more effective than coeducational schooling in improving the academic achievement of students. Even though this is an older study, it provides information about attempts to use single-gender

grouping that can be helpful in this study as it will provide a caution for considering all possible conditions. Several researchers agree that overall research on the effectiveness of gender-based education is inconclusive (Hart, 2015; Liben, 2014; Pahlke, Bigler, & Patterson, 2014; Wilson, Gresham, Williams, Whitley, & Partin, 2013).

Additional studies were carried out in middle schools. Perceptions of parents, teachers, and students of single-gender grouping in a public charter middle school were explored by Wiegert and Che (2010). The school in this study was a Grade 6-8 middle charter school in a moderately-sized urban city in the south. There were approximately 120 students in the school and they were said to be from middle to upper middle-class families. The sample for this study included all the teachers, parents, and students of the school. The researchers used a case-study research design to survey and interview the participants as to the motivations for participating in this type of setting. All classes were single-gender classes. The surveys and interviews were analyzed and charted in order to reach a conclusion on the data. Wiegert and Che concluded that the parents, students, and teachers felt that the gender-based classes afforded the students to be a part of a socially relaxed space, as well as a more focused academic environment.

The conceptual framework of motivation, the previous research on single-gender instruction, and information on accountability measures enabled me to study the perceptions of teachers, students, administrators, and parents involved in the setting of single-gender grouping at the focus school. As has been presented, findings from research on gender grouping are mixed. There are studies that find that gender grouping is beneficial and there are studies that find the opposite.

### **Implications**

This study gives much needed insight on the perceptions of teachers, students, parents, and administrators involved in single-gender grouping as a possible way to improve student achievement. The findings report what teachers, students, parents, and administrators think about the possible influence single-gender grouping in the focus school had on learning, instruction, and motivation of students. Administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders can use this data to continue to improve upon single-gender instruction that may help to positively influence student achievement. The resultant project uses information collected from participants to develop appropriate professional development engaging teachers in strategies for improving instruction and influencing motivation of students.

### **Summary**

The NCLB (2002) then ESSA (2015) imposed tougher restrictions on schools and school districts with mandates to improve the academic achievement of students. Due to this emphasis placed on student achievement and teacher accountability, states have had to find programs and strategies to implement in order to ensure that teachers are held accountable and student achievement is improved. The ESSA was passed in an effort to lessen the federal government's involvement in education policy decisions. This law was passed in an effort to give individual states more power over making decisions that affect their students' academic achievement.

Evaluations at the focus school indicated that changes needed to be considered in order to ensure success for all students. Single-gender grouping was one strategy that the



focus school used as a way to help increase student achievement. Some studies show that single-gender grouping is beneficial for girls and helps improve their self-concept (Kessel & Hannover, 2008). On the other hand, a study conducted by Muijs and Dunne (2010) suggested that gender grouping could have a negative impact on students' self-concept, both girls and boys. Research conducted by Sadker and Sadker (1995) suggested that single-gender grouping is harmful to both males and females but more so to females. Previous research has revealed mixed results as to the use of single-gender grouping and can be helpful in alerting the school about possible positive and negative concerns. Data were gathered and used to make an informed decision as to participants' perceptions of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of single-gender grouping in this middle school. Section 2 describes the reasons for using qualitative methods and the processes of data collection and analysis.

## Section 2: Methodology

To address low achievement in middle school, I focused on two classes involved in single-gender instruction that had been implemented to help students find a setting that may increase their motivation to learn. Using qualitative methods to collect data was the best choice because I investigated the perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, and parents who were involved. A quantitative study would only yield numerical data, which was not my focus (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). An ethnographic study would only provide my observations (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010), but I wanted to know the perceptions of all involved to create an informed picture of what the actual experiences were of the students, teachers, administrators, and parents involved in single-gender instruction. The goal for this study was to investigate the stakeholders' perceptions of the use of single-gender classes as an instructional strategy to meet the needs of all students.

For this project study, I used a qualitative case study. Case studies are usually focused on individuals within a group or small groups in a setting, and experiences are documented using interviews, observations, and document analysis (Lodico et al., 2010). I chose this method for my study because I wanted to get a more in-depth description of what the participants thought about gender-grouping and student success in middle school. The administrators, teachers, parents, and students who were directly involved in the situation were the sources of information about the value of single-gender instruction, thus interviews provided a critique for future planning at the school (see Yin, 2018). Investigating participants' perceptions about single-gender instruction provided insight into the current mindset of the stakeholders. This allowed me to better understand what

strategies or programs the stakeholders felt would be beneficial in helping to increase student achievement.

When conducting an interview, researchers must complete several tasks including (a) attain participant consent and clarify confidentiality and anonymity and (b) review purpose of interview including the amount of time needed and how the results will be shared ( Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The objective of case study research was to attain a deeper understanding of the issue at hand through the eyes of the participants of the study (Woodside, 2010). By using interviews, I was able to investigate the single-gender instruction settings and record rich information from the stakeholders to better understand the perceptions of those involved.

### **Participants**

I used purposeful sampling for the participation pool. Purposeful sampling is nonrandom and allows researchers to select the cases to study (Patton, 2002). Potential participants included 30 seventh-grade students enrolled in two single-gender classroom settings, their parents, the two teachers of the classes, and the two administrators. There were two single-gender classes (one for each gender) that consisted of 15 students each with 30 total students. This plan allowed me to find a variety of perspectives, as some people were in favor of the single-gender grouping and some were not. I planned on interviewing the students' parents as well as the teachers of the single-gender classes and the school's two administrators to see what they thought about the single-gender grouping. However, only 10 of the 30 students who were involved in the classes agreed to participate. Final participants included 10 students, two parents, two teachers, and two

administrators. See interview questions for the teachers in Appendix C, students in Appendix D, parents in Appendix E, and administrators in Appendix F.

After receiving consent from Walden's IRB, the administration, teachers, students, and their parents, the interview process began. The purpose of the study was discussed with each single-gender class. I explained to the students and teachers that this study was being done with their best interest in mind, as it can help the school consider alternative ways of increasing student progress. Those who chose to participate were given consent forms and only those individuals who return signed consent forms were interviewed. Parents were contacted through e-mail, by telephone, and a letter sent home with the students to encourage them to participate in the study. They were informed that they could participate in the face-to-face interview or they could participate in a telephone interview. It was important to have the parents' perceptions about the single-gender classroom to provide ideas not shared by the students. Establishing rapport, a working relationship, with the participants was vital to the study. Due to the interpretive nature of the study, I was involved in the experience with the participants (Creswell, 2009), assuming a more participatory role. Many of the participants were known due to my job as an educator at the research site (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; see Yin, 2015; see Stake, 1995, 2010).

To ensure confidentiality of the participants, numbers were used instead of names for each participant during the interview and analysis process. I honored the participants' confidentiality and told them that the individual information gathered would not be shared with others, so the participants would feel less threatened by the study.

Participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary not mandatory. Participants had to sign a Walden informed consent to participate in the study. This assured their confidentiality, protection, and honored their right to withdraw at any time.

### Data Collection

Interviews were used to provide a rich method for investigating the positive and negative aspects of learning in a single-gender classroom. Perspectives of all involved revealed possible ways to better promote success and increase motivation for the middle grade students. The summative question was: What are the stakeholders' perceptions on the use of single-gender classes as an instructional strategy to meet the needs of all students? The research questions guiding this study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

#### *Research Question Alignment with Interview Questions*

Research Questions	Teacher Interview Questions	Student Interview Questions	Parent Interview Questions	Administration Interview Questions
1. How do students describe their reactions to their single-gender learning experiences?		#1, #2, #3, #4, and #5		
2. What are parents' reactions to single-gender grouping?			#1, #2, #3, #4 and #5	
3. How do teachers and administrators describe the influence of a single-gender academic setting on student learning?	#3, #4, #5, #6, #7, and #9			#3, #4, #5, #6, and #7

### **Process for Collection of Data**

After getting approval from Walden's IRB (approval no. 03-18-16-0184221) and getting consent from the administration, I conducted the study over a 5-week period (between August 15 and September 11, 2016). I personally asked the teachers and administrators about participating in this study and they agreed. Once they agreed, they were given a copy of the informed consent letter to complete. The students were contacted and given a consent form to take home to their parent(s). The parents of all 30 students were invited to participate by letter and/or e-mail. Once the consent form was returned from parents, students were contacted individually to ask for their assent and signature. Once I ensured that all interview protocols had been met, I scheduled interview times for all participants.

Though there are four basic types of data that can be collected in qualitative research—data from observations, interviews, documents, or audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2009)—for this study, data were generated through interviews. I collected data through an in-depth conversation with the 16 participants who agreed to participate in this study. Interviews were audiotaped, notes were taken, and the interviews were transcribed. Each participant was given a list of questions before beginning to allow them time to read over and think about the questions. To keep track of the data, I kept a reflective journal during the study to record my thinking, feelings, experiences, and insights during this process.

Interviews were conducted using open-ended questions to listen to participants' perspectives about single-gender grouping for instruction and its possible contribution for

improved motivation and achievement. The interview questions were designed to identify the participants' perceptions about reasons for low achievement scores and single-gender instruction. See Appendix C for teacher questions, Appendix D for student questions, Appendix E for parent questions, and Appendix F for the administrator questions. Interviews were conducted either before school or after school based on when the participants were available. Interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes per participant. Each participant was interviewed in the professional development room, which is located in back of the building to allow for some sense of privacy and to ensure minimal disruption for teachers and students.

There were a total of 10 students (five males and five females), two administrators, two teachers, and two parents who consented to participate in the study. Although I began with ideas to discuss, our discussion allowed for emerging ideas. Interviews were conducted with students who had proper documentation first. All student interviews and one parent interview were conducted after school. Both administrators, both teachers, and one parent were interviewed before school. Student interviews lasted between 30–45 minutes. Every other participant's interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The number of interviews done per day was limited so that I could transcribe the interviews the same day to capture my ongoing thoughts. The interview schedule is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Interview Schedule*

		M	T	W	Th	F
Month 1- Week 1	Female Students	1	1	1	1	
Month 1 - Week 2	Male Students		1	1		1
Month 1 – Week 3	Female & Male Students	1		1	1	
Month 1 –Week 4	Parents & Teachers		Teacher	Parent	Teacher	Parent
Month 2 –Week 1	Administrators	1		1		

**Role of the Researcher**

I was the eighth-grade information and communication technology II teacher at the focus school. I did not hold a supervisory role over any of the participants. My professional involvement in the focus school had been established, as I already knew the teachers who participated in this study and we had a positive professional relationship. Once permission was granted from the administrators, a meeting took place with each teacher beforehand to discuss the study, invite them to participate, and see if they had any questions. The teachers who were interviewed were involved in efforts to improve achievement for the students at the school. As we had previously discussed these concerns, I was alert to include all ideas, questions, concerns, and suggestions that could then be analyzed.

Though I started with the assumption that educators and parents were frustrated



that achievement scores had not improved, and that single-gender instruction may provide a viable alternative to traditional classroom instruction, I was open minded during interviews. I searched for ideas that may disagree with my preconceived notions about single-gender instruction as well as evidence that may demonstrate the value of this type of instruction. By talking to all persons who were involved, I was able to develop an in-depth description of the situations in single-gender instruction as well as revealed the participants' ideas for needed changes.

### **Data Analysis**

During the interviews, I handwrote observational and field notes and audio recorded the conversations. I then transcribed the interviews within a day or two of each interview (see Appendix G). Transcription is used to turn what was said verbally into written form (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011). My data analysis included organizing my data by transcribing interviews and observational and field notes and then reading through the data several times to get an understanding of emerging themes. I used open coding to organize themes then develop categories as I looked for ideas about perceptions of causes of low achievement and how single-gender classrooms may enable students to possibly be more comfortable and perform better. Some possible themes that emerged from the collected data were active engagement, student accountability, and parental involvement. Additionally, I coded the data, which involved creating labeled categories from participants' responses (see Creswell, 2009). After coding the data and developing categories, I then proceeded to describe and interpret the data. Using Microsoft Office Word, the data were transcribed to help sort the various ideas into categories and to gain

a sense of what the participants' perceptions were of their experiences in the single-gender environment.

Ethical protection of participants was established through use of pseudonyms in collection and organization of data and use of informed consent. Signed parental consent and student assent forms were required for participation in the study. This informed participants of their confidentiality, protection from harm, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by not discussing with other students, parents, administrators, or teachers individual statements that were recorded during interviews. Instead of the participants' names, numbers were used to identify each participant. All data were locked away in a secure cabinet and my locked computer to which only I have access to protect the integrity of the data.

### **Evidence of Quality: Establishing Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research requires the researcher to work to establish credibility and trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the trustworthiness of a study must be examined in qualitative research to ensure reliability, which is met through credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness. The credibility of results can be assured through triangulation, member checking, and clarifying researcher biases and assumptions (Merriam, 2009). Triangulation can help confirm the results of the study, provide more complete findings, and establish credibility (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). I triangulated my field notes and data gathered through the interviews of the four different groups of stakeholders: the administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Samples of transcribed interviews are included in the appendices to add to credibility.

After transcription of the data, each participant was invited to review their interview transcript to get feedback. Member checking allows for the perspective of participants and the researcher to come together and involves participants reading the conclusions and providing their interpretation of the findings (Bradbury-Jones, Irvine, & Sambrook, 2010). All participants were invited to read my final conclusions and provide their feedback, and I discussed my conclusions with participants and asked for their confirmation or disagreement. Participant validation through member checking enabled me to clarify my understanding and interpretation of the data and establish the credibility of the study.

To establish trustworthiness, in this study I describe my biases about low student achievement and single-gender instruction and explain any biases that arose during the study. For example, based on my 11 years of teaching at this school, I think that low achievement is due to the students' lack of motivation and a high teacher and administrator turnover. I also believe that single-gender instruction could improve students' motivation and involvement in learning. Discrepant cases that deviated from what I may have expected are addressed and I discuss data that agreed with my ideas of low student achievement and single-gender grouping as well as those that were different. By declaring my bias, I hope to ensure that information from the study reflects the participants' perspective and not solely based on what I think.

Findings from this study will be shared with the administrators and teachers in a collaborative attempt to find a strategy or strategies that may help improve student achievement. In addition, information gathered may help the teachers and administrators

improve student achievement and single-gender grouping instruction's correlation with other programs and strategies already in use within the school system. If students are successful in school, they may be more productive citizens in society.

### **Data Analysis Results**

For this study, I interviewed 10 students (five females and five males), two teachers, two parents, and two administrators who were involved in the single-gender environment. There were a total of 30 students enrolled in the gender-based classes and all 30 students and their parents were invited to participate but only 10 students and two parents decided to participate. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that investigated stakeholders' perceptions about single-gender grouping in a coeducational middle school setting as a means to improve student achievement. Interviews were conducted either before or after school based on what the participants requested. Each participant was interviewed in the professional development room at the focus school, which is located in the back of the building. To ensure effective, informative interviews, I scheduled one interview per day. I audio recorded each interview and started transcriptions as soon as possible. After the data were transcribed, I read through the data several times in an effort to be thorough in obtaining emerging themes.

Using Microsoft Office Word enabled me to easily read through the data. To keep track of the data generated, I kept a binder with the IRB approval letter, letters of cooperation, participants' informed consent and assent letters, observational notes, and a hard copy of the Microsoft Word document of transcriptions. I read and reread each transcription, then coded emerging ideas and patterns of ideas in the interview data, then

organized the ideas into categories, subcategories and final themes.

To present the findings from this study I will start by explaining how the participants responded to the research questions. After presenting and explaining the participants' responses during the interviews, I will discuss what themes emerged as I was studying the data.

### **Research Question 1**

This question investigated the students' perceptions of their learning experiences in the single-gender environment. With this question the students were able to respond to questions about their satisfaction with their academic progress in the single-gender environment, as well as their comfort and motivational level while in this environment. They were also able to discuss how they felt about their involvement/engagement in this setting. In order to gather data for this question, all 30 students, who were involved in the single-gender classes, were invited to participate but only 10 students agreed to be interviewed. They will be referred to using INT 100 – 109.

The students were on a regular seven period schedule with single-gender classes for just Math and English Language Arts. Their other classes were mixed gender classes. After interviewing both girls and boys, five girls and four boys reported similar experiences in this setting. About 90% of the participants agreed that they were a little skeptical at first about being in this type of class environment. Approximately 60% of the participants reported having a positive experience in this setting. For example, INT 100 stated:

At first, I was unsure of how this would work. I am used to being in class with both boys and girls so I was curious to see how this set-up would be different. After being in the class for a few weeks, I started to see a difference in the way the class environment was. I have taken classes with these young ladies previously and some either did not participate in class or were put out of the class for misbehavior. In this setting, the girls seemed calmer and less likely to be looking for attention from the opposite sex. This allowed the teacher time to actually teach and us to learn which sometimes doesn't occur in the coed class setting.

This response seemed to indicate that this interviewee actually was satisfied with her experience. She also noted that after she adjusted to this setting, things were a lot better and she was more motivated to learn and participate in class.

INT 105 responded:

My first thought was, this could be good. At the same time there was some doubt as I was thinking this probably won't work because I know a lot of girls that I do not want to be in class with.

INT 105 thought that he would be okay in this single-gender class for Math and English but was still a little doubtful about what this entailed.

Adding to the skepticism was INT 101. INT 101 stated that she didn't think this type of setting would work because the girls that she had taken classes with previously were messy and she did not want to even be bothered with that issue. Even though she did not think this would work, she still was willing to give it a try.

When asked about their comfort level in the single-gender class setting, INT 105 added:

I think I was more comfortable in the same sex class than in the mixed sex class because I was in class with my friends. I also think I was comfortable because it seemed like the teacher was more thorough in the same sex class than the teachers be in the two sex classes. This motivated me to be more involved in the class.

Sometimes I would not ask questions in the two sex classes because it seemed like the teacher did not want to be bothered. I would always ask questions in the same sex class because the teacher was going to make sure that I understood what was being taught.

INT 105's response led me to believe that this participant felt that being involved in this setting was beneficial in improving her motivation in school and about her grades.

INT108 added:

This was very comfortable for me. I enjoyed going to class and I was eager and motivated to learn. When I am in classes with boys and girls I usually don't ask questions because I was scared to sound dumb. In the class with all boys I was not even worried about if my question would sound dumb or not. If it was something I wanted to know, I asked the question.

INT 108's view was that this was a setting where he could relax and not be worried about impressing the opposite sex. He noted that he did not ask or answer questions in his coeducational class for fear of sounding dumb. He felt that he could be himself in this environment and that motivated him to give his all in class.

At the same time, there were some students who did not feel that this setting was right for them and was not beneficial in improving their grades. For instance, INT 106 commented:

I hated the idea. I asked my mom why she signed me up for that and she said because she felt it would do me some good. I reminded her about my friend from Georgia that had attended a school like this and how told me that she hated it. She said that her mom made her go and she did not like being in school with just girls and so I automatically assumed that I would not like this setting. I got mad at my mom and I told her to go and take me out of that class, but she told me that she was the parent and that I would have to just learn to deal with it.

INT 106 explained that he was not happy about being in this environment and thus did not feel that his progress was substantial. He also noted that he did all that he could to try and get taken out of that class and change to a regular English and Math class.

INT 107 added:

This class was a waste of my time and everyone else's time. I did not learn anything and to me, it was worse than the coed class. I think I could have done much better if they had left me where I was.

INT 107 felt that he would have been better off if he could have just taken all coed classes. He stated that his grades did not improve, and he was less motivated in class because he did not want to be there. He stated that he did not give his all-in class because he felt forced to be there.

Another student who did not like the single gender setting, INT 104 stated:



I think my motivation comes from within. I have set goals for myself and I stay motivated because I know where I am trying to go. If I had to choose, I would say that I am more motivated in the boys and girls setting because I feel more of a challenge with both sexes than I do with just girls.

This interviewee felt that she was more challenged with mixed gender setting, but the environment really had no effect on her grades or her motivation. She felt that she could thrive in any environment because she was self-motivated.

Motivation was also addressed by another student in response to the teaching strategies used in the single-gender class. One of the students, INT 109, noted that he appreciated the single gender class because the teacher had the students engage in projects that the student had not experienced before. He felt that students were held accountable for their own learning and that was beneficial. He added that the projects made him more motivated to learn. INT 109's response was very positive as it relates to projects. He noted that completing and presenting the projects was the best part of the class. He also stated that he was really motivated to complete the work because it was relatable.

At the same time there were students who did not like completing projects. For instance, INT 102 stated:

I enjoyed projects in the coeducational setting because I got to hear and experience the point of views of people of the opposite sex. In the girls only class, we all tend to think alike so the point of views are mostly the same.

This response led me to believe that there were aspects of the class that she felt were beneficial and some not beneficial. She firmly stated that she did not like the project portion of the gender-based class setting.

In opposition to this, INT 103 added:

Projects are better in the classes with both boys and girls rather in the class with just one sex. . . . I am not saying that boys cannot be deep, but I have seen girls look deeper into a situation, issue, or project and help to really bring things to light. Most boys just look at it in a simple fashion.

INT 103's response was that he did not like the class setting overall and this further proved the coeducational setting was better. He noted that he even suggested that they be allowed to collaborate with the all girls class when completing projects.

**Summary of research question 1.** A little more than half of the students felt that the single-gender learning environment was beneficial to their achievement. They described how they were more motivated and comfortable learning in this type of environment. They further noted that enjoyed the setting and were satisfied with the learning that occurred in the gender-based classes. Six of the 10 students stated that they would participate in this type of setting again if given the opportunity.

On the other hand, there were four students who did not like the gender-based setting. These students felt that this was a waste of time and they were not satisfied with the learning that occurred. One of the students did admit that his grades improved but he was still not elated about being in the single-gender classes. All four students noted that they would not ever voluntarily participate in this type of setting again.

## Research Question 2

This question investigated the parents' perceptions of single-gender class environment and the intent of this question was to find out how satisfied they were with the academic progress of their child in this setting. I also examined how parents felt about their child's comfort level and motivation in this environment. In order to gather data for this question, all parents of the students who were involved in the gender-based class were invited to participate. Only two parents agreed to be interviewed. They will be referred to using INT 400-401.

Both parents agreed that the single-gender setting helped improve their child's grades. They were both satisfied with the outcome and if given the opportunity again, would gladly have their child participate. For example, INT 400 stated:

I am satisfied with her academic progress. I was all for her being in this setting because I know that she can get distracted. She is a really well-rounded young lady, but I think she let things distract her and this caused her to start having low grades in her classes. Her mom and I paid for her a math tutor because she was really doing poorly in math. This is the reason why we jumped at the chance to sign her up to be in this environment.

Parent 400 believed the single-gender class helped her student in math and resulted in the student finishing required homework. The parent added:

She was really involved in the class and she told us that she really enjoyed and learned so much in the class. This was new to us because when we would ask her about her day, this was when she was in the coed class, she didn't want to talk

about it or she would say it was okay. When we asked her about her day, while in the single-gender class, she had so much to talk about. She really pushed herself to do well and she was really engaged in this setting. Her drive and enjoyment were all I needed to confirm that we made the right decision.

INT 400 felt that he made the right decision for his daughter. He stated that his daughter was more motivated and was eager to go to school each day. He stated that he felt very comfortable with her being in this setting. He mentioned that if he had the opportunity, he would definitely send her to an all girls school because he just felt that she would do much better in class with all girls.

The second parent was also happy with the single-gender class. INT 401 noted: Surprisingly I am satisfied with his progress. I really thought that he would not do well but the counselor told me to just give it a try because we were racking our brains trying to figure out what to do with him to get him to straighten up. After the first nine weeks . . . . his grades were actually good for the first time in a long time and he was really enjoying the class. I would ask him every day after school how school was going, and he would tell me that he had learned so much and couldn't wait to go back the next day. . . . The teacher was a great teacher and I loved his teaching style and he really cared about ensuring that the kids were learning, and because of this I was so satisfied with how much my son improved in his academics.

INT 401 also stated:

He was so motivated. He was engaged and motivated in the class. If he did not

understand something he didn't mind asking. He used to hate math, but he started to enjoy math.

INT 401 stated that if she had the opportunity for her son to participate in this type of setting again, she would take it. She was glad that she decided to let him participate because his motivation for school and his self-esteem improved greatly.

**Summary of research question 2.** Findings demonstrated that the parents were very happy with the experiences that their children had in the single-gender setting. The parents mentioned that they saw a change for the better in their child's grades and attitude. One of the parents stated that his daughter started completing homework assignments at home and she was very excited about school. He was so happy because the previous school term, she had expressed to him that she did not like school and was not learning anything. The other parent talked about how she was surprised because she thought that her son would rebel, and this was her last chance at helping him because she sensed that he was on the path to dropping out of school. She shed a few tears as she was talking about the positive changes that her son went through and how she was so glad that she did not pass up on that opportunity. Only two of the 30 parents who were invited to participate actually agreed to participate. Input from more parents would have yielded more insight into the value of the program, yet learning the perceptions of a mother and a father about a girl and a boy provided important insight.

### **Research Question 3**

This question investigated the teachers' and administrators' perceptions of single-gender class environment. Teachers and administrators answered questions pertaining to

how effective they thought the single-gender setting was. Also, they were asked to compare the single-gender environment with the coeducation environment as it relates to academics. Teachers were able to discuss some strategies that they utilized in the gender-based setting. In order to gather data for this question, both teachers and both administrators who were involved in the gender-based academic setting were invited to participate. Both administrators and teachers agreed to be interviewed. They will be referred to using INT 200- 201 and 300 – 301 respectively.

The teachers were interviewed first. Both teachers agreed that they were nervous when they learned that they would have to teach in this type of setting. The male teacher was a little more nervous than the female teacher because she had prior experience in this type of setting. Both felt that it was a great learning experience. One teacher had previous experience with this type of setting and the other had no prior experience in this setting.

INT 300 commented:

I taught the gender-based course to the male students. This was my first time ever teaching all males and I must admit that at first I was a little nervous. In my experience, male students have always been the rowdy ones. So when the principal first approached me about it, I knew it would be a challenge.

INT 300 stated that he felt the class was very intriguing. The students had to adjust to the setting but once they adjusted, they were more focused and ready to learn. He also noted that the gender-based class had better scores on assessments than the coeducational classes.

Participant 301 noted:

I enjoyed teaching in the gender-based class because that setting was more focused. The students were more involved and took more ownership in their learning. I had little or no behavior issues and the students were very supportive of each other. During the second half of the school year, the students functioned as more of a family and this was a tremendous learning experience for them all.

When asked about the strategies used in the gender-based classes, INT 301 mentioned:

I tried to utilize strategies that encourage the student to be accountable for their own learning. One of the strategies that the student really seemed to take ownership of was their student portfolio. At the beginning of the year, I give all my student a rubric that lists all of things that they are required to keep for their portfolio. I explained to them, in detail, what they needed to do and how they should go about keeping up with their assignments. I showed them several examples so that they could have a better picture of what they need to do. This helped to engage and motivate the students.

This interviewee expressed that she would have loved to teach in this setting again. She stated that she felt that this setting was very beneficial for the students and the majority of her students really loved the learning environment. She felt that the students were really engaged in the class and they had a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

INT 300 stated:

With this particular setting, I found that the main thing was knowing their learning style. Once I found out what each student's learning style was, I was able to cater the lessons to fit their style of learning . . . This was very helpful because

it helped the students take a sense of ownership in completing their assignment.

Also because the majority of the boys were athletes, I made sure that I explained a lot of the concepts through sports analogies . . . . this was something they could relate to. Peer tutoring helped as well. I used [mixed] ability grouping and paired my strong students with my weaker students. This worked really well. I found that they were able to learn and retain the content better when it came from their peers.

INT 300 noted that the students seemed more motivated and accountable in this setting.

He felt that the students were more open-minded and used their problem-solving skills to work through the content in the classroom unlike his coed classes.

After interviewing the teachers, the administrators were next. Both administrators were in favor of the gender-based setting. Their teacher observations were very positive. They noted that the students were engaged from bell to bell. During teacher observations, they conversed with random students and the majority of them said that they were learning a lot and really enjoyed those classes. When asked about their experience with gender grouping, INT 200 stated:

My experience with single-gender education is restricted to an experimental process where a grade level was selected to provide feedback to all stakeholders that were involved as a possibility for school-wide adaptation. In laymen's terms, I was one of the administrators that evaluated the single-gender process that was implemented for the selected grade level.

INT 201 added:

I have worked as a supervisor in a setting that utilized gender-based classes for



math and science classes. During this time, classes were divided up based on gender in order to facilitate the learning for each group. Each group performed all tasks together including lunch, testing and dismissal.

Each administrator had a different background with the gender-based class environment.

When asked why gender-grouping was chosen as a strategy to improve student achievement

INT 200 stated:

The idea for gender-based classes was derived from reading articles and studies that were done at other schools and districts where the results seemed promising based on the data that illustrated the before and after analysis. Although the initial interest was discussed at an administrative development session by the session's speaker, the leadership team within the school made the final decision to implement this structure as an attempt to improve the behavior of students while improving academic achievement using researched based strategies.

INT 201 mentioned:

After looking at the data from the state assessment of my incoming seventh grade students, there was a group of students having low test scores and were also behavior problems. These students had between 8 and 15 referrals to the office during the last school term. This led me to believe that I needed to do something to try to change this trend and get them up to par. I decided to offer gender-based classes because I wanted to see how effective this group would perform in a gender-specific learning environment. This was more so for the tested areas

because of the trend of failure I saw, ... I did some research and saw where several schools had improved their test scores in Math and English (which are state tested areas) using gender grouping and I decided to do what needed to be done to try it in my school.

Both administrators wanted to implement something that would help increase student achievement because they saw a need. Now that I knew why they decided to go with the gender-based environment, I needed to know what their thoughts were after observing the gender-based classes. INT 200 mentioned:

The gender-based environment was very engaging. The teachers were utilizing research-based strategies to deliver content. The teachers were not instructed to use specific strategies that were different from the strategies that were encouraged for all teachers which included using the opening, work period, and closing format. This format allocated additional time for the class work assignments and allowed time for the students to collaborate with each other on class assignments and the teacher to serve as the facilitator.

INT 200 expressed that he felt that this setting had a tremendous impact on student achievement. He noted that the students were more engaged and eager to learn each and every day.

INT 201 added:

In my opinion, single gender classes are a great way to offer specifics for a certain group. It provides for better classroom instruction and higher achievement statuses because it helps to remove many other distractions that are present with

coed classes such as boys misbehaving to impress girls (and vice versa).

INT 201 noted that the students seemed more engaged and were held accountable for their learning in the gender-based environment.

**Summary of research question 3.** Results revealed that the teachers and administrators felt that this environment was positive for the students. The administrators noted that the students seemed more engaged in the learning process in the gender-based environment. The administrators mentioned how they thought the students showed tremendous growth on their state assessments. The teachers mentioned how they loved how the students took ownership of their learning. They both said the students were more accountable for both their classwork and homework. They replied that the students were harder on each other than the teacher was. “They looked out for one another” said one teacher. The teachers also mentioned how they were truly inspired by the involvement of the parents in their child’s education. One of the teachers noted that he felt like the parent’s involvement was the most important benefit of improving the students’ achievement. He believed that the students were more focused and motivated because they knew that their parents were concerned and involved in their schooling. Overall, based on the data collected from the teachers and administrators, the gender-based environment did have a positive influence on student achievement.

### **Discussion and Interpretation of Findings**

The purpose of this research study was to investigate how the students, teachers, parents, and administrators perceived the single-gender grouping setting as a strategy to raise student achievement levels in a coeducational middle school setting and to see if

this is a viable option to continue to employ. Although I was only able to interview two parents, their comments aligned with the teachers and administrators. Input from more parents would have offered more insight into the value of the gender-based program.

The findings from this study showed that the single-gender setting did have a positive influence on student achievement as reported by the teachers and administrators. Data supports that this type of environment enabled the students to be comfortable, more motivated, and focused. Deci and Ryan (2008) noted that the self-determination theory can be very beneficial for student achievement. The more determined students are to do their best, the more eager and motivated they are to succeed because success can be both satisfying and rewarding. This particular theory confirms the results of this study because 6 out of the 10 students noted that they were more motivated to learn in the single-gender class setting. Wang and Dishion (2012) noted that the gender-based environment can provide for a more cohesive learning experience. According to Wiegert and Che (2010) the parents, students, and teachers from their study felt that the single-gender classes afforded the students to be a part of a socially relaxed space, as well as a more focused academic environment.

Sax (2010) noted that single sex schooling, when it varies based on boys and girls ways of learning, can lead to an improvement in student achievement. Data from the present study showed that the participants in the study had both positive and negative experiences in the single-gender class setting. Eight out of ten of the participants agreed that they were more comfortable in this type of setting as compared to the coeducational class setting. They also felt that they more motivated and willing to learn. The students

were more focused and were held responsible/accountable for their learning and took ownership in learning.

An opposing view to single-gender instruction was noted by Sadker (2011) who claimed that diversity in the classroom setting is important in education when it comes to grouping students because it helps prepare them for the real world. He felt that gender grouping was illegal and unethical and had no impact on student achievement. The staff members at the focus school were alert to any negative experiences and I think that because the students were only in two periods of single-gender instruction during the seven period day, they still had substantial time to be with co-ed peers.

There is still a question as to how single-gender grouping impacts diverse populations and it is highly contested (Goodkind, 2012). Four students who participated in this study would possibly agree with him. These students did not feel that this environment was beneficial to them academically. The students felt that this environment had a negative influence on their schooling. According to Muijs and Dunne (2010) gender grouping is harmful to both males and females but more so for female. One of the students stated that being in the gender-based class was actually worse than the coeducational setting. She felt that the gender-based setting was not beneficial for her because she needed to be in a class environment where she could have diversity in learning (learning from both genders). She noted that she is self-motivated and would have been better off with all of her classes, including Math and English, were coed. The male student stated that gender diversity in the classroom is needed so that male and female students learn from each other. He felt that he wasted an entire school year

because he participated in the single-gender class. According to Eliot (2013) there are no significant differences between boys and girls brains pertinent to education and learning. He stated that boys and girls can learn the same so there is no relevant reason to separate them. Findings from the study suggested that student academic achievement did increase in the gender based class setting.

Students must have an inner desire to do well in school. Approximately 70% of the students felt that they were able to be successful in the gender-based environment because they were held accountable for their own learning and they were motivated to learn. Students with an inner desire to learn demonstrate authentic engagement (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012).

Data from the study also suggested that at least one of the participants felt that the female students were calmer in the gender-based setting and this allowed them to be more focused and actually learn. She discussed how some of the same girls who were in the gender-based class with her, acted more erratically and were less motivated to learn in the coeducational class versus the gender-based class. She noted that the girls were calmer and more involved in the gender-based class setting but were loud and trying to be seen in the coeducational class setting. According to Belfi, Goos, DeFaine, and Van Damme (2012) gender-based classes are considered to offer a better learning environment for students academically by making it possible for students to be more focused on learning because there are less distractions and discipline issues. This study corroborated Belfi, Goos, DeFaine, & Van Damme's findings.

Both teachers reported a sense of uneasiness in anticipation of teaching the single-

gender classes even though one teacher had taught in this type of setting for several years previously. Both reported that as the students adjusted to the setting, they were more focused and engaged in discussions and class assignments than the students in the coeducational setting. One teacher noted that he initially did not believe that there would be a difference in the class settings, but he was surprisingly wrong. He reported that the students were more involved in the learning process and they served as motivators for their peers and were more satisfied with their schooling. Similarly, Hart (2015) found that participation in the gender-based class environment can produce higher levels of student fulfilment.

The teachers also mentioned how their communicating with each other on a daily basis helped them to be successful in the gender-based setting. They would debrief with each other about the things that went well and the things that went wrong. They noted that this helped them to change the way they were teaching and the strategies that they used to deliver the course content. Both teachers noted that parental involvement was a key to student success. They noted that the parents kept in contact with them, some on a daily basis and some on a weekly basis, to ensure their child's success.

The administration felt that this was a great experience for all students involved. They saw students who were more involved in class. One administrator mentioned that one of the students stopped her in the hall and told her how she loved her math and English classes and was happy to be a part of it. Overall the administrators reported that this environment, in their opinion, did have a positive impact on the academic achievement of the students.

Although the findings of this study indicate that single-gender instruction had a positive influence on student achievement and motivation, the gender-based classes were no longer offered for the subsequent school term due to administrative changes. The school's new administrator was just starting his career as an administrator and did not feel that he could successfully keep the program going so he opted out of using the gender-based class setting.

### **The Project Deliverable**

Based on the results from this study, the proposed project is a 3day professional development session for the teachers and administrators. In Section 3, I will give details of the project to be conducted. The project includes professional development sessions where teachers will be participating and learning about a few research-based strategies that could be used in all classes to help improve student academic achievement. The strategies chosen for the professional development were chosen based on data from the participants and related literature.



### Section 3: The Project

In this qualitative project study, I looked at the perceptions of teachers, administrators, parents, and students involved in single-gender instruction in a coeducational middle school environment. The data collected and analyzed revealed mixed perceptions about gender grouping, student motivation, and student achievement. Six of the 10 students felt that being in the gender-based class helped improve their grades and behavior, whereas four of the students believed that this environment had no effect on their academics or behavior. Both parents interviewed believed that this change in setting had a significant impact on their child's academics and behavior. The teachers also reported an increase in student achievement and behavior and noted that the students were more accountable for their own learning. Additionally, the administrators stated that students in the gender specific classes had considerable growth in academics. With this information, I will help the focus school develop a strategy or strategies to address student achievement.

#### **Description and Goals**

The overarching goal of this study was to address low student achievement and find out perspectives about single-gender classes at the focus middle school. The focus school no longer implements the single-gender classes, but I was able to find strategies that would help increase student achievement recommended by the participants. Specific goals that need to be met during this process are (a) identify a specific strategy or strategies to improve student achievement, (b) present these strategies to the administrator for approval, and (c) conduct a 3-day professional development session for

the teachers. The professional development session will address the strategy/strategies that can be used to improve student achievement and motivation based on data collected. In this project, I will address the problem described in the doctoral study by implementing the strategy/strategies that participants believed would increase student achievement and motivation.

I will be conducting a 3-day professional development session during the first semester of the school year (preferably teacher work days) to equip teachers and other stakeholders with information that, based on the data from the study, can increase student achievement and motivation in the classroom setting.

### **Rationale**

Motivation is an important aspect in determining whether students will learn. Research shows that students who are motivated to learn exercise their right of choice to be involved in their education and learning; students are more likely to want to learn when they make a choice to do so. For example, Guthrie and Davis (2003) noted that giving students more choice over their own learning leads to students being more motivated, and when students are more motivated they tend to be more engaged in their own learning. Erdem-Keklik and Keklik (2013) described this type of learning as self-regulated learning, which is the process of teaching students how to learn through actively managing the behavioral and motivational aspects of the learning process. Therefore, to improve student achievement, students must be able to choose to participate in their learning as well as set high expectations for their learning. These ideas of motivation and self-determination helped me gain a richer view of the classrooms.

Another important aspect of student learning and motivation is whether students retain the knowledge that they are taught. Student achievement is determined by how well students are learning and retaining skills and concepts being taught to them in an educational setting (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017). Students fall behind or fail when they struggle to learn or retain a certain percentage of the needed skills and concepts. Increasing student achievement is the process of constant monitoring of data to make informed decisions for improvements (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007). Through the implementation of research-based strategies in the classroom and a culture of monitoring and reflecting, needed skills and concepts can be addressed as needed and practiced thereafter to increase student achievement.

Based on this information on student learning, I chose to conduct a professional development session with the teachers. The decision to conduct a professional development session was selected after a discussion with the administrators, teachers, students, and parents revealed their belief that certain strategies were not used in the classroom because teachers did not know about them or were not comfortable implementing them. The data suggested that teachers could benefit from a better understanding of what strategies helped the students in gender-based classrooms be more motivated to participate in class. Many of the students in the study suggested that completing projects and participating in a student-centered classroom/environment was beneficial to their academics. Additionally, students, parents, teachers, and the administrator saw more student accountability in the gender-based setting and felt that this was mainly because they were motivated to learn. Because of this accountability,

students were taking more responsibility for their own learning and served as motivators for their classmates as well. The professional development session will give the teachers needed information that can help them to implement the strategies that the students and teachers felt were instrumental in helping increase student achievement.

The professional development session will equip teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge needed to get students more involved and motivated in their academic success as data from the study indicated. The target audience for this professional development is administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. Getting students more involved with their academic success can benefit not only the students but the parents, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders as well. This project will provide strategies that will aid the school in improving student achievement and motivation.

### **Review of the Literature**

The review of literature was the basis for the development of the project, a professional development session in which stakeholders will be given strategies that can be implemented to help increase student achievement based on the analysis of data from the study. This review includes recent research from current studies on topics like effective professional development sessions and parental involvement as it pertains to adult learners and motivation. To gather literature for this project study, I used ERIC, Academic Search Complete, and Education Research Complete, search engines on the Walden University's library system. I also used books, scholarly journals, and Google Scholar to gather information. Keywords used in this search were: *effective professional*

*development, motivation, parental involvement, technology, student engagement, and team-based learning.*

### **Parental Involvement**

Findings from the study suggested that students benefited from their parents being involved in their education. Parental involvement is parents working with the schools and their children for future success and to benefit educational outcomes (Hill, Witherspoon, & Bartz, 2018), which is an integral part of student success (Latunde, 2017). Both teachers mentioned how the students were more motivated and more accountable for their academics because they knew that their parents would be checking on them periodically throughout the school year. The administration and the students also noted more student involvement and concern about academics because they knew that their parents would be communicating with the teacher and the administration on at least a weekly basis. These findings are supported by previous research, such as Makgopg and Mokhele (2013), who noted that every adult involved in a child's life, including parents and teachers, should be held accountable for that student's learning. Additionally, Castro et al. (2015) noted a strong correlation between students with high academic achievement and parents with high expectations and home-school communications. Hashmi and Akhter (2013) concurred with Castro et al.'s findings and attributed parental involvement to what parents do to improve the academic success of their children, including the way in which support is provided at home as well as how parents communicate with the schools.

In addition to achievement, researchers also agree that parents who are involved in their children's education help increase their motivation for learning. For instance,

Lam and Ducreux (2013) noted that when parents promote the educational aspirations of their children, it helps increase their motivation, self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation for academics; the more motivated students are, the higher they perform academically.

Research has shown that intrinsic motivation and high student academic achievement have a positive correlation for middle school students (Rivers, Mullis, Fortner, & Mullis, 2012). Additionally, the expectations and values conveyed by parents have a significant effect on the academic outcomes of students including academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and engagement (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Hattie & Anderman, 2013). According to Savitri, Setyono, Cahyadi, and Srisayekti (2018) when parents show involvement in the education of their children, it helps them to reach their expected educational outcomes. Therefore, it is important to ensure that parents are aware of what is going on in their children's education.

The background and interest of a diverse population is an important consideration when trying to get parents involved. Understanding what motivates parents or guardians to become involved in the success of their child or children can help increase the involvement of parents in their child's education as well as have an impact on the school as a whole. For parents from diverse backgrounds to develop effective partnerships with the schools, the current frameworks need to be developmental and ethnically broadened (Toren, 2013). Many parents or guardians want to be involved in their child's or children's education but are not sure how or even understand what they can do to help ensure their success. For example, according to Lam and Ducreux (2013) as students transition into middle school, parental school involvement decreases because parents feel

that they cannot help their children with the more challenging curriculum or provide the needed support to help improve their children's knowledge and skills.

There are also numerous ways that schools can keep parents aware of what is going on in the school as well as with their children so they can be more involved. Technology is key in helping increase parental involvement. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), 95% of adult Americans own a cellphone with 76% of those cell phones being smartphones. This indicates that the best way to contact parents and get them involved is through some form of technology. In today's society, the advancement of technology has allowed better communication to occur between parents and the school. Alcena (2014) stated that teachers must be able to contact parents numerous ways, and one of the best ways to get in touch with parents is via e-mail.

### **Student Accountability**

When students are held accountable for their learning they take pride in what they learn (Graham, n.d.). They feel like they are in control of what and how they learn, which can lead to positive academic achievement. One way of holding students accountable is through the use of team-based learning (TBL). TBL is a form of small group learning that places emphasis on pre-class study and in-class applications to promote accountability among the team members (Stein, Colyer, & Manning, 2015). Through TBL, students collaborate with one another or engage in collaborative learning. Jarjoura, Tayeh, and Zgheib (2015) noted that "collaborative learning operationalizes the new paradigm of teaching, because it provides the context that encourages the development of students' talents" (p. 402). According to Wanzek, Kent, Vaughn, Swanson, Roberts, and Haynes

(2015) the purpose of TBL is to create collaborative discourse that allows students to engage in scholarly practice, think critically, hear the thoughts and perspectives of their peers, and problem-solve. TBL helps students have a sense of control over their learning (Wanzek et al., 2015).

When students feel like they are in control of what they learn and how they learn it, they tend to be more apt to be involved and accountable for their learning. Giving students the task of determining how they want to show that they learned a particular concept helps students feel a sense of control over their learning. Teachers can help students to improve their academics by letting them know that they are responsible for ensuring their work is completed and submitted in a timely manner.

### **Active Student Engagement**

Students must be actively engaged and motivated to effectively learn in class (Nayir, 2017). The dimensions of student engagement are emotional, behavioral, and cognitive (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). When students are actively involved in school, they participate in class, are on task, value learning, have a sense of belonging in the school, prefer a challenge, and comply with classroom rules. As the students' level of engagement in what they are learning increases, the more susceptible they are to retain that information. When students are involved in the learning process and are learning information that they perceive is relevant to them, the more receptive they are to what is being taught.

Teachers are a key factor in student motivation and achievement. Even though student motivation is an important aspect in student achievement, teachers play an



important role in the classroom and influence how students are motivated (Megowan-Romanowicz, Middleton, Ganesh, & Joanou, 2013). It is important for teacher to take on an active role in ensuring that students are motivated and engaged. Cavendish, Márquez, Roberts, Suarez, and Lima (2017) stated that in order to gain feedback about what motivate students to learn, teachers must listen to the voices and opinions of the students. They noted that in doing so, the teacher demonstrates to students that they are valued and therefore can gain insights into ways to increase student engagement.

Teachers have to do careful planning to ensure that students are actively engaged in the classroom. According to Lorain (2017) in order to ensure that students are actively engaged, teachers must do the following:

- Thoroughly learn/understand the curriculum.
- Identify teaching objectives and strategies that engage students and build understanding.
- Ask the following planning questions:
  - What is the goal?
  - What order does the teaching need to follow?
  - What do the students already know?
  - What do I want them to learn?
- Prepare the lecture or instruction of the concepts and skills, based on desired goals.
- Construct processing/learning activities that match the concepts, skills, and goals (para. 3).

Research shows that active student engagement does positively influence student learning. When teachers prepare and implement active student engagement strategies, it leads to self-questioning, deeper thinking, and problem solving (Lorain, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative that teacher do what it takes to keep students engaged in the lesson because when students become disengaged in the lesson their achievement level diminishes.

Many behavior problems are exhibited by students that are not engaged in the lesson. Students being disengaged in class can lead to low academic achievement. Some warning signs of student disengagement are students goofing off in the back of the classroom, playing hooky from school, and turning in homework late (Sparks, 2013). Student exhibiting these behaviors are at a higher risk of dropping out or falling behind in school. Therefore, it is imperative that students are actively engaged in the classroom as well as are held accountable for their learning.

A student's level of motivation impacts their level focus and effort on a given assignment/activity and motivation is the key to engaging students in the what they are learning. Educators are always searching for ways to help improve student achievement and using strategies to improve motivation seems to be a key. Motivation and student engagement go hand-in-hand. One strategy that could be used to help increase student motivation and engagement is power-teaching. The whole brain teaching strategy (formerly called the power teaching strategy) involves the teacher uses gestures and keywords to motivate the students and to engage the students in the lesson (Palasigue, 2009). Furthermore, because students learn by doing, effective educators should take

advantage of instructional strategies that will keep students engaged throughout the lesson (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). When students are actively engaged they are attentive to what is going on in class and are more involved in actual process of learning. Student engagement occurs when students are actively involved in the tasks and activities that they are learning (Hao, Yunhuo, & Wenye, 2018). When students are actively engaged, they will pay close attention in class, listen attentively, take notes, ask questions, and respond to the teacher's questions and the teacher serves as the facilitator (Schmoker, 2006). Therefore, it is imperative that students are actively engaged in the learning process.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development activities have been used in a variety of ways. There have been instances where teachers participate in professional developments to help them gain knowledge or skills about a certain topic/subject area. Martin, Polly, Mraz, and Algozzine (2018) stated that professional development positively impacts student learning and that teachers value the opportunity to engage in beneficial professional development that directly impacts student learning. There have also been instances where participants think that it is a huge waste of time because it does not fit their needs. The purpose of professional development is to increase a teacher's level of knowledge to a point where they can actively use such knowledge in the classroom (Nishimura, 2014). Many times, professional development activities can be linked to increased student achievement. If teachers are more prepared, they are better able to impart their students with the knowledge needed to help them to excel academically. Moreover, providing

teachers with strategies and skill that could be used in the classroom to help their students through effective professional development is very beneficial.

Effective professional development allows educators to collaborate, network, and gain additional knowledge or skills on a specified topic. Collaboration among teachers has been seen as a solution to problems in education (Forte & Flores, 2014). When teachers collaborate and network, they can help each other learn and solve problems that are occurring in the classroom or the school as a whole. Effective professional development activities should match the needs of the teachers and the school; it should also include teacher involvement in the planning and designing of the professional development; it should allow active participation and long-term engagement opportunities; and high-quality presenters (Bayer, 2014). An effective component of professional development includes reflecting in a teacher-driven inquiry setting (Pratt & Martin, 2017). Therefore, it is important that professional development activities are based on the needs of the teachers.

Professional development activities should match the needs of the teachers (DeMonte, 2013). All teachers do not need the same professional development activities. Most professional development initiatives are still designed without attention to teachers' motivation and needs (Caddle, Bautista, Brizuela, & Sharpe, 2016). They noted that the one-size-fits all professional development sessions have limited potential to impact teacher learning. These activities should cater to needs of each teacher individually. There will be times when the same professional development activities will be needed for all teachers but that should not be how all professional development activities should be

planned. For instance, if a teacher does not have an issue with managing his/her class than he/she should not be participating in a professional development activity for classroom management.

Professional development activities should focus on school needs. A need is a discrepancy between an existing condition and a desired condition (Yang, Lee, Park, Wong-Ratcliff, Ahangar, & Munday, 2015). What is needed in one school may not be needed in another school and vice versa. Professional development programs are much more effective when they are related to the school setting (Starkey, Yates, Meyer, Hall, Taylor, Stevens, & Toia, 2009). The results of their study showed that when professional development is geared toward the school it allows for personalized learning and networking with colleagues. They also found that local professional input into the content of professional development activities is very crucial to its effectiveness in the school. Effective professional development activities should include teacher input and design (Bayer, 2014). Teachers are the best resource for knowing what they need assistance with. The use of a needs-based survey could be used to help determine what the teachers feel need to be offered as professional development. Allowing teachers to help with the design of the professional development will allow teachers to feel more ownership with the professional development. Therefore, it is important to allow teachers to help design and deliver professional development sessions as well.

### **Project Description**

The proposed project is to conduct professional development sessions for teachers and all other stakeholders to help equip teachers with strategies that will aid in increased

student achievement and motivation. The first thing that I will need to do it to compile the information needed to conduct the professional development and present it to the administrators for approval. Upon approval from the administrators, the professional development sessions will be held during the first semester of the 2018 -2019 school year, during the scheduled teacher work days. After the professional development sessions are completed, the plan is to meet with teachers periodically, throughout the year, to see how well the strategy/strategies are working and to provide support to the teachers who need additional support/help.

### **Needed Resources and Existing Supports**

The resources needed to implement the strategy/strategies in the classroom are open-minded teachers who are willing to change and committed to increasing their students' achievement. In order to conduct the professional development sessions, I will need access to computers/laptops with Internet access, a projector or Smartboard, deck of playing cards, envelopes, digital timer, easel pad, sticky notes, scantron cards, IF-AT forms, and handouts for the professional development sessions. The administration will serve as a source of support by helping to ensure that teachers are using the strategies in their classes. The administration has agreed to conduct classroom observations and to provide teachers with any additional support that they need. The observations will be a way to monitor the motivation and engagement level of the students.

### **Potential Barriers**

The potential barriers that could hinder the implementation of the strategy/strategies are teachers not willing to change from the traditional form of teaching

and lack of parental support. Another barrier could be teachers not willing to put in the extra time that will be needed to plan their lessons to implement the strategy/strategies.

### **Potential Solutions to Barriers**

One possible solution to these barriers would be to create each teacher a resource binder that contain TBL exemplars that the teachers could use to guide planning efforts. Also, in the binder could be a list of websites, video, and etc. that the teachers could reference to when needed. With administration's approval, I could volunteer to collaborate with the teachers that may be hesitant to implement the strategies, to help them get started. Another solution could be to send a note home with the students explaining how collaborative instruction is being utilized and inform the parents that they could contact the administration or teacher if additional information is needed. The district has provided all teachers with Google accounts, so teachers will be able to collaborate with each other through the use of a Google Doc that will be shared with all teachers and administrators.

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

The suggested implementation of this project would be during the upcoming school year with monitoring throughout the year. The implementation process would go as follows:

- 1) Upon approval of the 3-day professional development by Walden University (Month 1) request a meeting with the administration.
- 2) Get approval to conduct the professional development session during teacher workdays during the school year (Month 2, Month 3, & Month 4);

- 3) Conduct the professional development with the teachers and other stakeholders;  
and
- 4) monitor teacher progress and offer additional support where needed (Month 2 & Month 4).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others**

Several individuals will be responsible for helping to implement this project. My role will be presenter. I will be responsible for creating and presenting the professional development sessions for the administrators and teachers. The administrators will be responsible for observing, monitoring, and evaluating the teachers to ensure that implementation of the strategy/strategies in the classroom is occurring. The teachers will be responsible for implementing the strategy/strategies in their classrooms. It is imperative that all individuals perform their responsibilities to ensure project success.

### **Project Evaluation**

The purpose of creating the 3-day professional development session, and conducting it during the first semester, is to address the need to improve student achievement. The project itself was derived from the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the use of single-gender grouping as a way to increase student achievement. Modeling of the suggested strategies will occur during the professional development sessions so that teachers and administrators are able to see what each strategy should look like.

The goal-based evaluation method is the best approach for the professional development sessions because several goals have been established for the professional



development sessions to address the strategies that could be utilized to help improve student achievement and motivation based on the data that was collected. Evaluations are important because they provide the presenter with knowledge about the areas that may need improvement or content that may need more focus. Patton (1987) noted that evaluation is a process of critically examining a program. He further stated that it involves gathering and analyzing information about a program's activities and outcomes with the purpose of making informed decisions about a program in order to improve the effectiveness of that program. At the end of the first and second professional development sessions, participants will be asked to list at least two things that they learned from the session and at least one thing they need more help understanding. This feedback will help me evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development sessions. An overall evaluation will be given at the end of the final professional development session to find out what the teachers, administrators, and parents felt went well as well as what they believe need to be changed for future professional development sessions. The evaluation tool that will be used is an electronic survey. I used Google Forms to create a survey to give to the teachers and administrators to get their feedback for each of the professional development sessions as well to give feedback on the use of the strategies suggested during the professional development (see Appendix A). The feedback from the overall evaluation will serve as a way of checking to see if the implementation of the suggested strategies is beneficial or not beneficial in improving student achievement.

Key stakeholders are the teachers, students, administration, parents, and the

community. The teachers will benefit from these professional development sessions because they will be able to implement the strategies presented in their classes to help improve student achievement and motivation. The students will benefit from the knowledge that they will gain as a result of using the strategies presented in the professional development sessions. Parents will benefit by having students that are learning and motivated to learn. The administration benefits from having students, teachers, and parents working together to ensure improve student achievement and motivation. The community benefits from having students that have gained knowledge and are successful at the next level which leads to them being more productive members of society.

### **Implications Including Social Change**

This project study investigated the perceptions of teachers, parents, students, and administrators about single-gender grouping as a way to help improve student achievement. Teachers can benefit from 3 days of professional development that aims to provide them with strategies that could be implemented to help improve student achievement and motivation. Through this professional development, teachers will participate in hands-on activities to help them visualize what it should look like in their classes.

This project has a potential to stimulate positive social change by providing information that can be used by teachers and administrators to help teachers improve instruction, as well as provide them with strategies that could enable students to become more successful in school which would lead to them being more successful at the focus

school and more productive citizens in society.

Students would benefit from increased motivation for learning and more engagement in the learning process. This would help them to take ownership in their learning and be more engaged in what they are learning as well which has the potential of helping them strive to be better students and better members of their community.

### **Local Community**

As stated previously, this project investigated the perceptions of teachers, parents, students, and administrators about single-gender grouping as a way of helping improve student achievement. The project can benefit the local community by providing the students with needed skills that could help them to become more productive citizens. I have seen how students that are not successful in school become menaces to society and communities. Oftentimes when students are not performing well academically, they end up dropping out of school. When they drop out of school the majority of them cannot find employment and often results in unsuccessful members in their respective communities. By providing the teachers with information that could help students to be involved and successful, students will become more productive citizens. They will more than likely stay in school, graduate, and either go to college or take up a trade. These students have the potential to come back to the community and offer their services to the community.

Student academic achievement is vital to building a successful school and productive citizens. Implementation of the suggested strategies has the potential to transform the school which will trickle on down into the community. If the implementation of these strategies is successful, it has a chance of not only having a

positive impact on the local community but on other communities as well because there is a possibility that some of the students will move out of state into other communities.

### **Conclusion**

The opportunity to conduct a professional development is needed in order to provide teachers with strategies that they can implement in their class to help improve student achievement. It is my belief that teachers want to see students succeed and are always looking for ways to help ensure that success. In this section I discussed the rationale for conducting a professional development session for this study. Also included in this section is a review of literature that was used to create the professional development, a description of the project, potential barriers and implications for social change. In Section 4, I will reflect on the project as a whole. That includes the strengths and weaknesses of the project as well as the limitations. I will also discuss how completion of this project has changed me as a person and a scholar.

#### Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of the qualitative study was to investigate perceptions of students, teachers, parents, and administrators about single-gender grouping that was used as a strategy to raise the achievement levels in a coeducational middle school setting. This section contains the strengths and limitations of the project, ways of addressing the limitations of the project, and scholarship. I will also present my role as a scholar, project developer, and practitioner. I will conclude this section with my thoughts on how this study can impact social change and future research.

##### **Project Strengths**

The study addressed the perceptions of all groups that were involved in the gender-based setting. The information gained in this study led to strategies that could be implemented by teachers to help improve student achievement. The project addressed the three themes from the findings: student engagement, student accountability, and parental involvement. The results of the study were used to inform the design of the project. Professional development for teachers and administrators was decided based on interviews. Additionally, by interviewing the students, I was able to obtain first-hand knowledge on what helped them to do better in class as well as what things caused them to not be successful.

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

One potential limitation to the implementation of the project is stakeholder buy-in. For the strategies provided in the professional development to be effective, the stakeholders must believe and implement the strategies. This means that teachers have to

ensure that the students are held accountable and engaged in the class. From experience, I have found that many teachers, especially veteran teachers, are not open to change; however, the only way to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies is through their usage. Administrators will need to monitor teachers to ensure that they are implementing the strategies in class and follow up to let them know what they are doing correct and what, if anything, they need to change. However, administrators may feel that monitoring the teachers adds more to the duties that they already have, which is another limitation. Additionally, parents will have to become more involved in their children's education and also communicate with the teachers and administrators on a regular basis.

To overcome these limitations, the administrators could come up with a document to track whether the strategies are being used and implement a reward system to reward those teachers who are using the strategies. Another way to address these limitations is setting aside time for teachers to meet and collaborate about what is or is not working in their classes.

### **Scholarship**

In completing this doctoral journey, I have encountered many barriers. I have been working on this degree since the Fall of 2011, and it has been challenging. This journey has opened my eyes to so much, and I have overcome things that I never thought I would have overcome. I have learned to appreciate making the small steps and not to get upset because I did not meet a goal.

I have also learned throughout this journey that having the right committee members is a plus. Without my committee chair, I would have quit this process a long

time ago. I think I came into this journey thinking that it would be easy, but I quickly learned that it was a complex process. I probably could have finished this process a year or two ago, but I never accounted for things happening in my life that would affect my plans. I had to deal with the death of several family members, which took a toll on me. My house was flooded, and I had to find a way to recover from that. All of this on top of working full time and taking care of four children caused me to have to take more time to finish this degree. My best friend (who is like a sister to me) lost her son to an accidental shooting. I had to take out time to try and help her deal with this unfortunate tragedy. She is still dealing with this daily, but we are just trying to get through one day at a time. I had plans of finishing up this semester but due to those unforeseen circumstances, I had to put my plans on hold to deal with this.

Finally, I have become more of a scholar during this process. I believe that everyone should learn something new every day. and I can say that while completing this doctoral study, I have learned something new every day. I learned how to analyze data and read through it until a theme emerges. The coursework and research that I had to complete has led to me being more knowledgeable and able to deliver what I have learned to a diverse group.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

Development of this project study required me to learn a variety of new skills. I had to learn how conduct research properly. I also had to learn how to take the information and synthesize a project based on the data that had been gathered. As I read through the data several times and the themes started to emerge, I decided that

conducting a professional development would be best to offer the teachers. The research conducted on student engagement, parental involvement, and student accountability helped to shape my 3-day professional development.

After developing and designing my 3-day professional development, next I had to think of how I could evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies that were suggested to help resolve the problem at the school. I decided to use Google Forms as an evaluation tool to create the surveys to give to the teachers and administrators to get their feedback on the professional development sessions. I would also develop a survey for the teachers and administrators to complete at the end of each semester to gather feedback on the use of the strategies suggested during the professional development. The feedback from these evaluations will serve as a way of checking to see whether the implementation of the suggested strategies is helping to improve student achievement.

### **Leadership and Change**

My decision to pursue a doctoral degree was based on my desire to become a leader in the school setting. I wanted to become a better researcher so that I could implement research-based strategies that could effect change in the school. I felt that pursuing a doctoral degree would help me accomplish that goal.

Change is one thing that leaders struggle with. I have had the opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity as department chair and the one thing that I learned is that when to implement change the necessity needs to be justified, which means having the research to back up the change. But my time at Walden has allowed me to become a better researcher. Before starting this journey, I was skeptical about having the other members



of my department to implement programs or strategies because I thought that they would not be open to trying new things. At this point I am comfortable getting the members of my department to try new things because before I introduce something new, I have the research to back it up.

I have also learned how to better read and understand data. It was not until I collected and analyzed my own data that I started to understand how to use data to support my goal. I was able to use the data that I collected to create a professional development plan.

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

Completing this project study has allowed me to grow as a scholar. Since I started teaching, I have always been concerned about how to improve student achievement in a way that will allow students to sustain success as they progress throughout their high school years. Completing the research on student engagement, parental involvement, and student accountability has been eye opening. Something as simple as a parent checking in regularly with the teacher and their child on a daily basis proved to be very beneficial to the students' academic achievement.

Throughout this process I have learned how to collect and analyze data. I learned how important it is to read through the data several times to find commonalities in the data. Before conducting this research, I expected to be able to look at the data once, maybe even twice, and be able to understand the data. I have learned how to immerse myself in the data and use it to help my students improve.

### **Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

When I reflect on what a practitioner is, I start to think about a practitioner in the field of medicine. A practitioner, in my opinion, is a person who practices or is actively engaged in their field of study. My field of study is education and I feel that it is my job to gather as much information and gain as much knowledge as needed in order for me to be able to help others in this field to be successful. My goal is to be a social change agent. I would like to impact social change in my school to ensure that our students are successful and therefore become productive citizens. The more successful our students are the better they will be prepared for the next phase of their education. I have seen both sides of the spectrum; I have witnessed what students do who are not successful in school as well as what students do who are successful in school. That is the reason I would like to see more student success because when students are successful, they are better students and better citizens in their communities.

Furthermore, I have learned that these are things that can be done in all classes, whether they are gender-based or coeducational, to help student achievement improve. I have implemented all three strategies (increased parental involvement, power-teaching, and team-based learning) in my classroom and it is amazing how much better the students are performing. I have even conversed with several of my coworkers about implementing these strategies in their classes as well.

### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

I have to be honest, when I first set out to complete this doctoral study, I did not even know what I was getting into. When I decided to conduct the project study, I really

did not know the first thing about developing a project. I had learned how to be a better researcher while completing my Specialist degree, but I really did not understand what developing a project entailed. Once I really got into the research, things started to become clearer and I started to understand what I needed to do in order to get this project started.

I decided to create and conduct the 3-day professional development because I felt that the knowledge that I gained from completing this study would better suit the stakeholders in this way. The things I found did not have anything in particular to do with the curriculum, so the curriculum plan was not feasible. The best way to deliver the data that I learned from the participants was through conducting the professional development session. As I was gathering information, creating the presentation, handouts and activities for the professional development, everything started to fall into place. This experience has enabled me to become a better project developer and leader within my school. I learned how to leave out my thoughts/biases and allow the research to speak for itself. I am now confident in my ability and skills to create and deliver professional development session whenever the need arises.

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

When I think of social change, I like to think of the impact that something that is done presently can influence the future. Therefore, I think that this project could have a significant impact on social change for the community surrounding the focus school as well as communities throughout the world. I have been an educator for 14 years. I have seen how positive academic achievement impacts students as the years go on. I have also seen how negative or low student achievement can impact students as well. I've

witnessed students who have been successful throughout middle and high school go on to college or take up a trade and then come back and offer those services within their communities or they move away and offer those services to other communities.

Therefore, my belief is that providing teachers with strategies that can be implemented in their classes to help students be successful could potentially have a significant impact on social change within their current communities as well as other communities. The strategies presented in the project can be implemented in not only the focus school but in other schools as well.

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

Teachers dread attending professional development sessions that they feel do not offer anything that they can use in their classes. This project's professional development sessions contain information that they can implement in their classroom immediately. It will take a little time and some planning, but it can be done. The most challenging strategy will more than likely be the active student engagement. It is sometimes hard to monitor whether the students are actively engaged but there are strategies that can be used to help monitor that as well. The participants in the study talked a lot about being engaged in the class and the information that they were learning being relevant to them. I used that information to create the professional development sessions because I feel that teachers need to know what things students think help gauge their learning.

Future research on strategies that have a positive impact on student achievement could be conducted. Teachers could reflect on how well the strategies worked in their classes as well as what, if anything, they did differently. Positive academic growth for the

students is the ultimate goal so more research could be conducted on what other strategies are being implemented in schools that are helping to improve student achievement.

### **Conclusion**

In Section 4, I offered an in-depth reflection on my experience while working on this doctoral project study. I went into detail about the strengths and limitations of the project as well as how I have grown as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. I can honestly say that I have honed my skills and knowledge and have confidence in my ability to be a leader. If the strategies that I suggested are successful in helping to increase student achievement, I will have helped to impact positive social change. As I stated previously, one of my goals is to become an agent of change for my school and community as a whole.

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## Appendix A: The Project

### Research-Based Strategies for Improved Student Achievement: Professional Development Goals, Outcomes, Objectives, and Evaluation

Data from the study suggested that parental involvement, student engagement, and student accountability were key in helping increase student achievement and motivation. Students, teachers, parents, and the administration believed that these things had a positive impact on student success, achievement, and motivation. The students were more engaged in the classroom and parents were more involved in their child's education. The students felt that working in teams on projects was motivating and made them want to and enjoy learning. The teachers mentioned that they used different strategies to hold students accountable and team-based learning was one of the strategies that worked really well. With team-based learning students participate in small group learning that focuses on teamwork and promotes student accountability and communication/collaboration among team members (Stein, Colyer, & Manning, 2015). Power-teaching is one of the strategies that teachers used to engage and motivate the students. Power-teaching/whole brain teaching involves the teacher using gestures and keywords as a way to motivate and engage students in the lesson (Palasigue, 2009). This information led me to believe that parental involvement, student engagement, and student accountability should be shared as a way of helping to increase student achievement and motivation.

**Program Goals**

- A. Provide teachers with a technology-based strategy that improves student achievement through increased parental involvement and communication.
- B. Present teachers with a research-based strategy for improving student achievement through student engagement that focuses on the whole brain instructional approach which can be incorporated within their current classroom structure.
- C. Share the strategy of using team-based learning (TBL) to improve student achievement through increased accountability for students.
- D. Provide teachers an opportunity to model strategies that were presented during the professional development with peers on a horizontal (grade-level) and vertical (subject taught) prospective.

**Program Outcomes**

- A. Teacher will gain knowledge and skills with using a technology-based strategy to increase parental involvement and communication.
- B. Teachers will be presented a modeled lesson on improving student engagement by using a strategy that focus on the whole brain instructional approach.
- C. Teachers will be presented a modeled lesson on incorporating the TBL approach to learning that improve student accountability.
- D. Teachers will be given the opportunity to demonstrate and reflect on the strategies that were present to improve student achievement.

**Program Objectives**

- A. Teachers will be able to communicate with parents to increase their involvement without providing personal information or increasing their current workload.
- B. Teachers will be exposed to a research-based strategy that improves student achievement by maintaining engagement and motivation.
- C. Teachers will be able to plan how they can improve student achievement with an increase in student accountability based on the strategy of Team-Based Learning.
- D. Teachers will be able to model a lesson using the research-based strategies for improving student achievement, along with analyzing the data from the previous grading period to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses they observed.

### **3-Day Professional Development on Improving Student Achievement**

#### **Middle School Teachers**

#### **Day 1**

#### **Strategies for Increased Student Engagement and Parental Involvement**

##### **Program Goals for Day 1**

- A. Provide teachers with a technology-based strategy that improves student achievement through increased parental involvement and communication.
- B. Present teachers with a research-based strategy for improving student achievement through student engagement that focuses on the whole brain instructional approach which can be incorporated within their current classroom structure.

##### **Program Outcomes for Day 1**

- A. Teacher will gain knowledge and skills with using a technology-based strategy to increase parental involvement and communication.
- B. Teachers will be comfortable using a modeled lesson on improving student engagement by using a strategy that focus on the whole brain instructional approach.

##### **Objectives for Day 1**

- A. Teachers will be able to effectively increase parental involvement and communications.
- B. Teachers will be exposed to a student engagement strategy that is research-based and focus on the whole brain instructional approach.

##### **Materials for Day 1**

- Standard deck of playing cards, with the cards cut diagonally into triangles



- Envelopes for each set of cards (the allotted timeframe for this activity has been modified from the original)
- Laptops or smartphone device
- Remind ([www.remind.com](http://www.remind.com)) to follow the sign-up process
  - The class will be created within the Remind app the day of the professional development to generate a joining code
  - Using the code, the teachers will join the class as participants
- Remind Introduction Video – A general overview message from the Remind company posted on YouTube (Remind, 2018).
- Projector
- PowerPoint

### **Day 1: Parental Involvement/Power Teaching**

8:00-8:30 Teacher sign-in principal's welcoming

- Teachers assigned to tables based on selected number with one member of the administration team at each table.

8:30-9:30 Ice Breaker (Mix and Match Cards)

- 10 minutes to explain the rules of the game
  - Each team, consisting of four members, will be given an envelope with diagonally cut cards in them, the team with the most matched cards after the 35 minutes wins
  - The teams have five minutes to review their card triangles and strategize, afterward 20 minutes of negotiation and bartering will begin

- Thereafter, 10 minutes will be used to count the number of matches with the winner being declared

- 35 minutes for the activity
- 15 minutes to review and debrief

9:30-9:45 Break

9:45-11:45 Parental Involvement Presentation

- PowerPoint (Remind)
- Have teachers use the prepared code to join presenter's Remind page
- Demonstrate the ease of getting parents signed the communication app
- Demonstrate the benefits illustrated in the presentation

11:45-1:00 Lunch

- Send a Remind during lunch to individual teacher and multiple teachers

1:00-1:30 Review material that was covered in the morning session

- Ask about thoughts on the messages that were sent during the lunch period.

1:30-3:00 Student Engagement (Power Teaching)

- Power Teaching
  - Part of the Whole Brain Teaching movement
  - Instructional strategy that encourages student engagement while allowing the teacher to facilitate the movement and actions of the students during the instructional process.

- Using current seating arrangement, group teachers in A/B groups, where A is for the teachers who selected even numbers at sign-in and B for those who selected odd numbers
- PowerPoint Presentation
  - Provide the guidelines for the practice lesson
  - Demonstrate a lesson using Power Teaching with the teachers playing the role of students (Topic: Causes of World War I)

3:00-3:15 Debriefing and Evaluations

### **Day 1 Handout**

#### Guidelines for Practice Lesson

1. Mimic the presenter in tone, speed, and frequency
2. Practice: Class-Yes! (repeat in different tones and speed three more times)
3. Mimic the presenter's gestures and movement
4. Practice: Clap three times then stamp foot three times (repeat with different movement)
5. Mimic the present in tone, speed, and frequency
6. Practice: TEACH! – OK! (repeat in different tones and speed three more times)
7. Switch: recite the next part of the lesson that follows what the partner shared
8. Mirror Words: Words or phrases that are key terms to learning the new lesson
9. Hand and Eyes: stop the lesson for a teachable moment by placing hands on desk/table and putting your eyes on the teacher.

10. (PowerPoint) Using teaching points 1 and 2, the participants will use Power Teaching and switch when instructed.
11. (PowerPoint) Using teaching points 3 and 4 will be done individually.
12. Mirror Words: Arms Race, using arm muscles for emphasis; alliances, with fingers intertwined; imperialism, hands together with one hand making a circle and coming back; and nationalism with mimicking the pledge pose.

## Day 2

### Research-Based Strategies for Improving Student Achievement Through Student Accountability

#### Program Goal for Day 2

- A. Share the strategy of using TBL to improve student achievement through increased accountability for students.

#### Program Outcome for Day 2

- B. Teachers will be presented a modeled lesson on incorporating the TBL approach to learning that improves student accountability.

#### Objective for Day 2

- C. Teachers will be able to plan how they can improve student achievement with an increase in student accountability based on the strategy of TBL.

#### Material for Day 2:

- Projector
- Digital timer
- Quiz article – “Keeping Students Accountable”
  - Identifies three strategies used by teachers in the classroom to promote student accountability in the education process (Graham, n.d.).
- Introduction to Team-Based Learning Handout – Page 1
- Scantron cards (iRAT)
- Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique (IF-AT)

## Day 2: Team-Based Learning

8:00-8:30 Teacher sign-in and Principal's message

8:30-9:00 Ice Breaker (Speed Meeting)

- Modeled from the Speed Dating process
- Teachers rotate around the class every three minutes to discuss one or more of the following:
  - Share one thing about yourself that you think your coworker doesn't know
  - Tell your coworker your favorite television show and why
  - Share how Remind has or has not helped in getting parents involved

9:00- 11:45 Modeling with participants the process of using team-based learning (TBL).

- According to Sibley and Spiridonoff (2014), TBL is a small group instructional strategy based on the flipped classroom model that allows students to spend the majority of the class period solving problems together using material that was assigned and studied before class.
- Groups are formed along grade levels
- Participants take a five-question quiz based on an article that I shared with them via Remind on student accountability using scantrons
- The groups take the same test using the IF-AT forms response cards
- Mid-point break (15-minutes)
- Results from the Individual Readiness Assurance Test is graded and compared to the results from the Team Readiness Assurance Test

- The results from the two assessments are disaggregated to identify improvements, if shown
- Groups are given a final question about student accountability

11:45-12:45 Lunch Break

1:00-3:00 Power Point Presentation

- The four principles of Team-Based Learning
- In class application

2:00 – 2:15 15-minute break

3:00-3:15 Evaluations and Debriefing

- Question and Answer sections

## **Day 2 Handouts**

### **Keeping Students Accountable Quiz**

1. Which book was referenced as an instrumental tool for ideas to creating an effort and achievement scale?
  - a. Robert Marzano’s “The Reflective Teacher”
  - b. Patti Kinney’s “Fostering Student Accountability through Student Led Conferences”
  - c. Douglas Reeves’ “Accountability for Learning”
  - d. James Popham’s “Instruction That Measures Up”
2. Which of the following is a key component to creating a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to accountability and responsible learning?

- a. Allowing students to assist in making the rules
  - b. Creating a culture that allows students to feel like adults
  - c. Using proximity instead of words for inappropriate behavior
  - d. Allowing students to formulate and follow their own plan to improve
3. Why is it suggested that parents be included in the accountability conversation?
- a. To strength the home-school connection
  - b. To ensure students are held accountable at school and home for their work
  - c. To ensure students assumes responsibility for their mistakes
  - d. To maintain a line of communication with the parents
4. Which of the following is considered vital to creating student accountability both individually and in groups?
- a. Research based group formation
  - b. Positive home-school communication
  - c. Students invested in their work
  - d. Students creating their own improvement plan
5. Which of the following subtopic were not discussed in this article?
- a. Flipped classroom in a student-centered classroom
  - b. Using a rubric to get students invested
  - c. Making students and parents partners in their success
  - d. Creating a positive and respectful group atmosphere

Final Student Accountability Question



According to Kate Ortiz, one place to start is creating a classroom atmosphere conducive to responsible learn by: establishing, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ expectations and consequences.

IF-AT Form

**IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE (IF AT®)**

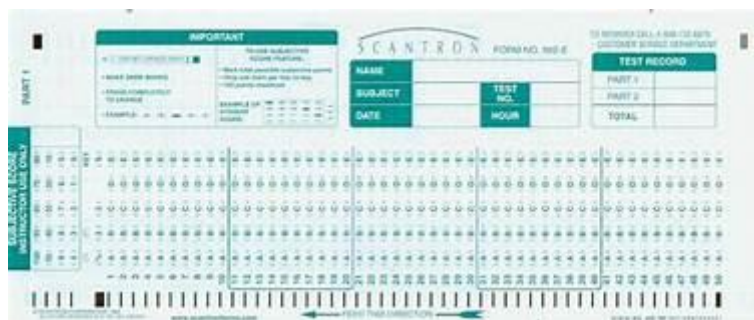
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Test # \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

**SCRATCH OFF COVERING TO EXPOSE ANSWER**

	A	B	C	D	Score
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Scantron



Teachers' Prep Assignment for Day 3 professional development

1. During your professional learning communities meeting, each group will develop a lesson using Team Based Learning that will be presented to the group during the next professional development session in January.
2. Reading material should be sent via Remind at least two weeks before the professional development.
3. It is asked that you use a lesson that was utilized in the classroom with the students.
4. The lesson should include both an assessment for the iRAT/tRAT and a final question.

## Introduction to Team-Based Learning

TBL is a uniquely powerful form of small group learning. It provides a complete coherent framework for building a flipped course experience.

### TBL lets you achieve two important things:

1. Students come to class prepared by using TBL's ingenious Readiness Assurance Process.
2. Students learn how to apply the course concepts to solve interesting, authentic, real-world problems using TBL's 4-5 framework.

### It's like a courtroom jury ...

Think of a courtroom jury that sifts through large amounts of evidence, statements, and transcripts to come up with a simple decision: guilty or not guilty. Imagine your work on a jury; you rise to state the jury's verdict, but another person rises from a different jury team in the same courtroom and states a different verdict. You naturally want to talk to them; you naturally want to ask "why?" This simple comparability between decisions, and the natural tendency to ask the question "why" is at the heart of TBL. This "why" motivation provides the instructional fuel to power insightful debates between student teams.



## The rhythm of TBL

TBL courses have a recurring pattern of instruction that is typical of many flipped classrooms. Students prepare before class and then students spend the bulk of class time solving problems together. TBL gives you a straightforward whole course framework to design and implement your flipped classroom.

A typical TBL course is divided into five to seven modules. Each module has a similar rhythm, opening with the Readiness Assurance Process that prepares the

students for the activities that follow, and then moving to Application Activities that often grow in complexity and length as the module progresses. As the module is ending, you provide some closure and reinforcement. Module length varies in different contexts. In some courses an entire cycle is completed in one long session and in other courses the cycle may be spread across multiple class meetings.

As the next module begins, the familiar TBL rhythm starts to build: out-of-class preparation, the Readiness Assurance Process, followed by Application Activities.

### Typical TBL Cycle



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE

CENTRE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT  
by Jim Sibley and Sophie Spridonoff  
[www.teambasedlearning.org](http://www.teambasedlearning.org)

### **Day 3**

#### **Data Analysis, Reflections, and Modeling of Lessons**

##### **Program Goal for Day 3**

D. Provide teachers an opportunity to model strategies that were presented during the professional development with peers on a horizontal (grade-level) and vertical (subject taught) prospective.

##### **Program Outcome for Day 3**

D.1. Teachers will be given the opportunity to demonstrate and reflect on the strategies that were presented to improve student achievement.

##### **Objective for Day 3**

D.1.d. Teachers will be able to model a lesson using the research-based strategies for improving student achievement, along with analyzing the data from the previous grading period to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses they observed.

##### **Materials Day 3:**

Computer

Projector/SmartBoard

#### **Day 3: Data Analysis/Teacher Demonstrations**

8:30-9:00 Teacher's sign-in and principal's welcome

9:00-9:30 Teachers prepare for their vertical alignment presentations using TBL.

9:30-10:30 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers demonstration and modeling

- Model a lesson that was used with the students in class
- Other teachers will play the role of students

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45-11:45 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers demonstration and modeling

- Model a lesson that was used with the students in class
- Other teachers will play the role of students

11:45-12:45 Lunch

1:00-3:00 Reflections on the strategies that were introduced in the previous meetings

- Table discussion on the strategies that were introduced
  - Remind for parental involvement
  - TBL for student engagement
- Check number of Remind communication made
  - Compare to school requirement of five contacts per week
- Teachers will reflect on their experience using Remind for communicating with parents
- Teachers will reflect on their experience and identify ways to improve their usage of TBL and Power Teaching in the classroom
- Each table report common thoughts to the group

3:00-3:15 Debriefing and evaluation

**Day 1 – PowerPoint**

# Parental Involvement/ Power Teaching

Day 1 Professional Development Session

Ms. Chundra Grisby

## Agenda

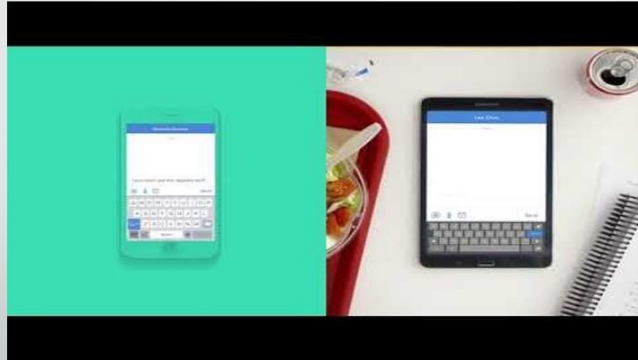
### Parental Involvement

- ❖ Meet parents where they are
  - 95% of adult Americans own a cellphone
  - 76% of all cellphone owners have smartphones

### Mobile Communication

- Remind
- Available on IOS, Android, or computer
- 2.5 million teachers currently on Remind

## Video – Introduction to Remind 101



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFbAjRdMyXk>

## Features

- ❖ Co-teacher support
  - Multiple owners on one domain
- ❖ Read receipts
  - Notification on messages that were received and read
- ❖ Group Conversations
  - Communicate with individual parents or with a group as a whole



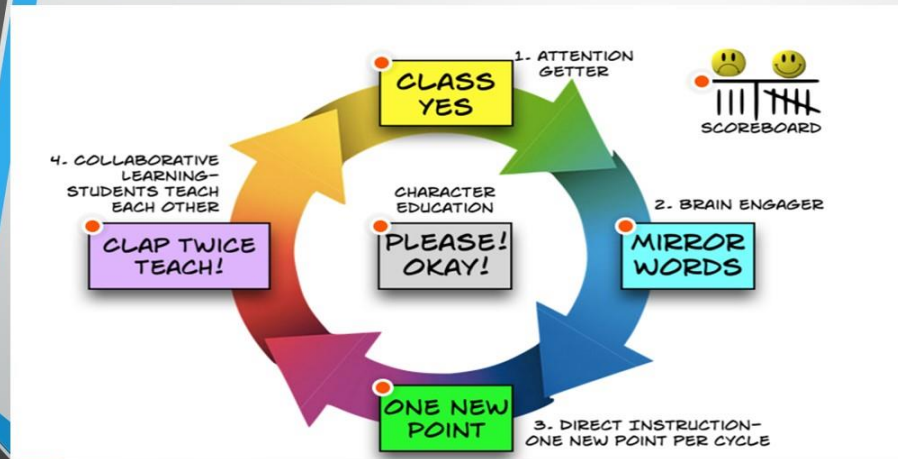
## Features

- ❖ Scheduled announcements
  - Set reminders in advance
- ❖ Office hours
  - Set times that parents can contact you
- ❖ File attachments
  - Class photos, homework handouts, school announcements

## What is Power Teaching?

- Power Teaching is part of the Whole Brain Teaching moment
- There are five levels of engagement
  - Beginner
  - Intermediate
  - Advanced
  - Legendary
  - Semi-Divine
- Our focus for the purpose of this professional development will be
  - Beginner
  - Intermediate

## Why Power Teaching



## Why Power Teaching?

- Research has shown when students are highly engaged by caring teachers, their potential for learning increases because there is a significant and substantial relationship between engagement, student behaviors, and achievement because the more students are highly engaged academically, the less they are to exhibit disruptive behavior with the potential to increase learning (VanHosen, 2015).

## Why Power Teaching?

### Benefits




- Learning is fun for you and the students
- Higher retention, greater involvement
  - Attention getters
  - Gestures
  - Body motion



## Power Teaching

### Types of Learners

- Visual- what you see
- Auditory- what you hear
- Kinesthetic- movement, gestures, and body language

		
<b>AUDITORY</b>	<b>VISUAL</b>	<b>KINESTHETIC</b>
Auditory learners make up <b>30%</b> of the population.	Visual learners make up <b>65%</b> of the population.	Kinesthetic make up just <b>5%</b> of the population.
If you're an auditory learner information comes in best through your ears, from speeches, presentations or audio books. You have a knack for foreign languages and benefit from study groups.	They tend to be neat and tidy, excellent spellers and quick to read charts. Visual learners also tend to be the fastest talkers.	They are primarily male and love anything hands-on. These learners are often skilled athletes or musicians and are drawn to construction projects, science experiments and field trips.

## The Super Six of Power Teaching

- The Five Rules – modification of current school wide rules
- Hands and Eyes
- Mirror Words
- Class – Yes
- Teach – OK
- Switch

## The Five Rules!



## Mirror/Hands and Eyes

- Mirror Words are key terms that students need in order to complete the assignment
- When vital points are needed for the completion of an assignment or assessment, the teacher uses "Hands and Eyes"

### 1. Notes

When you say "Mirror Words" and pick up your hands, your students respond "Mirror Words" and pick up their hands. As you teach, they repeat your words and mirror your gestures ... their Whole Brains in synch with your Whole Brain.



### 2. Notes

When you have a Big Point, say, "Hands and Eyes!" Kids respond "Hands and Eyes!," fold their hands and stare intensely at you.



## Attention Getters: Class-Yes!

- The Attention Getter is utilized to bring the class to attention in a quick orderly fashion
- Similar to the current "Red Light" phrase that is being used in many classrooms now.
- This process is used during the teaching of a lesson before and after the student engagement process begins

### 1. Notes

Whatever tone you use to say "Class!", your students respond, "Yes!" with the same tone, fold their hands, and stare at you.



### 2. Notes

Try "Classy-Class" and your students respond, "Yesity-Yes" If you exclaim, "Class Bazinga!," your class exclaims, "Yes Bazinga!" More variety in your Attention Getter, more engagement from your kids.



## Teach-OK!

- Teach-OK! Is a directive to the students to began the engagement process
- What ever gesture is used before follows the attention getter

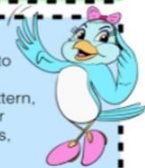
### 1. Notes

After you finish Direct Instruction, clap twice and say "Teach!" Your kids clap twice, say, "Okay!," make a full turn and, using large gestures, teach their neighbor, over and over, what you said ... until you call them back with "Class!"



### 2. Notes

As engaging variety by clapping one to five times, varying speed and rhythm; then say, "Teach!" Kids copy your pattern, say "Okay!" and, as above, teach their neighbor your lesson. Add foot stomps, head pats, disco moves, the Twist, cheerleading gestures too!



## Switch

- Switch is a directive given to the students during the engagement process
- Two types of Switch
  - Students recite the lesson that was previously stated by their partner
  - Students continue the lesson where their partner ended before the directive was given

### 3. Notes

To insure that pairs of students have equal turns in teaching each other, the teacher calls out "Uh oh! Switch!" Kids respond, "Uh oh! Switch!" and use one hand to pull down a giant, imaginary switch.



## Lesson Structure Student Engagement

- Introduction
  - Teacher introduces the lesson for the day
  - Engages the students by using body gesture first
    - Clap, stomp, mixture
- Students mimic teacher in tone of voice and gestures
- Then say TEACH!!!
- Students respond by say OK!!!

## Lesson Structure Student Engagement

- Students face each other and the first students explains the lesson just as the teacher presented to them
- The teacher says SWITCH!!!
- The other student continue where the partner finished or recite the same material
- Collaborative learning held from one minute to one minute and a half each
- Teacher says CLASS!!!
  - End the current session before beginning additional material

## Post Student Engagement

- Celebrations
  - Ten Finger Woo!!
  - Dabbing
- Class Motto
  - Never Give Up!!
  - Ex: MATH: Mistakes Allows Thinking to Happen

## Sample Lesson Causes of World War I

- Teaching Point 1: Alliances – The Triple Alliance headed by Germany and the Triple Entente headed by Great Britain, France, and Russia. Each country would be protected by the others in the alliance in case of war. A disagreement between two smaller countries, Austria-Hungary and Serbia, led to the larger countries fighting each other.
- Teaching Point 2: Militarism – Britain built the world's largest Navy while Germany and France possessed the world's largest armies. The more one nation built up their military, the other countries felt the need to follow their lead causing what is known as an "arms race".



## Sample Lesson Causes of World War I

- Teaching Point 3: Imperialism – The process of larger countries taking over smaller countries and turning them into colonies. European nations competed with each other to gain more colonies than the other. The purpose of imperialism was to build up wealth and influences around the world. This global competition for land caused confrontations and conflicts in many places.
- Teaching Point 4: Nationalism – Pride in one's own country and the belief that one's country or culture is superior to all others. Also gave groups within the colonies the idea of forming independent nations of their own with the freedom from foreign rule.

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- Super Six of Power Teaching. Retrieved from [www.wholebrainteaching.com](http://www.wholebrainteaching.com)

## Day 2 – PowerPoint

# Team-Based Learning

Chundra Grisby

Day 2 Professional Development

## What is Team-Based Learning?

- Team-Based Learning (TBL)
  - Process of amplifying small group instruction
  - Holds individuals within the group accountable
  - Works within the traditional structure of current class format
  - Course divided into five to seven modules instead of chapters in a textbook



Team-Based  
Learning™  
Collaborative

According to Stepanova (2018) Team-based learning (TBL) is a powerful pedagogical and instructional framework that is built on students giving student feedback and increasing the motivation to learn and achieve more.

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### The Four Principles of TBL

- Students are accountable for pre-learning and for working in teams
- Students must receive frequent and immediate feedback
- Team assignments must promote both learning and team development
- Groups should be properly formed and fixed for the whole course

## Components of TBL

- Modules

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- Preparation
- Readiness Assurance Testing (RAT)
- Application-focused exercise

## The Five Stage Readiness Assurance Process

- Preparatory Materials
  - Pre-readings at the beginning of the modules

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- iRAT
  - Taken at the beginning of class by each individual student may be graded immediately or later as a starting point using multiple choice questions using scantrons
  - Assessment contains 5 to 20 questions
- tRAT
  - The same assessment as the iRAT
  - Taken as a team with Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique forms (IF-AT)

## Five Step Readiness Assurance Process

- Appeals Process
  - Answers are selected until the correct answer is chosen
  - Pre determined deduction for answers outside of the first choice
- Mini-lecture clarification
  - Clarification for any questions that received a high percentage of incorrect
  - Linking the lesson to the preparatory material and assessments
  - Carry the lesson into application

## IF-AT Forms

### IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE (IF AT®)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Test # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

**SCRATCH OFF COVERING TO EXPOSE ANSWER**

	A	B	C	D	Score
1.					_____
2.					_____
3.					_____
4.					_____
5.					_____
6.					_____
7.					_____
8.					_____

### IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE (IF AT®)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Test # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

**SCRATCH OFF COVERING TO EXPOSE ANSWER**

	A	B	C	D	Score
1.					2
2.					4
3.					4
4.					2
5.					1
6.					4
7.					2
8.					4
9.					4
10.					2

## IF-AT Forms

- Test Maker Program
  - Free of charge with purchase
  - Matches the existing cards based on form
  - Homework, quizzes, and major assessment
  - Stores test once created for future uses
- Guiding principles
  - Immediate feedback
  - Scratching off the answer instead of filling-in
  - Never leaves a question without knowing the answer

## In-class Activity

- 4S Problem Solving Framework
  - Significant Problems
  - Same Problems
  - Specific Choice
  - Simultaneous Report

Using the questions from the Readiness Assurance Test, each of the 4s problems will be discussed with the teachers.

## In-class Activities

- Significant Problems

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  - Relevant problems that captures the interest of the students
  - Quality controls effectiveness
  - Requires course concept to solve
- Same Problems
  - Teams work same problems in order to sparks possible discussions
  - Reporting opportunities
  - Creates interest in what others decided

Question 1: How many of the previous question could be answered without reading the article?

Question 2: What was your experience completing the same assignment with the team in contrast to completing them alone?

Question 3: Did you feel that the questions were relevant to the article that was assigned for this professional development?

## In-class Activities

- Specific Choice
  - Multiple choice/response questions only
  - Teams select best choice
  - Allows final decisions to be compared to other teams
  - Allows teams to critique and examine other teams' decisions
- Simultaneous Report
  - Holding up cards with correct answers ensures conversation through team's decisions
  - Puts their thought into action
  - Immediate feedback from peers once responses are provided
- Review for big assessment

Question 4: Was there any group that did not get the correct answer on their first choice, what was the conversation like within the group after this occurred?

Question 5: You were asked to write the answer to number 4 on a sheet of paper and hold it up for a reveal, how many looked around the room to see others answers before knowing the correct answer?

The final question that you are about to complete mirrors the state assessment with a multiple response format. With this question, each individual must correctly answer both responses in order to receive credit, there is no half credit.

Following the final assessment, the data from the individual test and the team test will be discussed to determine whether growth was shown between the two tests.



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<b>DAY 1 - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION LEARNING FORM</b>	
Topic: _____ Date: _____	
Position: _____ Grade/Content Area: _____	
<b>I learned ...</b>	
<b>Most helpful ...</b>	<b>Least helpful ...</b>
<b>I would like to know more about ...</b>	<b>Questions, Comments, Concerns ...</b>

**DAY 2 - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Respond to the following questions.**

1. Of all the things learned in today's session, what was the most valuable learning experience?

2. What things did you learn through today's professional development that were unexpected?  
Why?

3. As a result of today's session, what will you do differently in the future? Why?

**DAY 3 - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Session Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name/Group** \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Please rate each item from "Poor" to "Excellent"  
 If the statement is not applicable, leave it blank.

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Poor</b>				
1. Were the objectives of the session made clear?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
2. How effective were the presenter's instructional skills?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
3. How effective was the session in holding your interest?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
4. Were the facilities conducive to learning?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
5. Were your questions and concerns addressed?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
6. How useful will these ideas and strategies be in improving student learning?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
7. How would you rate the overall value of this professional development?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
8. The material is immediately useful.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

9. What were the best aspects of this professional development or activity?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. What could be done to improve this activity?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11. For future sessions, what topics would be most helpful in performing your job?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

12. Additional comments?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix B: Transcripts with Reflective Notes

All interviews were conducted before or after school (participants were allowed to choose morning or afternoon) in the professional development room. All participants were assigned a number for confidentiality purposes. All participants were provided a list of the questions that would be asked prior to the interview.

### **Interview with INT #330**

**Interviewer:** *Good afternoon. My name is Chundra Grisby and I am doing a research project to investigate perceptions of students, teachers, parents, and administrators about single-gender grouping as a strategy to raise achievement levels in this coeducational middle school setting. I invited you to join my project because you were involved in gender grouping. Would you please read and sign this assent form to join my study? Thank you. I will now start the interview.*

**Interviewer:** *What is your experience with single-gender instruction?*

**INT #330:** I taught the gender-based course to the male students. This was my first time ever

*Worry about experience*

teaching all males and I must admit that at first I was a little nervous. In my experience, male

*preconceived notion= males rowdy*

students have always been the rowdy ones. So when the principal first approached me about it, I

*felt it would be challenging*

knew it would be a challenge.

**Interviewer:** *How did you become the teacher in this single-gender class setting? How did you feel about this at first? At the end of the first year?*

**INT #330:** As I stated above the principal approach me after a faculty meeting at the end of the school year. He stated that he was looking for a way to help improve student achievement and

*principal supportive of idea*

wanted to try single-gender grouping for 7<sup>th</sup> grade Math and English/Language Arts. Again, at first I was a little nervous because, from experience, boys are really rowdy and I just began to think about having a class with nothing but boys. I agreed to do it but I must say that I had my

*doubted it would work      worried about behavior problems*

doubts. Initially I felt that it would not work because the boys would not cooperate and would be

*planned ahead*

all types of behavior problems. I was thinking to myself what was I going to do in order to teach this group of boys. I asked the principal what type of students I would have and he stated that it

*mixed-ability group*

would be a mixture of students.

**Interviewer:** *That is very interesting. My next question concerns your thoughts about how the gender-based classes differ from the coeducational classes. So, how do you think single-gender classes differ from coed classes?*

**INT #330:** At first the class started the same as any other class. One of the boys noted that it was

*Students were not told ahead*

only boys in the class. Another student asked me why there were no girls in the class and one of the other students told him that his mom told him that he would be in Math and ELA classes with

*learned through friends about Mom's decision?*

just boys to see if he could learn better. I explained to the students why they were in the gender-

*It would be nice to know what she told them*

based class. I think that, that conversation really helped the students to with their comfort-level.



*More focused boys!*

But to answer the question the students were more focused. In the coeducational classes the

*Getting attention of opposite sex*

students tend to try to get the attention of students from the opposite sex and it takes a little time

*ask more questions      more involved*

to get them focused. Also, the students were more apt to ask questions and were more involved

*cover more information*

in their work. I was able to cover more information in this setting than in the coeducational

*worked better together*

setting. The students worked better together as well.

**Interviewer:** *Ok. Next question, how was your preparation for the single gender class different from mixed gender classes?*

*Prepared more*

**INT #330:** In order to prepare for this class, I did a lot more research because I wanted to ensure

*Wanted it to work*

that I gave this setting the full benefit. I know that most boys like sports so I made sure to relate

*related to student-centered topics*

the lesson to sports. I also made sure that all lessons taught were relevant and that the students

*student-centered*

could relate to what was being taught. I mean I used research-based strategies for the

*changed pedagogy*

coeducational classes as well but a lot of those strategies were strategies that I had always used.

**Interviewer:** *What strategies do you utilize in the single-gender environment?*

**INT #330:** With this particular setting, I found that the main thing was knowing their learning

*Knowing each student*

style. Once I found out what each students' learning style was, I was able to cater the lesson to fit

*used learning styles*

their style of learning. It took a lot of planning but I ensured that all assignment had different

*different options*

*sense of ownership*

options. This was very helpful because it helped the students take a sense of ownership in

completing their assignment. Also because the majority of the boys were athletes, I made sure

*used sports analogies*

that I explained a lot of the concepts through sports analogies. This was really successful because

*student centered peer tutoring*

this was something they could relate to. Peer tutoring helped as well

**Interviewer:** *How is class participation in a single-gender environment versus a coeducational environment?*

*Teacher surprised? Participation better*

**INT #330:** I must admit that class participation was better in the single-gender

environment. The

*Asked and answered questions*

*eager to learn*

guys were not afraid to ask and answer questions and they were eager to learn. In my

*more female participants in coed classes*

coeducational classes most of the class participation came from my female students and when I

*boys reluctant when girls there*

would try to get the guys involved, they would hesitate. It was not that they did not necessarily

*boys not want to be considered a nerd*

know the information but they just didn't want to be thought of as a nerd.

**Interviewer:** *What, if any, differences have you seen in the comfort level of the students in the single-gender class? Please explain.*

**INT #330:** As I stated previously, the biggest difference I saw was in the participation

level of the

*All males participated!*

male students. All of my male students participated in class. They were answering questions and

*no one ashamed*

asking questions. No one was ashamed because we established early on that there were no dumb questions. I told them that the only dumb question is the question not asked. They were

*males felt would not be laughed at*

comfortable in the fact that they knew that no one was going to laugh or make fun at them for

*more helpful/less critical*

asking any questions or responding to any questions. The students were more helpful and less

*males worked as teams*

critical. The students truly worked as a team. If they saw that one of their classmates was

*helped others*

struggling, they were there to help. I think that the level of confidence that they gained even

*increased confidence stread!*

helped them in their other coeducational classes.

**Interviewer:** *Would you prefer to teach only single-gender classes? Why or why not?*

**Prefer single-gender**

**INT #330:** If had to choose, I would prefer to teach in the single-gender class. The reason

why is

*More focused*

*more involved, take ownership*

because that setting is more focused. The students are more involved and take more ownership in

*lack of behavior issues*

their learning. I had little or no behavior issues and the students were very supportive of each

*students treated class like a family*

other. During the second half of the school year, the students functioned as more of a family and

*tremendous learning experience for all*

this was a tremendous learning experience for them all.

**Interviewer:** *What ideas do you have to increase student achievement other than single-gender classrooms?*

***Ownership of learning***

**INT #330:** *The best way, in my opinion, to increase student achievement is through ownership.*

When the students take ownership in their learning, they are more productive, and they learn and

***Working in teams***

retain more information. Also, when students learn to work effectively in teams, their level of

***achievement increased***

achievement increased.

**Interviewer:** *Do you have any additional comments would you like to make about this topic?*

**INT #330:** No there are no additional comments. Thanks for allowing me to participate.

This has helped me to think more about things I should do in all my classes.

**Interview with INT #102**

**Interviewer:** *Good afternoon. My name is Chundra Grisby and I am doing a research project to investigate perceptions of students, teachers, parents, and administrators about single-gender grouping as a strategy to raise achievement levels in this coeducational middle school setting. I invited you to join my project because you were involved in gender grouping. Would you please read and sign this assent form to join my study? Thank you. I will now start the interview.*

**Interviewer:** *What were your thoughts on gender grouping when you first learned you would be enrolled in a gender-based class?*

***Nervous but interested***

I was a little nervous, but I wanted to see if there would be a difference in the way I learned in

*Interested in how different his learning may be*  
this class versus the other classes.

**Interviewer:** *How satisfied are you with your academic progress in the single-gender class? Why?*

**INT #102:** I am not satisfied. I really do not like this set up. I feel that I could learn better in the

*Could learn better in coed grades were good*  
coeducational setting. Even though my grades are good, I still feel that I would do much better in

the coeducational setting.

**Interviewer:** *How comfortable do you feel asking questions in this setting versus the coeducational setting?*

*Comfortable in both settings/thrives in both*  
**INT #102:** I have an outgoing personality, so I am comfortable in both settings. I thrive in class

with boys and girls as well as in the girls only class.

**Interviewer:** *What are your feelings about your involvement in projects in the single-gender setting versus the coeducational setting?*

**INT #102:** I enjoy projects in the coeducational setting because I got to hear and experience the

*Wanted to hear views of opposite sex*  
point of views of people of the opposite sex. In the girls only class, we all tend to think alike to

*girls think alike*  
the point of views are mostly the same.

**Interviewer:** *Describe an example of a project situation that may demonstrate a difference in the single-gender setting versus the coeducational setting.*

**INT #102:** In the girls only class we had to create a storyboard about our role model.

Needless to

*Role model--father*

say most of the girls' role model was their father. In the girls and boys class, my friends created

theirs on their mothers, fathers, celebrities, and stuff like that. That was way more interesting

than what happened in our class. There was only one girl in the girls only class that said her

mother was her role model.

**Interviewer:** *What are your feelings about your involvement in discussions in the single-gender setting versus the coeducational setting? Describe an example of how a discussion was carried out that may demonstrate a difference from the coeducational setting.*

**INT #102:** I mean, I don't care who is in the class, if the discussion is of interest to me, I am going

*Girls more argumentative*

to put my two cents in. From experience, I did find that girls are way more argumentative than

*boys don't care*

boys. I guess we want the last word but the boys really don't care.

**Interviewer:** *Do you think you are more motivated to learn in the single-gender setting or in the coeducational setting? What about that setting motivates you?*

*Sees herself as motivated*

**INT #102:** I am motivated to learn because I want more for myself out of life so the class setting is

*Class setting not a factor*

really not a factor. Plus, I know that if I don't do what I am supposed to in class my folks gone

*parents follow up to make sure work is done*

be all on my butt and I will not be able to get the stuff I want so that is basically my motivation.

## Appendix C: Teacher Interview Questions

1. What is your experience with single-gender instruction?
2. How did you become the teacher in this single-gender class setting? How did you feel about this at first? At the end of the first year?
3. How do you think single-gender classes differ from coed classes?
4. How was your preparation for the single gender class different from mixed gender classes?
5. How is the class environment in the single-gender classroom setting different from the coeducational setting? Please describe a situation that could demonstrate what you think about this.
6. What strategies do you utilize in the single-gender environment?
7. How is class participation in a single-gender environment versus a coeducational environment?
8. What, if any, differences have you seen in the comfort level of the students in the single-gender class? Please explain.
9. Would you prefer to teach only single-gender classes? Why or why not?
10. What ideas do you have to increase student achievement other than single-gender classrooms?
11. How do you think single-gender classes might be effective in helping to improve achievement?
12. What additional comments would you like to make about this topic?



## Appendix D: Student Interview Questions

1. How satisfied are you with your academic progress in the single-gender class?
2. How comfortable do you feel asking questions in this setting versus the coeducational setting?
3. What are your feelings about your involvement in projects in the single-gender setting versus the coeducational setting? Describe an example of a project situation that may demonstrate a difference in the single-gender setting versus the coeducational setting.
4. What are your feelings about your involvement in discussions in the single-gender setting versus the coeducational setting? Describe an example of how a discussion was carried out that may demonstrate a difference from the coeducational setting.
5. Do you think you are more motivated to learn in the single-gender setting or in the coeducational setting? What about that setting motivates you?

## Appendix E: Parent Interview Questions

1. How satisfied are you with your child's academic progress in the single-gender class?
2. What are your thoughts on the comfort level of your child in this setting compared to the coeducational setting?
3. Describe what you think about your child's level of motivation in this setting? Describe your child's motivation in the coeducational setting.
4. If you had the opportunity in the future, would you choose the single-gender class setting for your child? Why or why not?
5. What additional comments would you like to add about this topic?

## Appendix F: Administrator Interview Questions

1. What is your experience with single-gender education?
2. What made you decide to offer gender-based classes? How did you determine who would teach the gender-based classes?
3. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of single-gender classes helping to close the achievement gap?
4. How do you think single-gender classes differ from coed classes?
5. What is the class environment like from the gender-based classes? From the coeducational classes?
6. Do you require the teachers to utilize specific strategies for single-gender classes? Why or why not? Please explain.
7. As an administrator, are there more behavior problems from students in the single-gender classes or the coed classes? Why do you think there are more problems in that setting?
8. What additional comments would you like to make about this topic?

## Appendix G: Analysis Following Data Collection

		Number of hours per week	
Month 1- Weeks 1 & 2	Transcribed the interviews of the female students	35 hours	2 interviews per day
Month 1 - Weeks 3 & 4	Transcribe the interviews of the male students	30 hours	2 interviews per day
Month 2 –Weeks 1 & 2	Transcribe the interviews of parents and teachers	30 hours	2 interviews per day
Month 2 –Weeks 3 & 4	Transcribe the interviews of the parents and administrators	15 hours	2 interviews per day

## Appendix H: Table of Coded Information

Students were randomly given numbers between 100 – 109. Since there were only 10 students that agreed to participate, I decided start at 100 and end with 109 to cover the 10 students.

	Thoughts on the gender-based environment	Motivation in gender-based setting	Accountable	Engaged	Academic progress
#100 (Girl)	Unsure of the environment	More motivated	Had to be sure assignments were completed by due date	More involved in class and discussions	Satisfied with progress/ able to pull English grade from F to B
#101 (Girl)	Upset about being in setting at first	More comfortable and motivated	If absent had to ensure the all missed work was completed and turned in	More involved in projects and the class as a whole	Grades improved/ started embracing learning
#102 (Girl)	Nervous	Motivated	Had to get my work done	Mandatory class participation	Academics improved
#103 (Boy)	Did not like the idea	Kind of motivated	Gave us a syllabus with assignments and due dates	Involved in class and discussions	Feel like I could do better but grades improved
#104 (Girl)	Did not think much of it	More motivated in coed classes not this setting	Did not like being responsible for getting assignments completed and turned in on time	Refused to be involved in class discussion and group projects	Grades improved and then slipped at the end of the year
#105 (Girl)	Felt it could be good	More motivated	Teacher was more of a facilitator	Very involved in group projects	Grades were good/ learned a lot
#106 (Boy)	Hated it	More motivated even though I didn't want	We had to teach ourselves	Not involved in class initially but eventually I	Even though I did not like this environment,

		to be there		started to participate in class.	my grades did improve and I was more focused
#107 (Boy)	Hated it	Not motivated	Refused to turn in work when due	Not an active participant in class	Waste of time/ I feel I would have been better off in the coed classes
#108 (Boy)	Might be interesting	More motivated	Had to be responsible and get assignment completed and turned in by the due date	Very involved in every aspect of the class	Actually learned in this class/ grades improved
#109 (Boy)	Thought it was against the law to separate based on gender	More motivated	A lot of responsibility was placed on us/ had to use a rubric	Involved in some of parts of class but not fully involved	My behavior improved which I guess allowed my academics to improve